

**Division of Humanities  
Tentative Course Syllabus**

**Course Code:** HUMA 1639  
**Course Title:** Marriage, Family and Kinship in Cross-cultural Perspectives  
**Course Offered in:** Spring 2025  
**Course Instructor:** Prof MA JIANXIONG

**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.

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):**

	Course ILOs
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
4	Have opportunity to improve presentation skills

**Course Outline:**

Week	
1	<b>The invention of family and kinship (I)</b> Reading: Goodenough, Ward H. 2006. "Introduction". In <i>Description and Comparison in Cultural Anthropology</i> . New Brunswick and London, Aldine Transaction, pp. 1-38.
2	<b>The invention of family and kinship (II)</b>
3	<b>Marriage, family kinship and descent groups (I)</b>

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<b>4</b>	<b>Marriage, family kinship and descent groups (II)</b> <b>Documentary: Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard. GN20 S773 1990 V6.</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Romantic love (I)</b> <b>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.</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Romantic love (II)</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Chinese lineage (I)</b> <b>Field Trips: The Ping Shan cases.</b> <b>A fieldtrip to study lineages in Pearl River Delta.</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Chinese lineage (II)</b> <b>Reading: 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.</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Diverse kinship and marriage ties in Southwest China (I)</b> <b>Documentary: Ladies of the Lake (20 min.) DS731. N39 L33 1998.</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Diverse kinship and marriage ties in Southwest China (II)</b> <b>Reading: 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.</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Gender and family (I)</b> <b>Reading: Watson, R.S. 1986. "The named and the nameless: gender and person in Chinese society", American Ethnologist, 13, 4, 1986, pp. 619-631.</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Gender and family (II)</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Conclusion: Kin ties as social and cultural capital</b>

**Planned Assessment Tasks:**

Two Assignments (one field trip report and one essay):

20%

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Class participation and text book presentation: 20%

Final exam: 60%

Participation in class and worksheets: %

**Readings:**

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

2. *“Chopsticks only work in pairs”: gender unity and gender equality among the Lahu of Southwest China*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003.