

**Friday, Nov 1, 2024  
Opening Keynote Session**

<b>Foyer</b>	
4:00-5:40	Welcome and Registration
<b>Room A</b>	
5:40-6:55	Dinner Banquet Performance by Soul Vang
<b>Room A</b>	
6:55-8:25	Keynote Talk by Dr. Ian G. Baird "Hmong Education: The Communist Party of Thailand Approach"

**Saturday, Nov. 2**

<b>Room A</b>	
7:30-8:00	Light refreshments (bagels and coffee)
8:00-8:15	Conference Welcome

**Saturday, Nov 2  
Session 1**

<b>Room B</b>	<b>Chair: Cho Ly</b>	<b><i>Hmong Language</i></b>
8:15-8:30	Will Johnston	"Parts of Speech in Hmong"
8:30-8:45	Tou SaiKo Lee	"Exploring the Potential Impacts of Indigenous Revitalization on Hmong Language Education in the United States and Thailand"
8:45-9:00	Rachel Grandey	"'No turning back': Ntiajteb and the doomed earth in Hmong hymnody"
9:00-9:15	Bao Xiong	"Ethnographic Research with Hmong Participants: Key Lessons from Insider and Outsider Perspectives"
9:15-9:30	Tom Chang	"Situating Hmoob Rhetoric and Hmoob Literacies Within the Imagined Body"
9:30-9:45	Maichou Lor	"Co-Creating Interventions: Preserving Hmong Culture and Language Through Collaborative Lexicon Development in Academia, Community, and Healthcare"
9:45-10:00	Discussion	

<b>Room C</b>	<b>Roundtable Chair: Vicky Xiong-Lor</b>	<b>Lub Zej Zog Project: Interdependence as an infrastructure model for community-university partnerships and collaborative research</b>
8:15-10:00	Vicky Xiong Lor Choua Xiong Thong Vang Jenna Cushing-Leubner Pang Yang Discussion	

**Saturday, Nov. 2**

**Session 2**

<b>Room B</b>	<b>Panel Chair: Kong Pheng Pha</b>	<b><i>Radical Relationalities: Hmong Ontologies of Fantasy, Healing and Education</i></b>
10:05-10:20	Chundou Her	“HMagical Girl Academy”
10:20-10:35	Mai Xiong	“Holistic Care: Challenging Social Work Concepts of Hmong Healing”
10:35-10:50	Mai Neng Vang	“Participatory Action Research, Activism, and Healing: Toward a Socially Just Methodology for HMoob Studies”
10:50-11:05	Discussion	

<b>Room C</b>	<b>Panel Chair: Jacob Hickman</b>	<b>Hmong in China</b>
10:05-10:20	Zhang Weidong	“Becoming Miao/Hmong: Agency, Dynamics, and Negotiating Ethnicity—A Case of Shifting Ethnic Identity in Two Miao/Hmong Villages”
10:20-10:35	Elizabeth Chiu	“Developing Community Self-Reliance Cultural Tourism: An Empirical Study of the Shidong Miao Teenager in China”
10:35-10:50	Tian Shi	“The Art of Being Governed and Cooperative: The Trajectories and Transborder Mobilization of Hmong in the Tri-State Area Between China, Vietnam and Laos”
10:50-11:05	Discussion	

**Saturday, Nov. 2**

**Session 3**

<b>Room B</b>	<b>Panel Chair: Chong Moua</b>	<b><i>Hmong Women in Diaspora</i></b>
11:25-11:40	Malina Her (et al)	“One Man, One Life, One Marriage”: A Qualitative Analysis of Hmong Women’s Divorce Experiences
11:40-11:55	Huang Xiurong	“Research on International Marriage of Hmong Americans”
11:55-12:10	Yee Thao	“Hmong Feminist Community Organizing”
12:10-12:25	Discussion	

<b>Room C</b>	<b>Panel Chair: David Chambers</b>	<b>Hmong in Vietnam</b>
11:25-11:40	Thi Le Thu Dinh	"Labor migration of the Hmong in Vietnam: a question of "who you are"?"
11:40-11:55	Ha Trieu Huy	"A New Life for us: Protestantism and Hmong Ethnic Group in Vietnam, a Case Study in Sin Suoi Village, Phong Tho District, Lai Chau Province, Vietnam"
11:55-12:10	Discussion	

<b>12:25-1:40</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	No lunch is provided. There are several restaurants in the surrounding area where conference participants can eat.
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**Saturday, Nov. 2  
Session 4**

<b>Room B</b>	<b>Roundtable Chair: Choua Xiong</b>	<b>Hmong Femtors: Cultivating Feminist Superpowers in Academia</b>
1:40-3:10	Choua Xiong Aline Lo Kaozong N. Mouavangsou Chong Moua May Kao Xiong Karen Vang Discussion	

<b>Room C</b>	<b>Panel Chair: Tou Saiko Lee</b>	<b>Moving Towards Otherwise HMoob American Knowledge Making: Creative and Cultural Production as Praxis</b>
1:40-1:55	Chali Lee	"To Be Queer Hmong: How Film Can Explore What We Give to Memory and What We Give to the Self"
1:55-2:10	Kaylee Moua Nok	"California Dreaming: HMong Activism and Actualization on the West Coast"
2:10-2:25	Magnolia Yang Sao Yia	"Hmong dance in the U.S. diaspora: a contemporary tradition"
2:25-2:40	May Yang	"On Hmongness, Metalepsis, and Evading Literary Capture"
2:40-2:55	Tsim Nuj Vaj	"My Queer Hmoob Love Dance"
2:55-3:10	Discussion	

**Saturday, Nov. 2  
Session 5**

<b>Room B</b>	<b>Roundtable Chair: Mai See Thao</b>	<b>The Book No Longer Catches Us: Hmong Studies, <i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i>, and Reclamation</b>
3:15-4:45	Mai See Thao Ma Vang Aline Lo Chong Moua, Kong Pheng Pha Discussion	

<b>Room C</b>	<b>Panel Chair: Mai Na Lee</b>	<b>Claiming Space: Cultural (Dis)continuity and the Renegotiation of Gender across the Hmong Diaspora</b>
3:15-3:30	Ong Thao	“An analysis of the meanings and values of gender roles, masculinity, and femininity for Hmong men and women in China”
3:30-3:45	Bao Xiong	“Rethinking transnational hypergamy: Hmong Lao and Hmong Thai women’s agency”
3:45-4:00	Alexander Hopp	“Like G.V. Pao: Rethinking Hmong American Masculinity through Refugee Emasculation”
4:00-4:15	Mao Lee	“Poj niam Hmoob txoj cai tsis cai tsis sib luag”: Hmong women’s negotiation of home and belonging”
4:15-4:30	Discussion	

**Saturday, Nov. 2  
Session 6**

<b>Room B</b>	<b>Panel Chair: Ian Baird</b>	<b><i>Hmong Diaspora in Empire</i></b>
4:50-5:05	Alex Greene	“Plant relations and circulations in the Hmong diaspora: Between resilience and transformation”
5:05-5:20		“Hmong Monuments in France”
5:20-5:35	Mai Na Lee	“Climate Change and Racialized Disparity in Land and Water Use Policy Enforcement”
5:35-5:50	Peterson-Rockney Kong Pha	“The Uneven Histories of Sunisa Lee: The Imperial and Neoliberal Asian American in U.S. Gymnastics”
5:50-6:05	Discussion	

