UGEC1685   **Drugs and Culture**   Spring 2026

Lecture: Thursday 11:30 – 13:15 (ICS L1)

Lecturer: Wai-Man TANG   NAH302, **wymantang@cuhk.edu.hk**
            (Office hours: Thursday 13:30-14:15 or by appointment)

Course Description
Many drugs have mind-altering effects, but some are defined as legal and some as illegal. The War on Drugs have been launched in many societies but none of them has successfully become a drug-free society. This course provides students an understanding of drug-related issues from a perspective of medical anthropology. Through close readings of ethnographies, viewing of videos, and fieldtrips, the class explores drug use, prevention, and treatment in both scientific and cultural perspectives and re-examines the linkages between legal and illegal behaviors, healthy and unhealthy bodily conditions, as well as science and culture.

What you will learn:
Student taking this course will:
- acquire basic knowledge in medical anthropology;
- learn the skills to comprehend the drug history in Hong Kong, China, and other parts of the world;
- develop the ability to apply the learned knowledge to analyze the complex relationship between science and culture; and
- acquire a critical mind to evaluate any social issues.

Course Requirements:

Response Papers:	50% (25% x 2)
Final Exam:	50%

1) Response Papers (50%)
   Choose two weekly topics and write two 3-4 page response papers. Response papers should discuss the topic with reference to the assigned reading and/or lecture. Instead of merely summarizing the readings/lecture, you should raise critical points of views, for example, what new insights you have got, what limitations you have identified, what follow-up questions have come to your mind, etc. Ideally, a central theme should be raised to link up your arguments.

   In this course, fieldtrip will be arranged. You can choose to write a 3-4 page ethnographic paper to substitute one response paper. The ethnographic paper should include your field observations and discussion with reference to the assigned readings. Similar to the response paper, instead of merely describing your field observations or summarizing the readings, you should raise critical points of views.

   Submit your first response paper on or before **1 April** and second response paper on or before **16 April**.

2) Final Exam (50%):
   Four open-ended questions will be given on **17 April** and choose two to answer. Write each answer of 2-3 pages. This is a take-home exam, and the questions cover all the topics in the lecture. You will have one week's time to complete the exam.

After finishing your written assignments, please submit soft copies to both VeriGuide and the course website (Blackboard). Hard copies are not required. When you name your files, please indicate the topics that you are responding to.

The paper should be written in the following format: Double line spacing, Times New Roman, and font 12 (either Chinese or English).

Please submit your assignment on time. Marks will be deducted (i.e. one point per day) for late submission.

Course Schedule:
1) Introduction (8 Jan.)

Section I: Drug Ethnographies
2) Theories and Methods in Drug Research (15 Jan.)
Page, J. Bryan, and Merrill Singer. 2010. "Systematic Modernist Ethnography and Ethnopharmacology." In *Comprehending Drug Use: Ethnographic Research at the Social Margins*, pp.50-69. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
Tang, Wai-man. 2020. "You are (Hong Kong) Chinese! You should Understand our Culture!': Reflections of a Chinese Male Ethnographer on Researching Nepali Drug Users in Hong Kong." In Shirlena Huang and Kanchana N. Ruwanpura, eds., *Handbook on Gender in Asia*, pp.28-44. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Section II: Drug Scene in Hong Kong
3) An Overview of Drug Use History in Hong Kong (22 Jan.)
Cheung, Yuet W. 2015. "Macro Social Flaws and Intervention's Unfinished Business: A Personal Note on Young People's Drug Use in Hong Kong." *Substance Use & Misuse* 50(8-9):1044-1050.
Laidler, Karen A. Joe. 2005. "The Rise of Club Drugs in a Heroin Society: The Case of Hong Kong." *Substance Use & Misuse* 40:1257-1278

4) Drug Use by Gender and Ethnicity (29 Jan.)
Tang, Wai-man. 2015. "Effects of Transnational Migration on Drug Use: An Ethnographic Study of Nepali Female Heroin Users in Hong Kong." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 26:8-14.
Tang, Wai-man. 2017. "Migration, Marginalization and Metropolitaneity: Negotiation of Masculinities of Nepali Drug Users in Hong Kong." *Gender, Place & Culture* 24(2):213-224.

Section III: Drug Treatment and Prevention
5) <u>Fieldtrip I: Visit Drug-related Services in Hong Kong (24 Jan. or 7 Feb.) (Optional)</u>
Tang, Wai-man. 2014. "Examining the Relationship between Ethnicity and the Use of Drug-related Services: An Ethnographic Study of Nepali Drug Users in Hong Kong." *Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation* 5:53-62.

