

Saturday Session Schedule + Abstracts

Session I | 10:00 am – 11:00 am

1. **Title:** Empowerment of Hmong Women in a Bicultural Context

Location: Meyer Hall 318

Presenter: Dr. Pader Vang, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work & Critical Hmong Studies Minor Program Coordinator, St. Catherine University

Abstract:

This study describes a study about empowerment of Hmong women and girls. Empowerment looks different depending on the cultural context. Empowering across cultures requires cultural competence and an understanding of how empowerment is conceptualized across different communities. For example, although the idea of American individualism is empowering, it may clash with the value of interdependence and collectivism from other communities. Although Hmong women are beginning to integrate into the individualist context of American society, Hmong women still live with one foot in each culture (Foo, 2002; Nibbs, 2006; Long, 2008). Hmong women and girls engage in code-switching in order to navigate the expectations of two cultures. Twelve Hmong women were interviewed for 1 ½ hours each. The researcher transcribed each interview. Transcripts were analyzed using content analyses and the most reoccurring themes were selected. Respondents reported that empowerment of Hmong women in the United States must include the following 1) education about biculturalism and its impact on Hmong women's lived experiences in the United States, 2) balancing the two cultures and code switching according to cultural context without feeling compromised, 3) learning women's self-empowerment strategies specific to each culture, 4) Hmong women need to develop a support network and this is done through sharing personal stories and supporting other women of color.

2. **Title:** New Approach to Alcohol Intervention on Drinking Behavior

Location: LTC 218/219

Presenter: Dr. Won Yong Jang , Associate Professor, Communication and Journalism, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Abstract:

Campus officials for years have struggled to find solutions to campus drinking issues. Many interventions to prevent binge drinking have been developed because it is the most serious public health concern and related to several negative consequences on college campuses today. This study tests the hypothesized Structural Equation Model of alcohol use to determine if interpersonal communication, deliberation, and drinking expectancies would mediate alcohol advertising effects on drinking in alcohol intervention situations. This study also examines whether the circumstances are different between men and women, adolescent and legal-age drinkers, and White and Green (Blue) Hmong students. Hmong American families are not well addressed in the public and academic areas. If not well addressed, the challenges of serving a diverse population are likely to increase health disparities. This study relied on an online survey. This study collected data from a sample of more than 500 Hmong students ages 18 to 25 to determine how exposure to alcohol advertising influences their drinking behavior. This study will offer a new intervention idea for how educators go about creating anti-drinking campaigns differently to diverse young populations. In other words, understanding these differences will be helpful in tailoring alcohol prevention and cessation programs for diverse populations of college-age individuals.

3. **Title:** The First Hmong Dual Language Program in the U.S.: Data on Student Achievement for Hmong Dual Language Students at Jackson Elementary

Location: LTC 214/215

Presenter(s):

Yeu Vang (Principal of Jackson Elementary)
Phoua Yang (Math Intervention Teacher)
Gao T. Vang (Hmong Curriculum Coordinator)
Mai Kou Xiong (Dual Language TOSA)

Abstract:

Our panelists will present student achievement data for students in the Hmong dual language program at Jackson Elementary. The data will show the effect of dual language immersion on Jackson student achievement in math, reading, school attendance and behavior as compared to their non-dual language peers. St. Paul Public Schools is one of the largest school district in Minnesota which serves approximately 39,000 students in grades Pre-K - 12. SPPS students speak over 100 languages and dialects with Hmong being the largest percentage. The district's immersion programs include French, Spanish, Mandarin, and Hmong. Jackson Elementary is the first Hmong dual language school in the district as well as in the nation. The data examines several cohorts of SPPS Jackson students who entered Pre-K in the 2006-07 through 2012-13 academic year. The first cohort utilized the 50-50 model with the following cohorts utilizing the 90-10 model.

