

YSS2245 MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP  
Semester II, AY 2021/22

DRAFT SYLLABUS 15 OCTOBER 2021

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Office: RC2-2-02B (in Suite 6 on Saga level 2 across from Saga Dining Hall)

Hours: To be arranged.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This module introduces the anthropology of marriage and kinship, asking questions like: How does the creation of kin through marriage vary cross-culturally? How and why do states exercise control over marriage? Why are people marrying later and having fewer babies, and how will this development shape societies in the twenty-first century? Who has access to marriage, who does not, and why? Is marriage a tool of patriarchal domination? Or can it become a site for culturally and historically specific forms of agency? Students will conduct original research and read ethnographies of places around the world with a focus on Asia.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course aims to provide students with an overview of contemporary anthropological research on marriage and kinship. By the end, students should be able to do the following:

- Critically assess cross-cultural trends in marriage and kinship from an anthropological perspective, including feminist and decolonial critique.
- Practice collaboration and leadership skills through working in groups and leading class discussions.
- Understand, summarize, and critique ethnographic texts.
- Devise and conduct original anthropological research on marriage and kinship practices.
- Apply social theory to ethnographic evidence; use that evidence to make theoretical arguments.
- Incorporate their cultural insights about marriage and kinship into their daily lives as citizens and future leaders of a rapidly globalizing world.

## REQUIRED TEXTS AND READING LOAD

For this course, we will mostly be reading full-length ethnographies, that is, books by anthropologists who work on marriage and kinship. We will be moving through about one book per week, but I will work with students to **keep the reading load manageable** either by assigning selected chapters or by divvying up the reading load appropriately (i.e., different groups read different chapters). Most of the ethnographies are recent, published in the last 10 years. These ethnographies are selected because they are both highly readable and because they represent the state-of-art of the field.

You may purchase the texts if you prefer to work with hard copies. But all required texts will either be on reserve or available as e-books through the library.

*Required texts:*

- Davis, Deborah, and Sara Friedman, eds. 2014. *Wives, Husbands, and Lovers: Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Urban China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Friedman, Sara. 2015. *Exceptional States: Chinese Immigrants and Taiwanese Sovereignty*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Haenn, Nora. 2019. *Marriage After Migration: An Ethnography of Money, Romance, and Gender in Globalizing Mexico*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hirsch, Jennifer S, and Holly Wardlow, eds. 2006. *Modern Loves: The Anthropology of Romantic Courtship & Companionate Marriage*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Inhorn, Marcia C. and Nancy S. Hefner, eds. 2021. *Waithood: Gender, Education, and Global Delays in Marriage*. New York: Berghahn.
- Lai, Francisca Yuenki. 2021. *Maid to Queer: Asian Labor Migration and Female Same-Sex Desires*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Nakano, Lynne. 2022. *Making Our Own Destiny: Single Women, Opportunity, and Family in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Tokyo*. Honolulu: Hawaii University Press.
- Pauli, Julia. 2019. *The Decline of Marriage in Namibia: Kinship and Social Class in a Rural Community*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript.
- Ramberg, Lucinda. 2014. *Given to the Goddess: South Indian Devadasis and the Sexuality of Religion*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Weeks, Kathi. *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.

## **COURSE FORMAT**

The course format encourages participation, with students initiating and leading discussions. The workload is designed to be manageable so that we can focus on reading and discussing the texts. For most assignments, you determine your own deadlines, which is intended to help you with planning your workload. You will have four kinds of required assignments:

- Discussion Questions (DQs) – 10 per semester.
- Class Discussion Questions (CDQs) – 2 per semester.
- Critical Book Precip (that is, book summaries) – 2 per semester.
- Marriage and Kinship Ethnographic Project – 1 per semester.

All assignments will be posted publically in discussions on Canvas so that you can read and engage with your classmates' work.