6) War on Drugs (5 Feb.)
Garcia, Angela, and Brian Anderson. 2016. "Violence, Addiction, Recovery: An Anthropological Study of Mexico's *Anexos*." *Transcultural Psychiatry* 53(4):445-64.
Garcia, Angela. 2010. "The Elegiac Addict" In *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Possession along the Rio Grande*, pp.57-85. Berkeley: University of California Press.

7) Harm Reduction (12 Feb.)
Zigon, Jarrett. 2019. "Disclosive Freedom." In *A War on People: Drug User Politics and a New Ethics of Community*, pp.100-131. California: University of California Press.
Bourgois, Philippe. 2000. "Disciplining Addictions: The Bio-politics of Methadone and Heroin in the United States." *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 24:165-195.

8) <u>Fieldtrip II: Visit Drug-related Services in Macau (14 Feb.) (Optional)</u>
Li, Spencer D. 2016. "Substance Abuse and its Prevention and Treatment in Macao." In Nazrul Islam, ed. *Public Health Challenges in Contemporary China: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, pp.89-104. Berlin: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
李景輝, 張力珩. 2019. 綜合緩害心理治療法初深。載《2019 年全國藥物濫用防治研討會》，頁 70-76。香港：香港社會服務聯會。

9) Holiday (19 Feb.)

Section IV: Drug Use by Specific Topics

10) Sexualized Drug Use: Chemsex (26 Feb.)

    Kiran, Pienaar, Dean Anthony Murphy, Kane Race, and Toby Lea. 2020. "Drugs as Technologies of the Self: Enhancement and Transformation in LGBTC Cultures." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 78:1-9.

    Guadamuz, Thomas E., and Pimpawun Boonmongkon. 2018. "Ice Parties among Young Men who have Sex with Men in Thailand: Pleasures, Secrecy and Risks." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 55:249-255.

11) Reading Week (5 Mar.)

12) Doping in Sport (12 Mar.)

    Aubel, Olivier, and Fabien Ohl. 2014. "An Alternative Approach to the Prevention of Doping in Cycling." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 25(6):1094-1102.

    Hoberman, John. 2009. "Putting Doping into Context: Historical and Cultural Perspectives." In Thomas H. Murray, Karen J. Maschke, Angela A. Wasunnna, eds., *Performance-Enhancing Technologies in Sports*, pp.3-27. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

13) No lesson (19 Mar.) Replaced by Fieldtrip I

14) Smart Drug: Adderall (26 Mar.)

    Cooper, Amy, and Lisa McGee. 2017. "'At Such a Good School, Everybody Needs It': Contested Meanings of Prescription Stimulant Use in College Academics." *Ethos* 45(3):289-313.

    Esposito, Luigi, and Fernando Perez. 2014. "Neoliberalism and the Commodification of Mental Health." *Humanity and Society* 38(4):414-442.

15) Therapeutic Use of Psychedelic Drugs (2 Apr.)

    Pollan, Michael. 2018. "The Trip Treatment: Psychedelics in Psychotherapy." In *How to Change your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches us about Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence*, pp.331-395. New York: Penguin Press.

    Langlitz, Nicolas. 2010. "The Persistence of the Subjective in Neuropsychopharmacology: Observations of Contemporary Hallucinogen Research." *History of the Human Sciences* 23(1):37-57.

16) Plant Teachers – Cannabis (9 Apr.)

    Waldsten, Anna. 2019. "Smoking as Communication in Rastafari: Reasonings with 'Professional' Smokers and 'Plant Teachers'." *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 85(5):900-919.

    Kinney, Alexander B. 2024. "Becoming a Cannabis Professional." *Sociological Inquiry*.

17) No lesson (16 Apr.) Replaced by Fieldtrip II

Use of AI Tools

Approach #3 – Use only with explicit acknowledgement

The use of generative AI in writing should be disclosed when submitting a paper (i.e., response paper and research paper). The following guidelines pertain specifically to the writing process and do not cover the use of AI tools for data analysis or research insights.

- Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies should only be used to enhance the readability and language of the paper.
- These technologies should be employed under human supervision, with you reviewing and editing the output as necessary, since AI-generated content can contain errors, omissions, or biases. You remain responsible and accountable for the final content of your work.

Disclosure of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process is required by including a statement before the references list at the end of the paper upon submission. For example:

- Title of new section: Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process.
- Statement: During the preparation of this work I used [NAME TOOL / SERVICE] in order to [REASON]. After using this tool/service, I reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the paper.

This declaration is not required for basic tools such as grammar, spelling, and reference checkers. If there is no relevant use to disclose, no statement is necessary.

Grade descriptors are as follows for the assessment of this course:

Grade	Overall course
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	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.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.