4. **Title:** Historical Representation and Quest of Identity in *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*

Location: Meyer Hall 321

Presenter: Wang Wei, Associate Professor, Foreign Language School, Guizhou Normal College and Guizhou Institute for Advanced Study in Anthropology and Ethnology, China

Abstract:

Born in Thailand's Ban Vinai Refugee Camp, Kao Kalia Yang, a Hmong American woman writer, immigrated to St. Paul, Minnesota with her parents and elder sister when she was only six years old. Her book *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*, which won the Minnesota Book Awards for memoir/creative nonfiction as well as the Reader's Choice Award in 2009, is a selective, personalized history of the Hmong who fled Southeast Asia in the aftermath of the U.S. Secret War. As a family saga and a narrative of the Hmong American diaspora, this book hybridizes the genres of creative nonfiction and history and blends personal history with the Hmong's immigration history. This presentation intends to employ New Historicism in order to explain how *The Latehomecomer* focuses on the multiple interplays between historical facts and their textual representation. It also analyzes Yang's technique of historiography to re-present the past and to replace the master narrative of American History with alternative histories. Through literary creation, Yang has reconstructed the history of Hmong by means of connecting stories and her memories. Also, in the process of rewriting their history, Yang as a hmong diaspora constructs their hybrid and dynamic identity and boldly speaks out about her hope, fears, and aspirations. Just as Mai Neng Moua notes the younger generations (like Yang) now "write for those who do not or cannot write their own stories, stories that are as familiar to the culture as the back of one's hands."

Session II | 11:20 am – 12:20 pm

1. **Title:** Teaching English to Rural Hmong Students: The Application of Innovative Methods and Cultural Mode in English Teaching

Location: Meyer Hall 318

Presenter: Junan Xiong, Xiong Magical English Learning Center & Zhaotong Zhaoyang District Rende Middle School, Yunnan Province, China

Abstract:

The globalization of English is one of the important symbols of globalization. According to statistics by David Crystal, there are 370-450 million people using English as their first language; one billion as a foreign language; about 1.2-1.5 billion as their mother language or an equivalent; and 75 countries using English as an important language in the government, law, business, commerce and education. The above statistics are made according to geographic distribution. Taking the range of application into consideration, English is the most frequently used language in science and technology, commercial trade, tourism, diplomacy, culture and law. The rapid development of the internet has accelerated the globalization of English, since the 1990s. According to statistics, 80% of Internet web pages are in English. Since China's "Reform and Opening-up" which was put into force at the end of the 1970s, English has been adopted as a compulsory subject in both urban and rural areas. English is increasingly important in employment competitiveness. With a vast territory and a large population, the economic and cultural development is highly unbalanced. And even in the villages and towns in one county, there are differences in ethnic groups and living conditions. In China, over 95% of Hmong people are living in the enclosed southwest with bad transport facilities, shortage of qualified teachers, backward economy and ideology, and a harsh natural environment. The Hmong community in Yiliang County (Zhaotong, Yunnan) is representative. One strategy on effective English education in such areas is the application of innovative methods and cultural mode. In the past nearly 40 years, different genres of English education have come out. There are many recognized teaching methods by domestic and international authorities, also known innovative teaching methods or cultural mode. Summarizing teaching experience, summing up and contrasting various innovative teaching methods, the author, in his nearly 20 years English teaching, generalizes an effective English teaching method suitable for the rural Hmong students. Based on a summarization of various innovative teaching methods and teaching experience in rural Hmong communities, this presentation aims at providing a practical example.

2. **Title:** Hmong, a language without tense - implying temporal distinctions using aspect and modality

Location: Meyer Hall 321

Presenter: Elisabeth Ginsburg - Australian National University

Abstract:

Grammatical marking of tense is found in many languages. Tense places events temporally in relation to the time of speech. White Hmong has grammatical markers that can be used to help situate events in time, but which are not grammatical tense markers. This paper explores some ways in which time reference (tense-like meanings) are conveyed in White Hmong. Instead of using tense, White Hmong utilizes its extensive aspect and modality system. Aspect describes events in terms of initial and final boundaries and can also highlight completion and progression. Modality can convey information about necessity, ability and reality. The type of modality that will be explored is the Irrealis, which denotes that an event has unknown reality at the time of speech. This talk will focus on four markers that would often be translated as past or future tense, showing first that they are not tense markers and then describing their actual functions. The first two markers, *tau* and *lawm* often occur with events with implied past time reference, but are best described as aspectual markers of Achievement and Completion. Similarly, *mam li* and *yuav* are often associated with events that have future time reference, but in truth, are better described as two different types of modal markers of Irrealis. White Hmong has many other aspectual and modal markers, but by focusing on these four markers, this talk presents the complexity of the system in White Hmong and shows how it expresses temporal relationships without grammatical marking of tense.