<b>Room C</b>	<b>Panel Chair: Cho Ly</b>	<b>The State of the Hmong Bilingual Authorization Program in the State of California</b>
4:50-5:05	Vicky Xiong-Lor	“Teaching Hmong BAP at Fresno State”
5:05-5:20	Thong Vang	“Teaching Hmong BAP at Fresno State”
5:20-5:35	Mai Julie Her	“Student-Teaching Hmong BAP at Fresno State”
5:35-5:50	Discussion	



**Saturday, Nov. 2  
Plenary Session**

<b>Room A</b>	6:05-7:05	Dinner Banquet Performance by Peter Xiong
<b>Room A</b>	6:55-8:25	Keynote Talk by Mai See Thao “Hmong Studies After Empire”

<b>Room C</b>	<b>Film Screening</b>	
8:45-9:00	Scott Christopherson	“Returning Home”
9:00-9:45	Yaj Ceeb Vaj and Jacob Hickman	“At the Doorway”

**Sunday, Nov. 3  
Session 1**

<b>Room A</b>		
8:00-8:15	Light refreshments (bagels and coffee)	

<b>Room B</b>	<b>Panel Chair: Malina Her</b>	<b>Hmong Studies in Education</b>
9:00-9:15	Zha Blong Xiong	“Do Students Benefit from Ethnocentric Niche Charter Schools? The Role of Students’ Social Capital and Perceived Academic Competence”
9:15-9:30 9:30-9:45	Kong Pheng Pha Ethan Xiong	“Hmong Studies as Buffer to Racism in STEM” “Personality, Acculturation, and Religious Beliefs and Practices: A Comparative Study of Characteristics” Associated to Barriers to Seeking Mental Health Services Among Hmong Americans and Non-Hmong Populations
9:45-10:00	Pa Nhia Xiong	“Utilizing a Critical Pedagogy and Participatory Learning Framework in Teaching Hmong Mental Health in Social Work Education”
10:15-10:30	Discussion	

<b>Room C</b>	<b>Roundtable Chair:</b> <b>Mao Lee</b>	<b>Love me like a Hmong Daughter</b>
9:00-10:30	Mao S. Lee Sheng Lee Mai Yer Lee Discussion	

<b>10:35-10:50</b>	<b>Conference Conclusion</b>
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**\*Below is the complete list of conference abstracts in the order they appear on the program**

### **Parts of Speech in Hmong**

Will Johnston, McGill University

**1 Introduction** A fundamental idea in the study of grammar is that words come in different types, often referred with familiar labels like “verb”, “adjective”, or “preposition”. This talk considers issues in applying such labels to Hmong.

**2 The reality** Parts of speech are language-specific categories. Although languages follow certain universal trends, they vary in how many categories they have, and a particular category (like “verb”) may have different properties in different languages (Haspelmath 2012).

**3 Parts of speech in Hmong** In Hmong, words are commonly multifunctional. Some seem to belong to multiple categories, e.g. tuag in (1a–b). Others have additional “grammatical” uses, e.g. tau in (2a–b).

(1) a. [tus ntxhw no] tuag  
Clf elephant this die  
'This elephant died.'

b. [tus ntxhw tuag no]  
CLF elephant dead this  
'This dead elephant'

(2) a. Kuv tau peb tug tses  
I get three CLF fish  
'I got three fish.'

b. Kuv hais tau lus hmoob  
I can speak word Hmong  
'I can speak Hmong.'

I will show that Hmong words are flexible only along certain lines. Other possible types of flexibility, such as between nouns and verbs, are not attested. A further complication are the many “particles” and other grammatical words found in Hmong.

**4 Discussion** Language education, descriptive grammar, and formal linguistics each have their own needs. For Hmong, different categorizations can (and should) be used, depending on the task at hand. I discuss several possibilities, which can coexist with one another if we keep in mind that “parts of speech” are not merely a universal checklist.

### Exploring the Potential Impacts of Indigenous Revitalization on Hmong Language Education in the United States and Thailand.

Tou SaiKo Lee, University of Wisconsin-Madison

This research paper explores the potential impacts of Indigenous revitalization on Hmong language education in the United States and Thailand. It examines the terminology, current practices, and histories of language revitalization and its possible effects on the Hmong language in formal, non-formal, and informal educational contexts in both countries.

The study emphasizes best practices that have proven effective in enhancing confidence in cultural identity and transforming a language from obscurity to relevance and vibrancy. Through comparative analysis between the U.S.A. and Thailand, the paper aims to uncover distinct challenges, efforts, and implications for transnational collaboration. The results could offer insights to support educators, cultural advocates, and community members involved in Hmong language revitalization globally.

The research utilizes two approaches: visiting schools with Indigenous language programs, including dual immersion and charter schools, and reviewing literature on Indigenous language revitalization from around the world to understand Hmong language learning initiatives in the U.S. and Thailand. The paper explores terminology, current practices, and language revitalization efforts within various Indigenous societies to find significant connections between Indigenous and Hmong communities.

The study highlights the decline of the Hmong language due to assimilation pressures and the importance of preserving and revitalizing it for future generations. It discusses language revitalization methods influenced by Indigenous principles, such as incorporating community stories, traditional wisdom from elders, and collaboration with cultural experts. The paper argues that applying Indigenous revitalization approaches to Hmong language learning could have profound impacts on student well-being by connecting them to their cultural roots, providing a sense of belonging, and strengthening communications with their cultural community.

### 'No turning back': *Ntiajteb* and the doomed earth in Hmong hymnody

Rachel Grandey, University of Leeds, UK

[prreg@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:prreg@leeds.ac.uk)

'The world is not for long; Jesus is forever,' begins one Hmong version of the hymn 'I have decided to follow Jesus'. This paper explores reciprocal relationships between Hmong culture, language and religion in the context of translation and translateability. Specifically, it presents an exploration of Hmong Christian environmental perspectives through narratives around *ntiajteb* – 'the world' - in hymns. It argues that through replacing circular, reincarnation-driven time by linear chronology, aspects of Hmong Protestant eschatology can reflect, and affect, perceptions around the world's inherent value.

Presenting the findings from thematic textual analysis of Protestant hymns containing *ntiajteb*, the paper notes key themes emerging in Hmong-language translations or interpretations of the English versions from which they were translated. Compared to the English versions, the Hmong hymns present the world as a more negative place, and with a recurring sense of transience due to the world's imminent destruction (when Jesus returns). A corollary to this is the way that didactic messages appear more frequently in the Hmong versions, urging the listener to believe in order ultimately to leave the world behind and enter the new spatial reality of heaven 'above'.

As well as interrogating the translateability of religion in the Hmong cultural and eschatological context, the paper examines ways in which religious frameworks can influence contemporary environmental attitudes among the Hmong.



