Will to Die

Affective Ties of Blood Contamination and the Immobilization of AIDS Patients in China

Observers have been highlighting the intensification of social and political conflict in China, which involves some of the weakest, poorest, and most marginalized sectors in the Chinese countryside. Still, less attention has been drawn to sufferers who swallow the cost of injustice and choose not to contest it. What blocks the formation of social grievances and collective actions despite the shared collective experiences of social suffering? This talk will demonstrate the manner in which micro-level network factors impact local peasants’ perceptions of inequality and justice, reinforcing the present problems as individually earned. It will discuss how peasants experienced China’s largest HIV/AIDS epidemic caused by blood contamination due to the reckless expansion of the blood industry supported by the government. While this scandal caused at least 30,000 cases of infections, findings show how the continuum of violence was experienced by infected peasants as shame and despair in daily life became barriers to resistance and contention. Professor Long will explore how, in contrast with other countries, AIDS and death did not generate community mobilization in China but was met with silence on the part of both rural sufferers and urban health advocacy networks.

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Yan Long is assistant professor of International Studies in the School of Global and International Studies at Indiana University. Her interests span the areas of global health, organizational studies, and community activism. Professor Long’s current book project is Side Effects: The Transnational Doing and Undoing of AIDS Politics in China, which is based on her dissertation that won the 2014 American Sociological Association Best Dissertation Award.

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12:00 - 1:15 p.m.
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