

Friday Seminar



Department of Anthropology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
香港中文大學人類學系

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Waiting with uncertainty: progressivism, hope and precarity in families with disabled children

Nov 29

1:00 - 2:30PM

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Yingjun CHEN is an Anthropology Ph.D. candidate at Chinese university of Hong Kong. Her research interest focuses on medical anthropology, critical disability studies, family, and kinship, ethics, uncertainty, and religious practice. She has some academic articles published in Chinese journals like “江漢論壇” (Jiangnan Tribune), “華東師範大學學報” (Journal of Central China Normal University).

ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME!



Through fieldwork in a frontline care institution in Nanning, a provincial capital city in south China, I will show how daily care reimagines hope beyond the normalcy of ableism and how hope is practiced as “waiting with uncertainty”. This talk examines diffused “progressivism” throughout frontline rehabilitation and how it is entangled with the state project of “early intervention” and the biopolitical regime of “normal children development”. The “misfitting” experience under a normalized time framework further spoiled the personhood of vulnerable children, who seem to have no space to make progress at the proper age. Reimagining hope not only brings a new scope of knowledge beyond bodily impairments but also new relational practices of “tinkering” and transferring “disabled personality” into valuable personhood in daily care. This study further shows both doubting and uncertainty, hope and despair are entangled in the family exploration of possible futures. The talk states that waiting with uncertainty shows people’s positive participation in the future while there is no clear end. The meaning of waiting is to help families persist in present life, while it also reveals constant suffering in domestic violence and infinite care obligations.