**Panel Title: “Txawj Ntaub Tsis Txawj Ntawv”: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Re-Constellate Home for Hmong Culture and Language Practices Within Academic and Healthcare Research in the United States**

Tom Chang, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
 Maichou Lor, PhD, RN, Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Nursing  
 Bao Xiong, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Anthropology

Despite residing in the United States for nearly five decades, there are existing pitfalls that the Hmong community continues to experience across academia and healthcare systems due to their cultural and language practices. As a result, the Hmong community historically has been in conflict and contention with American values and social processes of expectations within these set systems. This interdisciplinary panel of Hmong scholars from English, Anthropology, and Nursing responds to the challenges of navigating these well-established systems by identifying opportunities and strategies to situate and empower the Hmong community in these systems that is culturally relevant and sustaining overtime. As an English instructor and doctoral student in the Composition and Rhetoric Program, Tom Chang will draw on the rhetoric of Hmong culture and language to advance the existing discourse on the relationship between the Hmong community and scholarly/institutional (one or the other should be fine here) spaces. He will focus on ideas of Hmong writing and language, as well as its role in informing research and higher education across settings. Drawing on ethnography field work in Thailand, Lao, and US, Bao Xiong will present on the challenges as an insider vs outsider researcher during interactions with Hmong individuals including communication norms such translations in research and healthcare settings. She will also provide practical examples to illustrate the function of Hmong culture within the research process. Maichou Lor, Assistant Professor and a registered nurse will discuss an exemplar of a co-created intervention that is informed and made by an intergenerational Hmong community and researchers to preserve Hmong culture and language—the Lexicon English-HMoob Medical Terminology Resource. She will also share how a form of text can distort, disrupt, and reimagine the spaces for the Hmong community within academia and healthcare systems. Together, all three panelists will end with lessons learned, strategies, and visions to move the Hmong community forward while maintaining the Hmong cultural heritage and story for generations to come.

Panel submission: 6th Hmong Studies Consortium International Conference

**Panel Title: Lub Zej Zog Project: Interdependence as an infrastructure model for community-university partnerships and collaborative research**

Dr. Vicky Xiong-Lor (California State University, Fresno),  
 Dr. Choua P. Xiong (University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh),  
 Thong Vang (University of Minnesota),  
 Pang Yang (Minnesota Zej Zog),  
 Dr. Jenna Cushing-Leubner (University of Wisconsin - Whitewater)

Community-university partnerships ground university research in real world issues and implications validated by community involvement (e.g., CBPR, PAR, PDR, and general community-informed research). They include nonprofits, coalitions, and individuals who partner with universities to facilitate programming, carry out self-determined inquiries, and develop community education and policy advocacy. While community members play key roles on paper, in practice, community-control, collective determination, and the health and longevity of these partnerships vary considerably (Fine, 2018). Partnerships can be unstable, short-term, and unequally beneficial (materially, financially, and otherwise), making authentic and trusting relationships both necessary and difficult (Tuck & Yang 2018). Some approach partnerships by trying to leverage interest convergence and mitigate harms, others attempt to be resistive and agentic within the partnership. Another approach is to treat the partnership as a contingent collaboration (Tuck, et al., 2013), with an “ethic of incommensurability that recognizes what is distinct between various projects of social justice and decolonization” (p. 58) and understanding sometimes things “simply cannot be aligned”.

Contingent collaborations free partnerships to take shape as ongoing consensual relationships: setting and holding boundaries, establishing and negotiating new agreements, and having the option to separate. These “otherwise ways” of doing things (Ritchie, 2024) require what we call “infrastructures for interdependence”: relational and material infrastructures that make collaborations sustainable, mutually beneficial, and determined through ongoing consensual agreements. This panel will explore what interdependent and consensual relationship approaches to these partnerships can involve, require, ask of our positionalities, and generate.

**Presenter PY & JCL** will discuss examples of infrastructures of interdependence from Lub Zej Zog Project’s seven-year community-driven participatory design research about Hmong language/culture reclamation curriculum and teacher professional development. They will explore questions of transparency, trust-building, and role-remediation (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016) for facilitating distributive leadership and sustainability.

**Presenter VXL & TV** will discuss multi-directional mentorship as part of Lub Zej Zog Emerging Critical and Indigenizing Hmong Education Studies Writing Fellows program. They will focus on the power of collectively redefining genres of “academic” and “public” scholarship and reflect on relational infrastructures that support community-rooted emerging Hmong education scholars within the isolating and deleterious environment of U.S. academia.

**Presenter CX** will discuss the role of academia in asserting disciplinary transformations that are responsive to community desires as a key component of infrastructures of interdependence, using the case example of the formation of Critical HMoob Educational Studies as a transdisciplinary space for collective self-determination within academia, refusing university/community separations.

References:

- Bang, M., & Vossoughi, S. (2016). Participatory design research and educational justice: Studying learning and relations within social change making. *Cognition and instruction*, 34(3), 173-193.
- Fine, M. (2018). *Just research in contentious times: Widening the methodological imagination*. Teachers College Press.
- Ritchie, A.S. (2024). *Practicing new worlds: Abolition and emergent strategies*. AK Press.
- Tuck, E., Smith, M., Guess, A. M., Benjamin, T., & Jones, B. K. (2013). Geotheorizing Black/land: Contestations and contingent collaborations. *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research*, 3(1), 52-74.
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2018). *Toward what justice. Describing diverse dreams of justice in education*.

**Radical Relationalities: Hmong Ontologies of Fantasy, Healing, and Education**  
**This panel explores how Hmong epistemologies reveal radical forms of relationality.**

Panel Chair: Kong Pheng Pha, Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison

As a people who have been historically harmed by researchers through the erasure of their narratives and subjective experiences, Hmong scholars have resisted their intellectual marginalization by radically (re)centering Hmong cultural forms and ways of knowing in order to critique and offer Hmong-specific solutions to structural violence. These cultural forms and ways of knowing are manifested in Hmong scholars’ unapologetic centering of Hmong healing, kinship-making, and participatory research. In other words, the ways Hmong have cultivated alternative modalities of care for each other within social work and education radically shifts what it means to relate to each other outside of white supremacist and settler colonial frameworks. Care for each other can be seen in how clinicians are advocating for their patients in medicine and social work, Hmong students playing videogames or creating podcasts together to reimagine work and play, and Hmong college students crafting ethical research methodologies through participatory action

research. These forms of radical relationalities, as this panel will argue, activates the potentialities of Hmong ontologies of fantasy, healing, and education, which in turn cultivates more ethical forms of relationality in a world that actively works to disentangle us from each other.

Individual Abstracts:

### **HMagical Girl Academy**

Chundou Her, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Wisconsin-Madison

This autoethnographic portrait intentionally blurs the lines between reality and fantasy; the self and others; the past, present, and future. In April of 2023, I was awarded the FreshEd Flux Podcasting Fellowship. What initially started as a traditional podcast consisting of interviews and exposition about HMoob student experiences at a predominantly white university in the Midwest quickly evolved into a multilayered tapestry. One which weaves together disparate moments in time for four HMoob cousins who once again embark on fantastical roleplaying adventures not just for entertainment but also for healing. We call our world “HMagical Girl Academy.” In this world, we fight the injustices of our pasts through the magical girl genre, made famous by Japanese anime and manga. In this world, we possess the capacity for immense power not just for individual gain but to support one another. It is through HMagical Girl Academy I, a HMoob education scholar, have learned and can now articulate the importance of “cousinhood” for HMoob youth—regardless of blood relation. I invite you, dear reader and listener, to bear witness to the transformative potential of HMoob cousinhood, imagination, and storytelling. Often times, this world can feel very large and scary. Though, sometimes you get cousins. And it is together you can defeat the evils of this world.

### **Holistic Care: Challenging Social Work Concepts of Hmong Healing**

Mai Xiong, Ph.D. Student, University of Wisconsin-Madison

In this presentation, I meditate on the ways we can move towards a health system that is inclusive and invested in Hmong healing modalities, Hmong bodies and Hmong lives. Centering Hmong epistemology and ontology, I interrogate key concepts in social work such as person-in-environment (PIE), ecosystems perspective, and social work code of ethics. I explore the possibilities of expanding the US health system that considers Hmong healing modalities as a holistic approach (social, psychological, somatic/physical, and spiritual) that offers and increases our options of treatment in the US.

