

Spring 2021

HUMA 1639 Marriage, Family and Kinship in Cross-cultural Perspectives

Course description:

This course examines the diverse cultural meaning and structure of kinship relations and organizations. Different anthropological approaches in analyzing kinship structures and practices will be examined. In human societies, marriage, family and kinship are the most common and fundamental cultural practices, although there are diversities. This course equips students with the basic knowledge to understand human culture and society, and stimulates their interest in their own families and kinship organizations.

Learning outcomes:

The students will be able to (1) identify the diverse cultural meaning and structure of kinship relations and organizations, (2) better understand one's own culture and society as well as other cultural practices in the world, (3) identify the technique of studying family and kin relations, and (4) have opportunity to improve presentation skills.

Course content and teaching components:

There will be both lectures and tutorials. The lectures are designed to introduce specific topics in understanding marriage, family, and kinship. In each tutorial, we will be discussing various movies and documentaries as well as readings relating them to students' own experiences. Students are able to participate in discussions and presentations in tutorials, from which they will have opportunity to organize and integrate presentation materials, and give oral presentations. Fieldtrips will also be introduced in the course allowing students a first-hand understanding of kinship in its social and cultural context. Students are required to hand in two assignments (about 5 pages in length respectively), which could focus on the course fieldtrips and their own family.

Assessment scheme:

Two assignments (one reading report on the textbook: 15%; one essay on "My Family": 15%)

Class participation: 10%

Final exam (open book examination): 60%

Course text:

Wolf, Margery

1972 *Women and the family in rural Taiwan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Course schedule:

Weeks 1-2. The invention of family and kinship.

February 3 & February 10. Introduction and basic concepts.
February 17. Family as a basic social institution.

Reading:

Goodenough, Ward H.

2006. "Introduction". In *Description and Comparison in Cultural Anthropology*.
New Brunswick and London, Aldine Transaction, pp. 1-38.

Weeks 3-4. Marriage, family kinship and descent groups.

February 24. Kinship systems.

March 3. Descent groups: patrilineal and matrilineal descents.

Weeks 5-6. Romantic love.

March 10. Romantic love under different cultural context.

March 17. Romantic love in socialist China.

Reading:

Macfarlane, A.

1995. "Individualism and the ideology of romantic love", in *Rethinking the subject: An anthology of contemporary European social thought*. James D. Faubion Ed.,
Oxford, Westview Press, pp. 125-137.

Weeks 7-8. Chinese lineage.

March 24 & April 7. Chinese lineage system.

Field Trips: The Nansha and the Ping Shan cases.

March 24 – April 7. A fieldtrip to study lineages in Pearl River Delta.

Readings:

Potter, Jack M.

1970 "Land and lineage in traditional China", in *Family and Kinship in Chinese Society*,
M. Freedman, ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970, pp. 121-138.

Weeks 9-10. Diverse kinship and marriage ties in Southwest China.

April 14. Marriage ties and kinship.

April 21. Marriage ties and matrilineal societies: the Lahu and the Moso.

Tutorial: April 3. Documentary: 1) *Ladies of the Lake* (20 min.) DS731. N39 L33 1998.
April 21. Documentary: 2) *The women's kingdom* (22 min.) DS793.Y8 W66 2006.

Readings:

Shanshan Du,

2003 "*Chopsticks only work in pairs*": *gender unity and gender equality among the Lahu of Southwest China*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp.52-76.

Weeks 11-12. Gender and family.

April 28. Gender issues in different cultures.

May 5. Gender and social change.

Readings:

Watson, R.S.

1986. "The named and the nameless: gender and person in Chinese society",
American Ethnologist, 13, 4, 1986, pp. 619-631.

Week 13. Conclusion. May 8. Kin ties as social and cultural capital.

Final exam: Open book examination, on-line, according to university schedule.