

**ANTH 1310 UGEC 1625**  
**Marriage, Family, and Kinship**  
**Spring 2026**

Instructor: Aaron HAMES, [ajhames@cuhk.edu.ck](mailto:ajhames@cuhk.edu.ck), NAH 325, 3943-5550

Lecture: Thursday 2:30-4:15 (NAH 11)

Tutorial #1: 4:30-5:15 (NAH 11)

Tutorial #2: 5:30-6:15 (NAH 11)

Office Hours: By appointment

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Updated: 2026.1.5



**Course Outline**

This course invites students to explore the topic of kinship cross-culturally through an anthropological lens. It introduces basic concepts and major issues in the study of kinship with a particular focus on conceptions of gender. In addition to basic kinship structures, this course will cover diverse themes, including gender roles, the shifting relationship between marriage and love, and the various new ways of people “doing” kinship in contemporary societies, fictive kinship, and the emerging problems that result from the changing social practices. We will also explore the effects on kinship due to new reproductive technologies as well as how to approach human bonds with non-human entities.

## Required Texts

All readings are either posted on Blackboard or available as an eBook through the University Library.

## Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course, students will:

- Be familiar with the basic concepts, theories, and contemporary social issues relating to kinship.
- To gain appreciation of the culturally diverse forms and understandings of kinship, gender, marriage, and family.
- Be able to identify and summarize key points and arguments in scholarly anthropological writings.
- To understand the practice of kinship as a means to ensure survival and establish meaningful social relations.
- To think analytically about the complex linkages between individuals and society in understanding and performing various forms of intimate relationships.

## GRADE DESCRIPTORS

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Criteria for 1) the course and 2) for coursework</i>
A	1) Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes. 2) The work has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas in an original way. Observations are nuanced, the argument is logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. Concrete evidence corresponds to statements and claims. The work responds directly to the assignment prompt.
A-	1) Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes. 2) The work synthesizes course materials and key ideas in an original way, but there are areas for improvement.
B-range	1) Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. 2) The work demonstrates a solid grasp of course materials and key ideas. There are areas for improvement with respect to handling complexity, building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence. Response to the assignment prompt may not be sufficient.

C-range	<p>1) Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.</p> <p>2) The work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged. The argument and the writing are not clear, and/or there is no evidence for statements and claims made. Understanding of course materials and key ideas has not been demonstrated.</p>
D-range	<p>1) Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.</p> <p>2) The work shows little effort to engage course materials. There are major problems with clarity of argument and writing.</p>
F	<p>1) Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.</p> <p>2) The work has failed to respond to the assignment prompt.</p>

## Evaluation

1. Class participation and response papers (15%)
2. Tutorial facilitation/discussion (15%)
3. Reflection paper (20%) and presentation (10%) on kinship, marriage, and/or family (30% in total)
4. Ethnographic sketch (10%).
5. Final paper (30%)

### 1. Participation and Response Papers (15%)

This course will consist of a combination of lecture and discussion. In order to make the course lively and informative, it is important to keep up with the readings and participate during class. Since kinship, marriage, and family are present in daily life and common themes, please bring and share your observations, experiences, and perspectives in class. During the last portion of each session, you will be given time to write an **informal, brief response (a paragraph or so)**. In addition to your general thoughts, please include any questions or issues you would like to explore further in future classes.

### 2. Tutorial Discussion Facilitation (15%)

Once during the term, you will work in pairs (or alone) to facilitate a discussion in the tutorial. Your main task is to stimulate discussion about the issues brought up by readings. To do so, you will use some sort of aid, such as a photo, video, advertisement, song, painting, cartoons, etc. Feel free to use different formats—role play, debate, games, etc.—to encourage consideration of the issues. Make sure to prepare carefully before coming to the tutorial. **Do not summarize the readings.**

If you are not facilitating, you are expected to be an active member in class. For each tutorial, you will prepare at least one question and submit to Blackboard (“Discussion Board”) by 5pm the day before the tutorial meeting. The questions should be based on your

understanding of the readings and should be aimed at generating group discussion. Facilitators are encouraged to consider these questions and use them in appropriate.

Once enrollment settles after Week 2, I will send out a sign-up sheet for facilitation. Choose a week with a topic that most interests you.

### 3. Reflection Paper (20%) and Presentation (10%) on Kinship, Marriage or Family

Use one piece of advertisement, news, movie, song, painting photo, etc. or your personal story about yourself, your relatives, your friends, etc. that describes your ideas about marriage and family, such as what do you think is “a good/bad marriage,” “a happy/unhappy family,” “a good/bad mother-daughter relationship,” etc. Describe in ~1,000 words why it catches your attention and what you like or dislike about it. A good reflection paper should also relate the story to the issues discussed in class and in the readings. This is a good chance for you to scrutinize your view towards marriage and family. A sharing session will be held on February 26. Submit your piece, in MS Word .doc format, with the photo (if applicable) on that day via Blackboard by 11:59, February 25, together with a signed VeriGuide receipt.