### **Participatory Action Research, Activism, and Healing: Toward a Socially Just Methodology for HMoob Studies**

Mai Neng Vang, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Participatory action research (PAR) is a partnership approach to research that involves critical engagement between academic researchers and community actors to gain a more grounded understanding of a given phenomenon with the goal of actionable social change. While it is not a panacea for inequities, PAR provides us with a research methodology that centers HMoob people, knowledge, and ways of being that can help us to move beyond the deficit framework toward a more socially just framework that seeks to uplift and empower HMoob communities. In this paper, I highlight the ways that HMoob American students use PAR as a tool of their activism for HMoob American studies. Moreover, I theorize how participation in PAR allows for HMoob students to build their critical consciousness, engage in healing from racist traumas, and reclaim what it means for them to be a HMoob person in the United States.

**Becoming Miao/Hmong: Agency, Dynamics, and Negotiating Ethnicity  
—A Case of Shifting Ethnic Identity in Two Miao/Hmong Villages**

Weidong Zhang, Ph.D, Winona State University

While studies on Chinese ethnicities often concentrate on how the Han majority has assimilated minorities—a process known as Sinicization or Hanization—the converse, wherein Han individuals integrate into minority ethnic groups, remains underexplored. This investigation utilizes both historical analysis and ethnographic study to shed light on such a transition within two Miao/Hmong villages in Southwest Guizhou Province, namely Kaitang and Shankai. Family histories suggest these communities' forebears were Han Chinese who sought refuge in Miao/Hmong territories and subsequently adopted the local ethnic identity. The study probes the genesis and progression of this identity metamorphosis, underscoring the influence of historical contingencies and personal agency in the construction of ethnic identities.

**Developing Community Self-Reliance Cultural Tourism: An Empirical Study of the Shidong Miao Teenager in China**

Elizabeth Chiu, Yongshi Lan

Shidong is one of the largest Miao communities in the east-south region of Guizhou Province, China. The location is a once trade center along Qingshui River which flows through hundreds of Miao and Han villages. The settlement developed a open, farming-oriented, and muticultural environment. However, owing to the lack of interaction between the Han and the Miao, many Han government officials have developed policies without understanding the Miao culture. Moreover, the new Miao generation lack the motivation to preserve their culture. In this study, a field survey was adopted as a research approach to gain an understanding of the Miao teenagers, especially those who come from the rural region, on the opportunities and challenges of accomplishing ethnic, cultural, and community-based tourism (CBT) while addressing the existing tourism issues in Shidong. It will also examine how to help the Miao people regain the right to make decisions and succeed in self-reliance by promoting sustainable economic and cultural development like community-based tourism. Going in depth on the opinions of the ethnic minority teenagers in rural regions of China cannot only raise attention to rural resource stewardship, sustainable economic development, and ethnic culture protection but also affect the relationship between the Han and the Miao ethnicity and even current issues on ethnic minority tourism development in mainland China.

**The Art of Being Governed and Cooperative: The Trajectories and Transborder Mobilization of Hmong in the Tri-State Area Between China, Vietnam, and Laos**

Tian Shi, The Overseas Chinese College, Wenzhou University, China

This article unveils how the Hmong, as a disadvantaged minority in Southeast Asia, navigate migratory trajectories in the context of the transborder policies of China, Vietnam, and Laos, as well as the three-party South-South cooperation. Contrary to the well-accepted assumption of “not being governed”, the Hmong in these three counties have been profoundly affected by both domestic policies and international affairs. This article analyzes the transborder activities of the Hmong in the post-Covid era in this tri-state area, especially their decision-making processes and resulting life transformations, within the tension and dynamics of the three-party South-South cooperation. Drawing on extended case studies in three countries, this research offers an in-depth analysis of the coping strategies of an ethnic minority which are shaped and reshaped by both local and global governance. Far from being isolated or peripheral, the Hmong actively take advantages of the opportunity structure created by the traditional clan systems, modern border governance, and evolving international networks to pursue economic prosperity. In sum, this study contributes to the ongoing discussion on the South-South migration in Southeast Asia as well as on minority agencies.

Contact: [shitianchina@hotmail.com](mailto:shitianchina@hotmail.com)

### **“One Man, One Life, One Marriage”: A Qualitative Analysis of Hmong Women’s Divorce Experiences**

Malina Her, Zha Blong Xiong, and Cahya Yunizar

Despite the rising divorce rates in some immigrant communities in the US, there has been scant scholarly attention on how immigrants experience divorce, particularly on the role of culture in the divorce process. The primary goal of the present study was to explore the diverse divorce experiences of Hmong immigrants in the United States. As a patrilineal and patriarchal community, divorce is generally frowned upon, with Hmong women often experiencing shame and stigma. A narrative design with nine Hmong women was used to capture their intricate stories that highlight such experiences. Interviews were conducted during spring 2021. Using a thematic analysis approach with a team of 5, our findings highlighted the complexity and cultural nuances the women in our sample encountered from initiating divorce to the divorce itself: 1) No wants a divorce, (2) Divorce is the “last straw”, (3) Varying divorce pathways, and (4) Navigating systems as a Hmong woman. For those who have increased knowledge of both the US American court system and divorce laws along with the traditional Hmong mediations, they may be more equipped in navigating systems. Yet as Hmong divorce practices are performed by Hmong men, Hmong women may struggle with finding their voice or support needed to advocate for their divorce. In such cases, the US court system may be more appealing in assisting their cause (e.g., custody). Professionals should be culturally aware and attuned to the different marriage and divorce practices to understand both cultural and legal barriers for those seeking a divorce.

### **Research on International Marriage of Hmong Americans**

Professor Huang Xiurong, from Southwest University in China; E-mail: [hxrjaime@swu.edu.cn](mailto:hxrjaime@swu.edu.cn).

**Abstract:** Since the 1990s, a large number of international marriages with wide age differences began to emerge in Hmong communities in the United States. The Hmong Advocates Organizing in Wisconsin coined the term “abusive international marriage” to refer to this phenomenon. The emergence of international marriages has a relatively complex mechanism: the prerequisite is that both parties have the same or similar ethnic and cultural identity; The independent development of Hmong women in the United States, the difficulty of Hmong men in adapting to the new cultural environment and the social structure of patrilineal clan in Hmong community are the necessary conditions for the birth of international marriage, while the economic backwardness of Hmong villages in Southeast Asian countries for a long time is the realistic conditions for the realization of international marriage. The huge age gap in inter-ethnic marriages has had a profound impact on the development of Hmong communities in the United States.

**Key words:** Hmong American International Marriage Old Husband and Young Wife the Social Structure of Patrilineal Clan

### **Hmong Feminist Compassion: Reimagining Refugeehood, Belonging, and Space**

Yee Thao, M.A. Candidate in Asian American Studies University of California, Los Angeles

**Abstract:** Despite being historically disempowered, Hmong women disproportionately lead many of the nonprofit grassroots organizations in Sacramento, California. In the context of Hmong diaspora, “home” is a moving, fluid, and evolving construct shaped by warfare, displacement, migration, geopolitics, and cultural hybridity. Hmong feminist leaders have long

demonstrated creation of community spaces allowing for reunification, rekindling, power building, intentional convening, and sites that attribute to the word “home.” My specific research utilizes “gendered refugee migration” frameworks to investigate transformative justice as embodied in Hmong feminist leadership while identifying how the feminization of Hmong refugee men amplifies masculine violence. I define “gendered refugee migration” as the process in which forced migration processes, patterns, and experiences (and outcomes post-migration in diaspora) are shaped by and continue to reshape gendered notions embedded in refugee communities as it intersects with race, class, and sexuality. I ask why gendered images persist both within and outside Hmong communities and if these representations of leadership result from Hmong historical migration patterns (colonial histories, militarism being gendered as masculine, patriarchy as a cultural system in Hmong traditions, etc.), opportunism on the part of oppressive systems who use traditionalist values of Hmong populations to ultimately sustain refugee displacement, or a layered combination of both. As an extension, I particularly explore how Hmong feminist leaders create notions of home through political mobilization, and how the idea of “home-building” informs their community organizing efforts in ways that cultivate social belonging and people-centered power.

