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***Politics in the Corridor of Dying: AIDS Activism and Global Health Governance***

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**Wednesday October 16, 2013**

5:00 – 6:00 pm

Coach House, Green College  
6201 Cecil Green Park Road



*“The theme of death became a nexus of protest.” - praxis of Necrorealism, underground art movement in late Socialist Russia.*

This SSHRC-funded research project looks at **global AIDS activism** in the last twenty-five years. Its **purpose** is twofold: to document the emergence of diverse community-based organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society groups engaged in AIDS advocacy worldwide; and to critically evaluate their role in changing global AIDS governance.

Using a **Foucauldian approach to power**, AIDS is conceptualized as overlapping legitimation crises. The role of AIDS activism, I argue, is in challenging four contemporary regimes of power—scientific monopoly, market fundamentalism, governance statism, and community control—through its alternative knowledge production based on human rights frames. In Science, AIDS activists critiqued an epidemiological model of the ‘at-risk’ body and replaced it with a human rights approach to HIV. In the Market, AIDS activists fought against a global intellectual property regime and greatly expanded treatment access through public health discourses. In Governance, AIDS activism won unprecedented representation on UN and other governance structures and lobbied successfully for an AIDS “war chest.” Finally, in the Community, activism fostered voice and empowerment while guarding against “expertization.”

**What AIDS activists have been able to achieve in the past three decades is more than inclusion in clinical trials, funding increase, treatment access, and a foot inside the UN per se. More fundamentally, it has revealed deep legitimation crises of Science, Governance, Market, and Community and forced them to diversify and democratize.**

The data is based on fieldwork in eighteen countries in Africa, Asia and Central Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East, and North and Latin America with nearly 110 interviews with HIV-positive networks, men who have sex with men groups, networks of people who use drugs, sex workers, migrants, transgender people, and children and youth affected by AIDS; treatment advocacy networks; legal networks; pharmaceutical companies; and intergovernmental organizations and foundations.

In contrast to existing work that mostly draws upon singular disciplinary approach (such as epidemiology/public health, cultural studies, or sociology), this research uses an **interdisciplinary approach**, tying together cultural studies, sociology, political science, and international relations to examine a broad spectrum of contemporary socio-political issues in AIDS activism including stereotyping; criminalization of HIV transmission; treatment literacy and advocacy; fight against Pharma and patent oppositions; UN division of labour in AIDS; politics of PEPFAR, the Gates Foundation, and the Global Fund; global health governance reforms; and community infighting.

**About the lecturer:** Dr. Jennifer Chan graduated from Stanford University with a PhD in International Comparative Education. She is the author of *Gender and Human Rights Politics in Japan: Global Norms and Domestic Networks* (Stanford University Press 2004) and the editor of *Another Japan is Possible: New Social Movements and Global Citizenship Education* (Stanford University Press 2008). She has published widely in *Critique Internationale*, *Comparative Education*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *Recherche Feministes*, *International Review of Education*, and *Globalisation, Societies, and Education*. Her research interests lie in international human rights law and social movements, antiracism and multiculturalism, gender, global health governance and global justice movement. *Politics in the Corridor of Dying: AIDS Activism and Global Health Governance* is her latest book manuscript. In addition to her continuous interests on access to treatment for HIV/AIDS and other neglected tropical diseases, she has started a new research project on internet activism and democratic change in China.