### 4. Ethnographic Sketch (10%)

For this short essay (500-700 words), you need to describe a scene or place that is some way connected to kinship, marriage, family, or dating. It can be drawn from your own daily life or observations in public settings. However, you must tie the essay into something relevant for class. Possible examples include a romantic date spot, a grocery store where someone is shopping for their family, playgrounds with parents and children, a wedding hall, etc. Spend some time in the place and take notes on paper (in English or Chinese) what your senses tell you. Use those notes and your recollections to write a short sketch that communicates what it is like to be in that space and how it connects with the themes of the class. The sketch is due 11:59 pm, March 21, together with a digital copy (photo) of your notes and a signed VeriGuide receipt.

### 5. Final Paper (30%)

Using the analytical tools you acquired and the anthropological distance you have gained from your own ideas of marriage or family throughout the course, write an analysis of your own written work “a good/bad marriage/family story” submitted earlier in the semester (1500 words). You need to use at least three readings from class. Unless cleared ahead of time (by March 12), YOU MAY ONLY USE READINGS FROM CLASS. You must submit an abstract (~300 words) by April 2. The final paper is due May 5. Submit the completed paper, in MS Word .doc format, via Blackboard together with a signed VeriGuide receipt.

## Schedule

### **Week 1 (January 8): Introduction (No tutorial)**

📖 *Optional:* Geertz, Clifford. 1973. “Thick Description: Toward and Interpretative Theory of Culture.” Chapter 1 in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Pps. 3-30.

## **Week 2 (January 15): Basics, Unilineal and Cognatic Descent I (No tutorial)**

- 📖 Giddens, A. 2000. "Family." Chapter 4 in *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping our Lives*. Pps. 69-74.
- 📖 Menon, Shanti. 1996. "Male Authority and Female Autonomy: A Study of the Matrilineal Nayars of Kerala, South India". In *Gender, Kinship, Power: A Comparative Interdisciplinary History*, eds, Mary Jo Maynes, et.al, pp. 131-146.

## **Week 3 (January 22): Unilineal and Cognatic Descent II**

- 📖 Stone, Linda. 2009. "The Power of Patrilineal." Chapter 3 in *Kinship and Gender: An Introduction*. Pps. 69-78.

Tutorial reading:

- 📖 Childs et al. 2011. "Externally-Resident Daughters, Social Capital, and Support for the Elderly in Rural Tibet." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 26 (1): 1–22.

## **Week 4 (January 29): Courtship, Romance, and Choices before Marriage**

- 📖 Lourdes de León. 2017. Texting Amor: Emerging Intimacies in Textually Mediated Romance Among Tzotzil Mayan Youth. *ETHOS*. Volume 45(4): 462–488.

Tutorial readings (short news articles):

- 📖 Webb, Amy. 2013. "Can Online Dating Lead to Love?" *Time*, February 14, 2013. <https://ideas.time.com/2013/02/14/how-to-game-online-dating/>.
- 📖 BBC. 2012. "Bradford's Cousin Marriage Boom." *BBC*, April 19, 2012. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_9714000/9714582.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9714000/9714582.stm).
- 📖 Mitchell, Sue. 2023. "Fewer Cousins Marrying in Bradford's Pakistani Community." *BBC*, November 18, 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67422918>.
- 📖 Merten, Martina. 2019. "Keeping It in the Family: Consanguineous Marriage and Genetic Disorders, from Islamabad to Bradford." *BMJ* 365 (April):11851.

## **Week 5 (February 12): Marriage and Romance after the Ceremony**

- 📖 Cheung, Sidney C. H. 2006. "Visualizing Marriage in Hong Kong." *Visual Anthropology* 19 (1): 21–37.

Tutorial readings:

- 📖 Croydon, Helen. 2012. "Monogamy Is a Fairytale Ideal: Affairs Won't Go Away." *The Guardian*, August 27, 2012, sec. Opinion. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/27/monogamy-fairytale-ideal-affairs-wont-go-away>.
- 📖 Anderson, Eleanor. 2012. "In Real Life, 'playfairs' Just Aren't Fair Play." *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/9497809/In-real-life-playfairs-just-arent-fair-play.html>.

## **Week 6 (February 19): New Year Holiday! No class!**

## **Week 7 (February 26): Gender, Power, and Family**

- 📖 Cook, Daniel Thomas. 2011. "Through Mother's Eyes: Ideology, the 'Child' and Multiple Mothers in U.S. American Mothering Magazines." *Advertising & Society Review* 12 (2). <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/21/article/441202>.

Tutorial readings:

- 📖 Davies, Jeremy. 2023. "More Men Want to Be Stay-at-Home Dads and Better Fathers. Why Won't Politicians Help Them?" *The Guardian*, January 2, 2023, sec. Opinion. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/02/stay-at-home-dads-father-shared-parenthood>.
- 📖 Bhowmick, Nilanjana. 2023. "So Fathers Want to Be 'More Present' in the Home? Put down Your Phone and I'll Tell You How." *The Guardian*, March 1, 2023, sec. Global development. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/mar/01/stay-at-home-fathers-working-women-unpaid-caregiving-emotional-cognitive-labour>.