Key Words: Hmong, Diaspora, Feminist, Home, Leadership

### **Labor migration of the Hmong in Vietnam: a question of “Who you are”?**

Thi Le Thu Dinh, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Vietnam has undergone substantial economic development in the past forty years. Economic transformation in 1986, shifting the national economy toward a market-oriented economy, had a great impact on the livelihood and culture of the Hmong community. Residing in mountainous regions, the Hmong account for 1.5% of the national population and are one of the country’s poorest ethnic groups. Since the economic reforms of 1986, they have encountered new challenges and opportunities, marked by policy intervention and market economy. The expansion of industrial zones attached many Hmong and Hmong women to work in garment and electronic factories in the lowland areas. I am interested in the multidimensional aspects of this labor migration phenomenon of the Hmong, particularly considering their unique culture and special ways of life, such as a patriarchal society, clan-based system, and subsistence agriculture. Within the scope of the presentation, I am interested in the question of “who you are” in the labor migration process of the Hmong. I want to argue that instead of linearly viewing the identity of the Hmong and other ethnic minorities as assimilation, integration, or any type of social integration, their identities are more dynamic, fluid, and complex. The Hmong can create, abandon, or retain their identities to different degrees, depending on different factors and circumstances. Such fluidity of identities in the migration process is also applied to the changes in gender relations of the Hmong and other patriarchal communities.

### **A New Life for us: Protestantism and Hmong Ethnic Group in Vietnam, a Case Study in Sin Suoi Ho Village, Phong Tho District, Lai Chau Province, Vietnam.**

Trieu Huy Ha, Ph.D., University of Management and Technology, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

This presentation explores the significance of Protestantism toward Hmong groups in a specific case study of Sin Suoi Ho village, Phong Tho district, Lai Chau province, Vietnam. Adopting a qualitative research design by ethnographical fieldwork with the assistance of observation method, in-depth interviews, and questionnaire, I argue that Sin Suoi Ho is a uniquely well-preserved village of Hmong people in Lai Chau province, Vietnam, with a 100% population of Hmong residents and 70% of Hmong Protestants, the infiltration of Protestantism enlightened native groups’ thoughts that helped adopt a major change in their healthy and modern lifestyle in both material and spiritual aspects. In particular, introduced to Hmong people in 1992, Protestantism played a key role in transforming traditional belief from Polytheism to Henotheism, and Hmong Protestants are subjected to God’s guidance. They easily

abrogated backward customs and abstained from opium to pay close attention to boosting their income with an increase in community-based tourism and a decrease in agricultural production activities. In spiritual life, Hmong Protestants appeared a pious follower of the faith and strongly engage with religious activities as well as pay handsome tribute to local priests. Nevertheless, Hmong Protestants here are still trapped by poverty, and a dim local governmental understanding of Protestantism also hinders the possibility of religious practices. Hmong Protestants do not completely fuel their belief in Kinh/Vietnamese cardé's administration, but Hmong's ministers instead. Finally, I will give some insightful implications for the cultural continuity of Hmong Protestants in their economic and religious activities.

Keywords: Hmong Protestants, Protestantism, Sin Suoi Ho, Lai Chau, Vietnam, Asian ethnicity.

Participant bio: Trieu Huy Ha is a full-time lecturer at the Department of Liberal Arts Education, the University of Management and Technology, Ho Chi Minh City. He got PhD in Vietnamese history at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. His areas of expertise include the Vietnam War, Asian ethnic minorities, and international relations in Southeast Asia.

### **Hmong Femtors: Cultivating Feminist Superpowers in Academia**

Chair/Facilitator:

Choua P. Xiong, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

Panelists:

Aline Lo, Colorado College

Kaozong N. Mouavangsou, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Chong Moua, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

May Kao Xiong, University of California, Merced

Karen Vang, University of California, Davis

Reflecting on their journeys to find mentors, this round table discussion confronts the tensions and success of cultivating mentorship within the growing field of Hmong Studies. In building a transdisciplinary field, scholars within the field of Hmong Studies continue to navigate being the token Hmong-identified scholar, creating a sense of belonging and community, and addressing the colonial and racist history of Hmong Studies. The panelists explore how their positions as Hmong female scholars impact the ways they forge spaces of belonging and reimagine their scholarship and survival as tied to "community" and one another. They build on the concept of "femtor" (Aguirre, 2023; Gonzalez et. al, 2015; Lin, 2020), a feminist approach that interrogates male-centric mentorship, to examine the gendered ways mentorship plays out within the field of Hmong Studies. Aline Lo will discuss the geographical and disciplinary barriers in finding mentorship and the importance of peer mentors. Deviating from cis-gender male practices of mentorship, Kaozong Mouavangsou forefronts the commitment to grow and support each other in the sharing of wisdom, experiences, and navigational strategies within our HMOob/family spaces. Chong Moua will discuss the multilateral nature of femtorship that happens where mentorship is not a top-down experience but one that is more collective and recognizes the contributions of all scholars regardless of where they are in their journey. May Kao Xiong explores the need for intergenerational and diverse mentors and the necessary everyday feminist mentors outside of academia, to be alive in the institution and find joy and rest outside of the academy. Critiquing the heteropatriarchal norms present in "thaam pem" spaces, Karen Vang argues for more inclusive and functional thaam pem practices as femtorship for future generations. Collectively, this roundtable seeks to dialogue about the criticality of mentoring and mentorship, specifically the labor placed on Hmong women, within the academy and beyond.

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**Panel Title: Moving Towards Otherwise HMoob American Knowledge Making: Creative and Cultural Production as Praxis**

Panelists: Chali Lee, Kaylee Moua Nok, Magnolia Yang Sao Yia, May Yang, tsim nuj vaj  
 Panel Abstract: Looking back as a way to move forward, we remember that Hmong studies in the U.S. emerged as a Western imperial project and was largely shaped by white male missionaries and anthropologists. Additionally, for far too long, Hmong knowledge production in the U.S. have been overrepresented by traditional disciplines such as anthropology, history, geography, sociology, and psychology. We take the critical turn to Hmong American studies seriously, a call set forth by Ma Vang, by centering HMoob people and, in particular, HMoob artists/cultural producers as ongoing creators of HMoob knowledge. We, thus, rebuke the notion that notable knowledge making can only emerge from white males, traditional disciplines, and academic spaces.

As HMoob identifying researchers who draw from and/or are informed by our artistic practices, we foreground creativity/creation as not only a site of cultural production but of knowledge production and meaning making. Precisely, we situate cultural production as a praxis for “otherwise” HMoob American knowledge making, a concept coined by Ashon Crawley that signals towards otherwise possibilities within hegemonic systems. In this way, this panel will examine the practice of filmmaking (Chali Lee) and love dances (tsim nuj vaj) by Queer HMoob, unearth and narrate HMoob aesthetics present in archival artifacts (Kaylee Moua Nok) and oral accounts (May Yang), and destabilize traditionality in Hmong dance by unveiling the contemporaneity present in the practice (Magnolia Yang Sao Yia). This panel, facilitated by Magnolia Yang Sao Yia, will help us expand the field of Hmong studies by including HMoob American artist and artistic processes into the conversation of HMoob knowledge production.