3. **Title:** Ignorance as Bias: RadioLab, Yellow Rain, and the “Fact of the Matter.”

Location: LTC 214/215

Presenter(s): Dr. Paul Hillmer, Professor of History, Concordia University St. Paul & Dr. Mary Ann Yang, Assistant Professor of Biology, Concordia University St. Paul

Abstract:

In September of 2012 the WNYC radio program “RadioLab” issued a podcast entitled “The Fact of the Matter,” including a segment on yellow rain, an alleged chemical agent possibly used in Laos, Cambodia, and Afghanistan in the 1970s and ‘80s. This segment was later broadcast on numerous National Public Radio stations, though at least one—KNOW in St. Paul—chose not to air it. What was purportedly an investigation into the “facts” connected to yellow rain, particularly its use in Laos against the Hmong, became instead one of if not the most controversial segment(s) RadioLab ever aired. As of January 1, 2014 more than 1200 comments about the piece have been posted to the RadioLab site—almost six times more than any other show in the last three years. While the show was criticized for its cultural, racial, and gender insensitivity, much less has been said about the scientific theories promoted as fact by the show’s hosts Robert Krulwich and Jad Abumrad and producer Pat Walters. In this presentation we will discuss: the RadioLab segment; our assessment of its competence and fairness; the degree to which the segment actually employed the scientific method; scientific evidence intentionally omitted by RadioLab; and the journalistic and ethical issues that will likely never be addressed by RadioLab, its host station WNYC, or National Public Radio.

4. **Title:** Validity of the Peg Tapping Measure of Executive Function in Early Childhood for Hmong Children

Location: Meyer Hall 318

Presenter: Mai Yang, Ronald E. McNair Scholar - University of Minnesota

Abstract:

Research has shown Executive Function (EF) to be predictive of school readiness. This study examined the concurrent validity of Peg Tapping (PT), a measure of EF, with preschool age Hmong children during early childhood screening in an urban school district. Peg Tapping scores collected in Hmong and English were compared and analyzed for concurrent and predictive validity. Hmong Peg Tapping scores did not significantly correlate with validated screening measures in comparison to English Peg Tapping scores. However, the relationship between Peg Tapping scores and scores on validated screening measures trended in the hypothesized direction. Language was also found as a significant predictor of PT score outcomes. Future research should examine a larger sample size of Hmong children being screened in Hmong and English, as well as other children of different cultural backgrounds and languages.

Session III | 2:05 pm – 3:05 pm

1. **Title:** Text and the Embodiment of a People: the RPA and the Hmong of Laos 1947 – 1975

Location: Meyer Hall 318

Presenter: Seashia Vang, University of California-Berkeley

Abstract:

My paper investigates the relationship between western Christian missionaries and a newly created Hmong elite class, established under French colonialism, and their joint advancement of a Hmong script – the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) – in the Kingdom of Laos. Through historical analysis, I explore the connections among missionaries, the Hmong elite, and the Royal Lao Government during the period of the creation of the RPA. Drawing on archives, memoirs, newsletters, and audio-visual recordings, I further explore the ways in which Christian conversions were made, schools were built, and education was promulgated for both boys and girls; in such ways, western interests and Hmong agency combined to produce a new embodiment of the Hmong in Laos. Little has been written about this period and about Hmong colonial subjects who were pushed to reconstruct their embodiment from hill tribe inferiors to modern, literate citizens of Laos. I hope that this paper sheds some light on the complexities and transformations of the Hmong of Laos during this period.

2. **Title:** “Hmong Culture and Hmong Men: Are They Resisting Change and Holding Back Hmong Women in the US?”