### *Discussion Questions (10 submissions per semester)*

Over the course of the academic term, you will be required to submit class Discussion Questions (DQs) a total of 10 times to Canvas. That means that you need to submit DQs about every other meeting of our class. As long as you make your ten required DQ submissions, the precise schedule according to which you complete them is up to you. You should submit your DQs by 9 a.m. of the day of the seminar. This will give everyone a chance to read and reflect on your DQs before we meet. **You need not and should not submit DQs for sessions for which you are preparing CDQs (see below).**

Your DQs can take many forms. For example, you may want to raise a point that you did not understand or that you wish to clarify; alternatively, you may wish to push our discussion further by contributing a critical or provocative viewpoint. Sometimes you may want to bring the perspective of one reading to bear on another reading, or combine or synthesize your understanding of different readings. Finally, you are very much encouraged to relate the readings to your thoughts about society, history, or the world around you. You should use your DQs to guide our seminar toward issues that you connect with emotionally and/or intellectually.

Generally, each DQ should be between a sentence and a paragraph. In some cases, a short question is all you need. In other cases, you may wish to develop a more complex thought or write a few sentences to set up some context for your question.

#### *Class Discussion Questions (2 submissions per semester)*

Twice per semester, I will ask you to submit Class Discussion Questions (CDQs). CDQs are similar to DQs. In contrast to DQs, however, CDQs are designed for the whole class to help us move through the text. Generally, you will work together with partners to prepare 4 CDQs for the class. Along with your questions, include some direct quotations from the text to help anchor our discussion (remember to cite page numbers). During class, we will split into groups, each group discussing one of your questions for 15 minutes or so before we convene as a class to discuss all the questions together. At the beginning of class, I will ask you to give a brief (1- or 2-minute) informal statement explaining your questions to kick things off. You will also be expected to take a lead role in facilitating the discussion.

Your CDQ submissions will be due by 4pm on the day before seminar by email to zachary.howlett@yale-nus.edu.sg. I will read through your CDQs and sometimes make some suggestions. Then I will email them back to you before seminar and post the finalized CDQs on Canvas.

I will prepare CDQs for the first seminar or to model how to approach the CDQs. For the CDQs in particular, remember that a short, pithy question often focuses discussion better than a long, rambling one (something that I have to keep continually reminding myself as well!).

#### *Critical Book Precis (2 per semester)*

You will be required to write two critical precis (summaries) of texts that we read over the course of the semester. Usually these texts consist of selections from a book, but for the weeks in which we extract of different books or articles, you may summarize the readings in concert with each other. These summaries will generally consist of 3-4 pages of synopsis, in which you present some main arguments of the text or texts, and 1-2 pages of critique, in which you critically assess the text or texts from your point of view. On weeks that you are submitting book precis, I will expect you to take a greater role in class discussion. Your deadline for the book precis will be **midnight of the fifth day after we conclude discussion of the text.** (So if we finish discussing the text on a Friday, your precis will be due on Wednesday evening at midnight; and if we finish discussing the text on Tuesday, your precis will be due on Sunday evening at midnight.) In the spirit of creating an open learning

community, your precis will be “open source,” available for your classmates to read and draw from for their own papers and projects.

### *Marriage and Kinship Ethnographic Project*

For your final project for the course, you will write an original 8-10 page ethnographic research paper on a topic of your choice. Building on the course materials and class discussions, you will identify an area of interest to you in the realm of marriage and kinship. Then you will carry out firsthand ethnographic observations and, drawing from the course materials and your own experience and knowledge, you will make an original ethnographic argument about your observations. The assignment will be scaffolded in a collaborative manner so that you work together with your peers to brainstorm possible research topics and peer review your draft essays before producing a final polished piece.

**Peer review:** In the spirit of productive collaboration and to replicate the way in which scholarly writing is actually produced, you will workshop drafts of your paper in seminar.