**“To Be Queer Hmong: How Film Can Explore What We Give toMemory and What We Give to the Self”**

Chali Lee

Bio: Chali Lee is a queer Hmong-American artist scholar from Fresno, CA attending Stanford University. His passions include community organizing, storytelling, promoting higher education, and creating intentional spaces for intersectional communities. He hopes his work serving his queer Hmong community can become a beacon of resources, education, and abundance for the queer Hmong community, the Hmong community, and whoever seeks it.

Abstract: Researchers often portray Hmong and queer identities as clashing cultures and as incompatible. However, queer Hmong people persist in blending their identities and as evidenced in frameworks such as “Queer Refugeeism” by Dr. Kong Pheng Pha and “Queer Hmong Epistemology” by Chali Lee. These frameworks challenge traditional notions of queer Hmong identities and raise questions as to how these theories can be applied further. Therefore, I propose film as a deeply involved medium and practice to continue the exploration of queer Hmong identity formation for the self and the greater community.

The filmmaking process serves to examine both the hypervisibility and hiddenness of queer



Hmong people and also becomes a method for profound worldbuilding and storytelling in the Hmong context of fugitivity and secrecy. Film as a process implies many strategic offerings such as what is explicitly in frame and out of frame and how space, time, and place are manipulated in film. The filmmaking process then transforms the theory into working hands-on in-front and

behind the camera, becoming a transformative practice that blends theory and practice to inform deeper affirmations of identity.

This paper is important for (1) advocating for the incorporation of the arts into research, (2) examining the notions of hypervisibility and hiddenness of queer Hmong people, and (3) documenting the lived experiences of queer Hmong people through film to add to an existing archive of queer Hmong visibility, representation, and studies.

Bio: Chali Lee is a queer Hmong-American artist scholar from Fresno, CA attending Stanford University. His passions include community organizing, storytelling, promoting higher education, and creating intentional spaces for intersectional communities. He hopes his work serving his queer Hmong community can become a beacon of resources, education, and abundance for the queer Hmong community, the Hmong community, and whoever seeks it.

**Presentation/Paper Title: “California Dreaming: HMong Activism and Actualization on the West Coast”**

Kaylee Moua Nok

Abstract: Hmong traditions of oral history are inherently at odds with colonial and imperial practices of historiography. This makes it difficult to produce a Hmong account of history that meets the parameters of hegemonic modes. The vestiges of ancient civilizations have endorsed hundreds of years of archeological study. The same footprint does not exist for the Hmong, who “left nothing—not even grave sites,” in the words of Ya Po Cha. Hmong aesthetics, necessarily rooted in the oral and visual, is the script which allows such subaltern narratives to exist. Looking at archives from Hmong communities in California, we are able to piece together an archeology of Hmong America.

Bio: Originally working as a studio artist addressing issues such as class, identity, and race, I am currently pursuing a Master’s Degree in the History of Art and Archaeology at NYU’s Institute of Fine Arts. I’ve found that as I deconstruct art history, I’m finding tools to untangle my own history as a second-generation Hmong-Cambodian-American—and vice versa. My scholarship engages with the complex history of Asian America, with a focus on modern and contemporary art during the time of and after the American Vietnam War. My Master’s thesis, titled “In Search of Tebchaws, In Search of Hmong Identity,” traces Hmong visual art as a form of historiography. It is through revisiting traditional practices and exploring new ways of thinking that I am able to reconcile Southeast Asia’s tumultuous past and envision a hopeful diasporic future. My work is deeply indebted to those who came before me—soldiers, laborers, artists, scholars, and survivors whose American Dream lays the foundation of my scholarship. Empowered by feminist, diasporic, queer, and anti-colonial methods, I am committed to telling their stories and imagining their futures.

**Presentation/Paper Title: “Hmong dance in the U.S. diaspora: a contemporary tradition”**

Magnolia Yang Sao Yia

Abstract: Although “Hmong dance” in the U.S. is a relatively newer dance form and product of Hmong Lao refugees, it has too often been associated with and perceived as a traditional dance by both Hmong Americans and non-Hmong people. Drawing from works from dance scholars such as Yutian Wong and Priya Srinivasan, this paper unpacks the different ways Hmong dance production in the U.S., racialized as Asian, gets conflated as “traditional.” In particular, I am interested in how “Hmong dance” practitioners understand, navigate through, and employ this label to serve their objectives. I argue that the predominance of positive and unquestionable

attitudes about Hmong dance as a traditional dance by Hmong Americans says more about their desire for a traditional dance form than a reflection of actuality. Furthermore, I propose that “Hmong dance” be considered a contemporary dance practice to dismantle the orientalist and colonialist frameworks that continue to deem Hmong and Hmong American cultural production as “ancient” and “foreign” (Wong, *Choreographing Asian America* 12).

Bio: Magnolia Yang Sao Yia is a dance artist and Ph.D. candidate in Critical Dance Studies with a Designated Emphasis in Southeast Asian Studies at UC Riverside. Magnolia’s dissertation project examines Hmong dance practices in the U.S. diaspora to advance a cultural politic of HMOob self-determination that is critical of colonial and imperial value systems. As a dance artist who creates contemporary dance theater choreography, her work often centers the HMOob American woman subject, body, and experiences as the site of feminist inquiry and critique.

**Presentation/Paper Title: “on Hmongness, Metalepsis, and Evading Literary Capture”**

May Yang

Abstract: This paper focuses on the ways in which Hmong oral storytellers have used metalepsis as a method for escaping complete recognition within scholarly and historical texts. I interrogate how white authors have relied on the oral stories of Hmong interlocutors, and how these interlocutors use metalepsis to refuse transparency within liberal empire. Central to this argument is my concept of evading literary capture, which I explore through the written accounts of the infamous Paj Cai Vwj, who led a rebellion against French occupation of Indochina in *La Guerre du Fuo* (1918-1921). Central to my paper is how this method of evading literary capture is emerging in contemporary Hmong art and speaks to a longer tradition Hmong fugitive aesthetics which have yet to be centered in Hmong studies.

Bio: May Yang is an artist and writer from California’s Central Valley. They are a PhD candidate at UC Merced in the Interdisciplinary Humanities with a designated emphasis in Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, and the Guarini Dean’s Dissertation and Postdoctoral Fellow in Asian American Studies at Dartmouth. Their debut collection of poetry, *To Whitey and the Cracker Jack* (Anhinga Press, 2017), received the 2016 Anhinga Prize for Poetry. Writing under the nom de plume HAUNTIE, they force us to reckon with the violence of missing history and test our capacity to imagine how Hmong refugee lifeworlds sustain our humanity. They beckon us to listen to silence, surfacing the intimacy of secrecy between Hmong ancestral knowledge and liberal empire.

**Presentation/Paper Title: “My Queer HMOob Love Dance”**

tsim nuj vang

Abstract: tsim nuj will present on their dance/movement short film that highlights Queer HMOob love, centering on the love they receive from their community and chosen family. They ask and explore: what does it feel like to dance with our HMOob ancestors and descendants? What does it feel like to dance our way home? What does it feel like to dance towards HMOob futures (what is that journey)? What does it feel like to be free in the body, especially as a dancing HMOob Queer body? In this presentation, they re-contextualize HMOob healing and love practices, such as created new rituals that honor, remember, and connect us to our Queer and Trans HMOob ancestors and descendants. Other concepts they will explore are home, belonging, healing, transformation, hope, radical joy, and resistance. Ultimately, tsim nuj invites participants to dance/move as a way to experience transformation and an embodied sense of liberation, directed and generated from their own bodies. They hope that this will inspire participants to engage other APINH, SEA, and HMOob community members to do so as well so that we may all move towards collective care, love, and liberation.

