



Department of Anthropology
香港中文大學人類學系

Friday Seminar

Fall
2023



The Politics of Cancer in Contemporary India

Oct 27 | 10:00AM – 12:00PM



<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/91548294577>
Meeting ID: 915 4829 4577
Passcode: 145446

In this talk, I explore the efforts of Delhi's urban poor to create a livable life with cancer as they navigate an overextended health system unequipped to respond to the disease. Owing to long wait times, most urban poor cancer patients do not receive a diagnosis until it is too late to treat the disease effectively. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in the city's largest cancer care NGO and at India's premier public health hospital, I describe how, for these patients, a cancer diagnosis is often the latest and most serious in a long series of infrastructural failures.

In the wake of these failures, I track how the disease then distributes itself across networks of social relations, testing these networks for strength and vulnerability. I demonstrate how living with and alongside cancer is to be newly awakened to the fragility of social ties, some already made brittle by past histories, and others that are retested for their capacity to support. Through this lens, the talk offers an intimate look into the intricate interplay between medical inefficacies, social relations, and the lived experience of cancer.

Dwaipayan Banerjee is an Associate Professor of Science, Technology, and Society at MIT with a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from NYU. He's a former Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at Dartmouth College. His book "Enduring Cancer: Life, Death and Diagnosis in Delhi" is a seminal ethnography on cancer care in India. He also co-authored "Hematologies: The Political Life of Blood in India," examining the sociopolitical impact of blood donation. His research has garnered support from the Mellon Foundation, the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), and the Levitan Prize.

