

Spring 2025

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

Course Instructor: MA Jianxiong

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Time & Venue: Room 2464 (Lift 25-26); Tuesday, 12:00-13:50

Tutorial: Room 2464 (Lift 17-18); 14:00-14:50

Office hours: Thursday, 15:00-18:00;

Office: Room 3342

### **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: 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 4 & February 11. Introduction and basic concepts.**

**February 18. 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.

**No tutorial on February 4 & 11 during the Add & Drop period.**

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

**February 25. Kinship systems.**

**March 4. Descent groups: patrilineal and matrilineal descents.**

**Tutorial: February 18. Documentary: *Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard*. GN20 S773 1990 V6.**

**March 4. Documentary: *Mia and Alexandra Twins*. 2013.**

**Weeks 5-6. Romantic love.**

**March 11. Romantic love under different cultural context.**

**March 18. Romantic love in socialist China.**

**Tutorial: March 11 & 18. *Five golden flowers (1959)*. PN2874 X56 1999.**

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 7-9. Chinese lineage.**

**March 25 & April 8. Chinese lineage system.**

**Field Trips: *Nansha Filed trip (to be announced)*.**

**March 25 – April 8. 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.

**Assignment 1: Reading report on *Women and the family in rural Taiwan* due on April 8.**

**Weeks 10-12. Diverse kinship and marriage ties in Southwest China.**

**April 15. Marriage ties and kinship.**

**April 22. Marriage ties and matrilineal societies: the Lahu and the Moso.**

**Tutorial: April 15. Documentary: 1) *Ladies of the Lake* (20 min.) DS731. N39 L33 1998.**

**April 22. 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 11-13. Gender and family.**

**April 29. Gender issues in different cultures.**

**May 6. Gender and social change.**

**Assignment 2: *My family: on anthropological perspective*. Due on April 29.**

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 14. Conclusion. May 6. Kin ties as social and cultural capital.**

**Tutorial: May 6. Final reviewing.**

**Final exam: to be announced by the university.**