**Peer citation:** As an important component of the writing process, you will be required to cite at least two of your classmates’ critical precis and/or ethnographic project drafts in your final paper. The purpose of this exercise is to encourage you to perceive yourself and your peers as producers of original knowledge.

### LEARNING CONTRACT AND GRADING POLICY

In this course, I take a Learning Contract approach to grading.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this approach is to de-emphasize grades as an end in themselves. **Thus you will not receive grades on individual assignments; rather, I will base your grade holistically on a portfolio of all the assignments that you submit for the course.** I have high expectations for you but I also have great confidence in your ability. Thus any student who fulfils the following basic Learning Contract will receive a “B” range grade. By “B” range grad, I mean a B or a B+. Conscientious performance of the following tasks qualifies you at least for a grade in the “B” range:

#### Learning Contract:

- *On-time attendance at all class meetings:* Avoid being absent more than twice and being late more than three times to ensure that your attendance meets the requirements for a “B” range grade. If you need to miss a class, please contact me in advance.
- *Conscientious completion of all required assignments on time and according to the submission guidelines (see “Guidelines for Formal Essays” below):* This class revolves around collaboration; your on-time submission of assignments is required to make it work. Avoid handing in DQs, CDQs, and papers late to stay on track for a “B” range grade. Your assignment will be considered late if it misses the deadline without an assistant dean’s note or a medical certificate. If you know in advance that

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Peter Elbow and Mary Deane Sorcinelli’s discussion of Contract Grading in “Using High-Stakes and Low-Stakes Writing to Enhance Learning,” in *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College Teachers*, ed. Wilbert J. McKeachie (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2014), chapter 16.

you will miss a class in which a paper is due, make arrangements with me to hand in your paper in advance of your absence.

- *Meeting with me for any required conferences:* If I schedule required conferences, be sure to attend them.
- *Careful and thorough reading of the texts:* Your careful and thorough reading is evidenced by your active and thoughtful participation in the seminar. **I expect you to read your peers' Discussion Questions in addition to the required texts for each session.**
- *Active participation in all class activities:* Although frequency of participation is important, I value quality of contribution over quantity alone. I also strive to avoid an ethnocentric (culturally biased) definition of participation. I value many different participation styles. Participation has many aspects. You will get full marks by actively involving yourself in group work, listening to others, and contributing to class discussions, including by asking questions. (Remember that no question is ever "stupid"; if you have a question, others probably have the same question too.) You should always feel free to disagree with me and with one another. Critical, constructive dialog is at the heart of scholarship and learning. But keep in mind the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Unless I inform you otherwise, you can assume that your work—by demonstrating conscientious performance of the tasks outlined above—is on track to qualify you for a grade in the "B" range. Upon request, I will provide an estimate of your grade, but only after Recess Week and only in an in-person meeting.

### *Getting an "A"*

To receive a grade in the "A" range, you must perform the above tasks conscientiously *and*, in your formal essays (2 precis + 1 ethnographic interview project), consistently demonstrate writing that I deem objectively to be of superior quality according to the evaluation criteria that I append to every assignment. Although these criteria may vary according to the assignment, they generally include (but are not limited to) persuasiveness of argument and artfulness of presentation. I also expect "A" students to demonstrate superior citizenship and participation, although, as I note above, I strive to maintain a culturally sensitive, expansive view of participation, valuing quality of participation over quantity alone. Participation is also demonstrated through thoughtful submission of DQs and CDQs.

### *Guidelines for Formal Essays*

All written work for the two formally assigned essays must be submitted on Canvas and in hardcopy to me in class on the day that they are due. Written work must conform to the following guidelines:

- ✓ Word processed or typed
- ✓ Written in 12 pt. Times New Roman font.
- ✓ Double spaced with one-inch margins.
- ✓ Your name written on top of each page in the header
- ✓ Sources cited according to the Chicago author-date style, which the standard in anthropology. (Refer to the [Chicago-Style Quick Guide](#) and come to me with any questions.)