**Week 8 (March 5): Reading break: No class!**

**Ω REFLECTION PAPER DUE BY 11:59, FEBRUARY 25**

**Week 9 (March 12): Marriage / Family Sharing Day**

**Week 10 (March 19): Children, Parents, and Social Reproduction**

- 📖 Allison, Anne. 1991. "Japanese Mothers and Obentōs: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus." *Anthropological Quarterly* 64 (4): 195–208.
- 📖 Liu, Rigao, and John Kennedy. 2024. "China's Second Generation of Left-behind Children." *The China Story* (blog). August 16, 2024. <https://www.thechinastory.org/chinas-second-generation-of-left-behind-children/>.

Tutorial readings:

- 📖 Ng, Yupina. 2017. "Forget a Happy Childhood, in Hong Kong It's Just a Daily Grind." *South China Morning Post*, November 25, 2017, sec. News. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/community/article/2121442/children-hong-kong-are-raised-excel-not-happiness-and>.
- 📖 Hodson, Heather. 2011. "Amy Chua: 'I'm Going to Take All Your Stuffed Animals and Burn Them!'" *The Guardian*, January 15, 2011, sec. Life and style. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/jan/15/amy-chua-tiger-mother-interview>.

**Ω Requests for additional sources for the final paper are due**

**Week 11 (March 26): Adoption, Fictive Kinship, and Care**

- 📖 Carsten, Janet. 2000. "'Knowing Where You've Come From': Ruptures and Continuities of Time and Kinship in Narratives of Adoption Reunions." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6 (4): 687–703.

Tutorial Reading:

- 📖 Hansen, Paul. 2013. "Urban Japan's 'Fuzzy' New Families: Affect and Embodiment in Dog–Human Relationships." *Asian Anthropology* 12 (2): 83–103.

## Ω ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH DUE 11:59, MARCH 21

### **Week 12 (April 2): Reproductive Technologies and Kinship**

- 📖 Hayden, Corinne P. 1995. "Gender, Genetics, and Generation: Reformulating Biology in Lesbian Kinship." *Cultural Anthropology* 10 (1): 41–63.

Tutorial readings:

- 🔊 Yan, Cathy. 2010. "Maternal Mystery: Babies Bring Joy, and Questions, in Hong Kong; Bachelor Businessman Welcomes Triplets With Fanfare; A Lucky Number." *Wall Street Journal (Online)*.
- 🔊 Chow, Fiona, and Elizabeth Cheung. 2023. "Lawyers Praise Parental Rights Ruling for Hong Kong Lesbian Couple in IVF Case." *South China Morning Post*, October 23, 2023, sec. News. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3238806/hong-kong-legal-experts-praise-ruling-lesbian-couple-given-equal-parental-status-ivf-case-calling-it>.

### **Week 13 (April 9): Sexual Minorities and Kinship**

- 📖 Choi, Susanne YP, and Ming Luo. 2016. "Performative Family: Homosexuality, Marriage and Intergenerational Dynamics in China." *The British Journal of Sociology* 67 (2): 260–80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12196>.

Tutorial reading:

- 🔊 McConnell, Freddy. 2024. "We May Have Equal Marriage – but LGBTQ+ People Are Still Locked out of Equal Parenthood." *The Guardian*, April 27, 2024, sec. Opinion. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/apr/27/equal-marriage-lgbtq-people-equal-parenthood-families>.

## Ω FINAL PAPER ABSTRACT DUE

### **Week 14 (April 16): Aging and Caregiving**

- 📖 Traphagan, John W. 2004. "Interpretations of Elder Suicide, Stress, and Dependency among Rural Japanese." *Ethnology* 43 (4): 315–29.

Tutorial Reading

- 🔊 Wall, Tom. 2019. "'It Was Morally Wrong': The Plot to Abandon a Man 5,000 Miles from Home." *The Guardian*, November 9, 2019, sec. Global. <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2019/nov/09/american-man-abandoned-in-uk-international-puzzle>.

## Ω FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 1

## POLICIES

### Late Submissions

Papers submitted after the due date will suffer a fraction of a grade deduction for every day it is late. For example, an A- will become a B+, a B will become a B-, et cetera.

### Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on academic honesty and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on academic dishonesty. Any such offence will lead to disciplinary action including possibly termination of studies at the University. Students should know how to properly use source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Detailed guidelines and examples for the acknowledgement of sources can be found on the University's website at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. All papers must be submitted through VeriGuide.

### Use of AI Tools

Use of AI tools for course papers is strictly prohibited. You are expected to work independently, and to cite sources for any and all information you did not collect yourself. No credit will be given for AI work.