Location: LTC 214/215

Presenter(s): Dr. Vincent K. Her, Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse & Dr. Mary Louise Buley-Meissner, Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Abstract:

Our presentation addresses a controversial topic that we believe educators in particular are obligated to take seriously. As university professors, we regularly teach courses exploring the creativity of Hmong culture and the complexity of Hmong American contemporary life; for us, culture is a rich source of meaning for understanding how Hmong Americans have been able to achieve so much in the US in only forty years of resettlement. However, we are disturbed by two trends in popular news media and academic literature about Hmong people. The first is negative stereotyping which describes Hmong culture and Hmong men as patriarchal, resistant to change, and maladjusted in modern American life. Even more disturbing is the second trend that Hmong men and Hmong culture are holding Hmong American women back from the full progress that they are capable of making in modern society. News about the progress of Hmong American women includes ample coverage of their enrollment in higher education and professional schools. The “back story” frequently emphasizes how they have broken free of traditional gender roles to become high achievers. In our experience, successful women have been encouraged and supported by their fathers and husbands. In our presentation, we aim to offer a more balanced assessment of the interrelationship of Hmong culture and Hmong American contemporary life.

3. **Title:** Fighting Communism, Negotiating Peace: The Hmong and Chinese on the other side of the Hmong in the Communist Party of Thailand
Location: LTC 218/219
Presenter: Dr. Ian G. Baird, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Abstract:

Between 1968 and the early 1980s the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) represented the most important political and military threat to governments in the Kingdom of Thailand. In the north of the country, the Hmong made up the majority of on-the-ground fighters in the CPT, as abuses against them often gave appeal to CPT promises of social justice and equality. But the Hmong have long ceased activities with the CPT. Thus, although many Thais believe that all Hmong in Thailand have communist leanings, such stereotypes deserve greater scrutiny and nuancing, not only now but even during the CPT period. In this presentation I review the basic history of Hmong involvement in the CPT, consider the main reasons why so many Hmong joined the CPT, and examine the present-day land struggles of many former CPT Hmong. My main objective is, however, to tell the stories of those who are not ethnic Thais but fought against the Hmong in the CPT, mainly Hmong themselves. In particular, I focus on four groups of people: 1) the Hmong Lao who helped the Thai military combat the CPT, 2) the Hmong Thai who entered into volunteer defense forces opposed to communism, 3) the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) who fighting against Hmong CPT, and 4) the Hmong Lao who assisted the Thai military in persuading Hmong CPT to lay down their arms and give up to the government. The history of Hmong involvement in the CPT, and Hmong support to the Thai government, remains largely underrepresented in both the popular and academic literatures, and thus deserves more attention.

4. **Title:** Reconciling Bicultural Values: A Study on Hmong-American Women, Identity, and Education
Location: Meyer Hall 321
Presenter: Mysee Chang, Ronald E. McNair Scholar - University of St. Thomas /St. Catherine University

Abstract:

Second-generation Hmong Americans often struggle with culture clash. Many feel the pressure to assimilate in order to achieve their family's hope of the American dream, yet they are challenged because assimilating means losing their heritage. "Assimilation" is used to describe how immigrants adapt and integrate into the culture and society of the new country (Gordon, 1964). The literature on assimilation often focuses on how higher education functions as a way to assimilate immigrants into the dominant culture. The literature is primarily about social mobility and not enough attention has been given to the subjective aspect of assimilation. The purpose of my study is to better understand and explore the lived-realities of second-generation Hmong-American women. How do Hmong-American women come to understand their identities? How does higher education influence this process of identity development? How do they come to reconcile the values of the cultures they live in? Five second-generation Hmong-American women were interviewed for this study. In analyzing their narratives, I found that themes of difference and agency were common in their stories.

Session IV | 3:05 pm – 4:05 pm

1. Title: Claiming Place: Hmong Women, Power and Knowledge Production

Location: Buegner Education Center

Presenter(s):

Dr. Faith Nibbs, Director of Forced Migration Innovation Project and Research Assistant Professor, Southern Methodist University

Dr. Chia Youyee Vang, Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Dr. Mai Na Lee, Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Minnesota

Dr. Geraldine Craig, Associate Professor Department of Art, Kansas State University

Abstract:

This panel, made up of authors from the forthcoming book *Claiming Place: Hmong Women, Power and Knowledge Production*, will explore the myriad agentic roles Hmong women have played in society and the gendered ideologies that have prevented us from seeing them. In academic and popular literature, Hmong women have often been portrayed as victims of their patriarchal culture, of wars that have dotted their history, and as trapped between their cultural social standards and global industrialization, or as an emerging group who are starting to "come into their own." This panel will problematize those portrayals and the academic paradigms that supported them, and reexamine the historical and contemporary positions Hmong women have played in society. Our objective is not merely to engage in a binary analysis about male versus female. Rather, we move beyond this dichotomy to illustrate how centering women in studies of history, family, society, media, art, and sexuality will expand the body of knowledge about a Hmong lived experience while contributing to broader conversations on gender, diaspora, and agency. Locating the discussions in cultural agency as it relates to expressions of power, the presenters will de-essentialize the Hmong women and reposition her as an agentic individual situated within a nexus of ever-shifting political, social, and cultural power structures capable of acting to resist and deconstruct forms of oppression.

2. Title: Threading the Cultural Needle: Claiming Story Cloths as Evidence of Literacy

Location: Meyer Hall 321

Presenter: Pa Nhia Xiong, St. Cloud State University

Abstract:

Traditional notions of literacy have overshadowed a host of cultures and their practices. For the Hmong, the sharing of oral stories has been an imperative tool for communicating family and cultural values for thousands of years. This notion has been transcribed onto story cloths that reiterate the importance of Hmong cultural beliefs, values, and agricultural practices. However, with reading and writing held at the center, story cloths are not viewed as a literate practice. By redefining literacy, practices such as story cloths will be accounted for. In addition, through narrative rhetorical theories, Hmong cultural practices and values present in the story cloths enable the younger Hmong generation to understand their culture. Story cloths can be interpreted as literate practices that counter dominant narratives about Hmong being illiterate and allow communication across generations within the Hmong community and create a collective identity.

3. **Title:** Artistic Hmong voices: Activism, youth empowerment, and participatory democracy through poetry and song
Location: LTC: 214/215
Presenter(s):

Kinh T. Vu, Ph.D., Independent Scholar & Imagine America Fellow
Tou Saiko Lee, Hip-Hop& Spoken Word Artist
Laurine Chang, Spoken Word Artist
Chili Lor, Spoken Word Artist
Kevin Yang, Spoken Word Artist

Abstract:

Power of Voice in a country that heralds its freedom –its democratic ideals –is oftentimes limited to those whose socio-political positions are elevated for various reasons including dominant race, ethnic background, or sexual identity. In Minnesota, the demographics of the Twin Cities metropolitan region are shifting from a predominantly white, middle-class populace to a more ethnically, racially, and socio-economically diverse community. A local group of young Hmong activist-artist who are challenging the hegemony of one-voice politics and expanding the range of expressions to include youth as progenitors of a new and collective voice, facilitate the advancement and promotion of youth who speak for peace, freedom, and disruption in the name of justice. In this session, a panel of St. Paul and Minneapolis spoken word poets and singers will engage participants in a critical, world café-and fishbowl-style discussion about the role of Hmong Hip-hop arts as a pathway to self-efficacy, group identity, and democratic living. We will perform poetry and music during the session in order to model ways for young people to stand and be heard in otherwise apathetic or desensitized communities where silence or compliance are considered forms of normative behavior.

4. **Title:** On the Protection and Utilization of Hmong Culture
Location: LTC 214/215
Presenter: Li Guowen, President, Hmong Culture Promotion Association of Xingwen County, China

Abstract:

Hmong is a historic nation. Hmong people developed, in the development of history, a unique style of outstanding culture. However, with the globalization and accelerating modernization, Hmong traditional culture is under unprecedented challenges and shocks. According to my research, Hmong traditional culture is suffering a loss. In some areas, the majority of the teenagers cannot speak Hmong which reflects the characteristics of Hmong people. Therefore, the protection of Hmong culture is a matter of great urgency. The Hmong culture is a place where Hmong people find spiritual resources. If we do not take measures to rescue, the foundation of Hmong will also be shocked. This presentation offers research on how to rescue, refine, protect, inherit, develop and utilize Hmong culture, aiming at attracting attention on these issues.