- ✓ Pages stapled.
- ✓ Proofread and spell checked. (As a good all-around writing reference, I recommend the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#).)
- ✓ **Pages numbered.** (Repeat offenders will have to buy everyone snacks!)

### *Diversity and Inclusion*

As a learning community, we are pledged to work together to create an inclusive and welcoming space for all members of our community irrespective of race, ethnicity, culture, national origins, gender identity, religious affiliation, socioeconomic background, and any intersection of these identities or others. As an instructor, I pledge to work proactively together with you the students to ensure that the classroom is an open, safe, brave, and respectful learning environment where everyone can share their points of view and engage productively with others. Diversity includes socioeconomic diversity and I understand, for example, that students working multiple jobs may occasionally need some flexibility with assignment deadlines. I see us as partners and co-collaborators in creating a classroom environment that empowers us all as learners and producers of knowledge. I strive to be maximally aware, flexible, and committed in my approaches and outlooks toward creating an inclusive space and I regularly solicit your anonymous feedback on how to do this better.

### *Awareness of Public Domain*

Please be aware that as part of our class activities your writing may be read by all members of the course. Follow the Golden Rule to foster a safe and productive environment for everyone.

### *Plagiarism Policy and Resources*

The faculty and staff of Yale-NUS College expect that students—regardless of their academic background or training—will become intimately familiar with what constitutes plagiarism and avoid it. Please see the Yale-NUS College policy on [Avoiding Plagiarism](#) for further information, including detailed discussions and definitions of plagiarism. All essays will be checked with Turnitin.

**You are encouraged to make full use of authorized collaboration.** Such collaboration includes peer review and critique of your essays, both organized by me and by yourselves. You are also encouraged to take full advantage of the Yale-NUS College Writers' Centre. You will find more information about the Writers' Centre below.

### *Canvas Discussion*

I have created a general discussion on Canvas for course-related matters. You should check the discussion every week and feel free to post any questions or comments that you have.

### *College Policies*

I respect and uphold Yale-NUS College policies and regulations with regard to the observation of religious holidays, assistance available to differently abled students, plagiarism, sexual harassment, and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with College regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to my attention.

### *The Yale-NUS College Writers' Centre*

The Writers' Centre provides support for individuals at any stage of the writing process. It is a free resource available to all students for nearly any kind of writing project, including applications, presentations, lab reports, essays, papers, and more. Tutors serve as responsive listeners and readers who can address questions about the writing process or about particular pieces of writing. They can also consider questions of confidence, critical reading, analytic thought, and imagination. Many writing tutors have experience working with non-native speakers of English.

You can find out more and book an appointment by visiting the Writers' Centre website: <https://writerscentre.yale-nus.edu.sg/>. Everyone is strongly encouraged to use this great resource.

## INDICATIVE READING LIST

**NB: Schedule is to be arranged. We will not read whole books but rather a manageable subsection of chapters. I will ensure that the reading load for each session is manageable.**

- Borneman, John. 1996. "Until Death Do Us Part: Marriage/Death in Anthropological Discourse." *American Ethnologist* 23 (2): 215–35.
- Davis, Deborah, and Sara Friedman, eds. 2014. *Wives, Husbands, and Lovers: Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Urban China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Friedman, Sara. 2015. *Exceptional States: Chinese Immigrants and Taiwanese Sovereignty*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Haenn, Nora. 2019. *Marriage After Migration: An Ethnography of Money, Romance, and Gender in Globalizing Mexico*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hirsch, Jennifer S, and Holly Wardlow, eds. 2006. *Modern Loves: The Anthropology of Romantic Courtship & Companionate Marriage*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
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- Lai, Francisca Yuenki. 2021. *Maid to Queer: Asian Labor Migration and Female Same-Sex Desires*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
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- Pauli, Julia. 2019. *The Decline of Marriage in Namibia: Kinship and Social Class in a Rural Community*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript.
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