Bio: tsim nuj vang (they/them) is a HMoob, Queer child of refugees and descendant of shamans and healers. They are a dance and movement artist and researcher. Located on Yokuts Land in the Central Valley, the Heart of Cali, their hometown is Merced. They are a local grassroots youth organizer with SEA youth and youth of color in Merced. They are a recent alumni of UC San Diego (2023) on Kumeyaay Land and received their Bachelor of Arts in Ethnic Studies and a Minor in Dance.

Their commitment for dancing, organizing, healing, and storytelling helps them dream, imagine, and build a better, more just, and liberated present and future. tsim nuj is inspired by the collective visions and actions of marginalized youth and communities, transformative and healing justice frameworks and lineages, prison and police abolition, and movements of people power. They aspire to create spaces and facilitate moments for healing, rest, belonging, and celebration through dance, and moving through the world with more love and care.

**The Book No Longer Catches Us: Hmong Studies, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, and Reclamation**

Mai See Thao, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
 Ma Vang, University of California-Merced  
 Aline Lo, Colorado College  
 Chong Moua, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh  
 Kong Pheng Pha, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Merced is home to where the book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* was written. A story about a young refugee Hmong family, their toddler who suffers from epilepsy, medical doctors and residents, and a white woman journalist, Anne Fadiman, this book informed a movement in medical education to care for cultural differences while obtaining medical compliance through the act of learning about the Other and their illness narratives. This book is the most taught book in medical education on cultural differences, and it remains taught throughout higher education across many disciplines. It also catapulted Fadiman's success in writing, and she often is asked to write or speak on behalf of Hmong people. This panel grapples with the ways this book continues to haunt the field of Hmong Studies and how the conditions of its haunting can inform and transform the field to tell truer stories that are socially just. We ask the following questions: How has this book impacted/limited the field of Hmong Studies? How can we critically examine this book for its exertion of power across issues of race, gender, spirituality, and disability? What are the ways this book and its attempt to care actually violent and harmful? And how can people teach about Hmong people without this book?

**Claiming Space: Cultural (Dis)continuity and the Renegotiation of Gender across the Hmong Diaspora**

Ong Thao (she/her), PhD Candidate, Shanghai East China Normal University [ongthoj@gmail.com](mailto:ongthoj@gmail.com)  
 Bao Xiong (she/her) PhD Student,, University of Wisconsin-Madison [bxiong39@wisc.edu](mailto:bxiong39@wisc.edu)  
 Alexander Hopp (he/him), PhD Candidate, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities [ashopp@wisc.edu](mailto:ashopp@wisc.edu)  
 Mao Lee (she/her), PhD Student, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities [lee02941@umn.edu](mailto:lee02941@umn.edu)

This panel critically examines how Hmong men and women negotiate gender and gendered social constructions of what it meant to be men versus women. Bridging Hmong experiences from across the diaspora, this panel will build on the experiences of Hmong women and men from China, Laos, Thailand, and the United States to offer a transnational perspective on the relationship between structural and epistemic violence and race, ethnicity, and gender: an intersection of identity that influences Hmong life regardless of location. This panel will place these negotiations in a specific structural and cultural context of gender and gendered lived experiences. Through an analysis of fieldwork in Yunnan, China, Ong's

presentation concludes that Hmong men and women's roles in the family is not so much about a competition between the roles and responsibilities of the provider and the caregiver, but as partners in a work unit who are subjected to patriarchal norms. The second presentation highlights how transnational marriages between Hmong women from Laos and Thailand and Hmong American men often reflect gender imbalances and perpetuate stereotypes of hypergamy. As a part of her ongoing research project, Bao emphasizes the agency of Hmong women in choosing their spouses and challenges simplistic views of transnational marriage solely based on economic considerations, highlighting the importance of meaningful relationships and affections. Turning to the United States, Alex's presentation theorizes refugee emasculation as a racialized process that genders Hmong American men as disposable and criminal during and after the resettlement process, using pop culture as a refugee archive to argue that Hmong American masculinity, shaped by these structures of humanitarian domination, exists at a crossroads, possessing the potential to unsettle or maintain patriarchy and white supremacy, both within and outside of the Hmong American community. Finally, in examining how state violence exacerbates gender inequality at the family setting, Mao's presentation centers Hmong women's perspective and agency, arguing for new ways to theorize gender inequality that disrupts the scholarship that presents gender-based violence as linear, victims as helpless, and the state as savior to expose larger issues on governance and the gendered relations between refugees and the states that created refugees. Altogether, these presentations represent Hmong agency to negotiate gendered constructions throughout the diaspora, as they nuance, contest, and reject state impositions in favor of a Hmong-centric perspective on gender and gender roles.

### **Individual Abstracts:**

#### **An analysis of the meanings and values of gender roles, masculinity, and femininity for Hmong men and women in China**

Ong Thao

Previous studies observed Hmong women were not equal to Hmong men because housework and childcare were done by women and working outside the home was reserved for men. However, these observations are juxtaposed to a euro-centric view of equality between men and women that come from women's suffrage and feminist movements where the right to vote, to own property, and to be employed and fairly compensated were used to quantify progressive policies that empower women in US or in Europe. While there has been a number of studies about women and gender in Hmong communities in the US, these studies focused on women's roles in politics and their agency rather than the analysis of the relationship, meaning, and value of gender roles, masculinity, and femininity in Hmong family dynamics. Additionally, the studies on gender dynamics in ethnic minority groups in China have focused on minority groups who are matrilineal and matriarchy, whereas Hmong families are patrilineal and patriarchy. Through an analysis of fieldwork, it concludes that Hmong men and women's roles in the family is not so much about a competition between the roles and responsibilities of the provider and the caregiver, but as partners in a work unit who are subjected to patriarchal norms in changing political economic conditions. As such, Hmong men and women are always negotiating their gender, gender roles, and gendered social constructions in conversation with their understanding of family and marriage, their filial duties and responsibilities, and their understanding of gender identity.

#### **Rethinking transnational hypergamy: Hmong Lao and Hmong Thai women's agency**

Bao Xiong

In many transnational marriages across Asia, including those involving the Hmong, there's a pattern of gender imbalances. While men from wealthier countries seek companionship abroad, women are seen as seeking marriage to improve their social economical standing. Hmong transnational marriage between Hmong women from Laos and Thailand and Hmong American men perpetuating stereotypes of hypergamy, especially concerning perceptions around unions between older Hmong American men and younger Hmong Asian women from Laos and Thailand. The association of economic resources with

transnational marriage, including remittances, increased bride prices, and opportunities for migration to the United States, has negative stereotypes that portrayed young Hmong Lao/Thai women as either manipulative or vulnerable targets of deception, which frequently overshadow the personal stories of many Hmong women who do not fit with these stereotypes. This paper presents an ongoing research project, reviewing the intricacies related to the topic of Hmong transnational marriage between Hmong American men and their Hmong Lao and Hmong Thai brides. The layer of complexity of transnational marriage is manifested through the desires of the women and their decisions. These women have their own agency and the abilities to choose their spouses. Transnational marriage that was tampered with economic returns completely ignores the aspects of meaningful relationships and affections between the couples.

### **Like G. V. Pao: Rethinking Hmong American Masculinity through Refugee Emasculation**

Alexander Hopp

This presentation will consider the process of gendered racialization experienced by Hmong American men, something I name as “refugee emasculation” in the lineage of Aihwa Ong’s theorizations of refugee love. This process, enacted by the humanitarian domination of resettlement and the slow death of poverty and racialization in the United States, results in Hmong American men experiencing a removal from “traditional” markers of masculinity, including an inability to support themselves or refuse humiliation. Refugee emasculation takes further shape through racialized discourses that represent Hmong American men as inherently criminal and inherently disposable, building on narratives that span previous racial projects in the US alongside past imperial projects in Southeast Asia. Within this framework, then, it is the realm of popular culture that offers Hmong American men the opportunity to contest and reframe these narratives of racialized (im)masculinity. Represented through the music of SonsOfNotown and Facebook discourse valorizing Chai Soua Vang, Hmong American men have worked to reclaim an agential masculinity through a historicized critique of US empire. Ultimately, however, it is the impact of refugee emasculation within the Hmong American community that represents the most significant implications of this theorization. Seeing refugee emasculation as an ongoing process structuring Hmong American masculinity offers a bifurcated path forward: one in which Hmong American men embrace patriarchy, reflecting concepts of violence and disposability upon their own community, or one in which a critical rejection of the framing enables an alternative vision of masculinity removed from both patriarchy and white supremacy.

### **“Poj niam Hmoob txoj cai tsis sib luag”: Hmong women’s negotiation of home and belonging**

Mao Lee

“Every two seconds someone is forced to flee” (Um, 2021) and become displaced. In displacement, gender oppression is intensified because there is no accountability, making women and girls most vulnerable. Disturbingly, gender oppression, especially gender-based violence, is condoned by nation-states and endorsed globally (Marmo, 2023). Patriarchal conditions embedded within classed and racialized/ethnicized layers of social hierarchies further perpetuate gender-based violence. Remarkably though, state violence which influences household violence is understudied. Examining how gender oppression within the family is an extension of state violence implicated across social structures, institutions, laws, and systems allows us to dismantle hegemonic power that reproduces inequality. Using interview and participant observation data with Hmong women in Thailand, this talk will examine how violence that occurs at the family setting is exacerbated by state violence that disservice disenfranchised people (Gill, 2018). Centering Hmong women’s perspective, this talk investigates how gender oppression shapes the gendered concept of home and belonging for Hmong women. Findings suggest Hmong women enact everyday resistance against gender oppression as they negotiate home and belonging. Critically, my research argues for new ways to retheorize family, home, and belonging in an age of global mass displacement.

### **Plant relations and circulations in the Hmong diaspora: Between resilience and transformation**

Alexander Greene. *French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and the University of French Guiana, Cayenne, France*

Hmong refugees leaving the camps in Thailand carried few possessions with them, and still fewer when they fled their homes in Laos. Yet one thing many did carry was knowledge of a particular way of life that was deeply tied to the land. Wherever Hmong communities were established, from California to Queensland, many families found ways to access land, but few tshuaj plants or even common crops from Southeast Asia were available in the countries of resettlement. Through an informal process of exchange often based on kinship networks, hundreds of species of plants were brought or shipped from Laos and Thailand to Hmong communities in the diaspora. As new plants were encountered in different countries, they also entered circulation. Based on fieldwork with Hmong communities in French Guiana, southern France, Minnesota, Wisconsin and northern Thailand, I attempt to map this plant circulation and determine the most commonly circulated plants. Asking why some Hmong people go to such great lengths to procure and exchange plants, I look closely at people-plant relations to understand how they are bound up with identity, food systems and community health, and contribute to resilience in the face of trauma and displacement. Looking to the future, I explore how the different experiences and concerns of younger generations are changing the dynamics of plant circulation, which concerns different plants and uses different means than those employed by previous generations.

**“Morts Pour la France et la Liberté”: Commemorating Hmong Soldiers of the First Indochina War**

Mai Na M. Lee, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

**Abstract:**

For the last ten years, the Hmong in France have been building monuments to commemorate the Hmong participation in the First Indochina War as colonial allies. So far they have erected three monuments and two plates in France and in French Guiana, where the Hmong have a small population. This coming year, two more monuments will be erected in France, rounding off the monument efforts in all the major towns with substantial Hmong population. This paper is a preliminary examination of these efforts in France and their significance to Hmong French society. The efforts in France are tied to the commemoration efforts in the U.S., forming a transnational connection across the globe.

**Climate Change and Racialized Disparity in Land and Water Use Policy Enforcement**

Margiana Petersen-Rockney, University of California, Berkeley [margiana@berkeley.edu](mailto:margiana@berkeley.edu)  
(Non-presenting co-authors: Christy Getz, PhD and Michael Polson, PhD)

Cannabis cultivation in the era of climate change provides a case to understanding how land and water use policy can be employed to serve broader exclusionary and rural protectionist goals. Cannabis policy is rapidly evolving in California while climate change presents opportunities for unlikely alliances that expand local government control and enforcement discretion. We detail how drought and wildfire risks, anxieties, and discourses are fueling innovative and administrative local government discretion in Siskiyou County, in northern California. Understood through theories of racialization and othering, we show how climate change creates opportunities for racialization rooted in anti-Asian tropes that produce disparity in land and water use policy enforcement today. Hmong farmers in Siskiyou, some of whom grow crops that include cannabis, are made highly visible and therefore vulnerable to environmentally justified enforcement through public discourse and local policy actions. Many of these farmers have limited resources and live and farm on “marginal” land without access to public services, making them especially vulnerable to the physical impacts of climate change. Local leaders have enrolled scientific expertise, especially regarding complex local hydrology, in the definition and defense of who counts as a farmer and what counts as agriculture, and corresponding resource entitlements to irrigation water.

Rapidly evolving cannabis and climate policies provide contested terrain for struggles over who controls the terms of rural culture, including the boundaries of belonging.

### **The State of the Hmong Bilingual Authorization Program in the State of California**

Vicky Xiong-Lor, Assistant Professor, California State University, Fresno,  
Mai Julie Her, Educator,  
Thong Vang, Doctoral Student at University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

#### **Panel Description:**

Hmong language programs are growing from elementary to college campuses in several districts, cities, and states across the nation. This panel fosters the ongoing conversation for scholars, community organizations, elders, and parents. Together in conversations stakeholders could share ideas, and resources to grow Hmong bilingual teachers and meet the demands of school districts while sustaining Hmong programs into the future. California has three universities that provide teacher education for the Hmong Bilingual Authorization Program (BAP), yet very few people know about these programs; however it has successfully prepared a handful of Hmong teachers each year. California State University, Fresno (Fresno State) is among the three universities that host the Hmong BAP. As we look forward to the next five to ten years, we are optimistic about the trajectory of bilingual education in California and the inclusion of languages and cultures of our local communities in public institutions. As community scholars, we move away from a traditional academic presentation that focuses on individual paper presentations to dialogue-based discussions. We designed this panel as a way to have conversations between community and institutions around what it means to have the Hmong BAP at Fresno State. We seek for community-institutional partnership solutions for today's and future challenges facing Hmong and other marginalized communities in California. Therefore, we invite everybody to come, participate, and learn about the state of the Hmong Bilingual Authorization Program, build awareness, and strategize to strengthen the Hmong BAP in California. We look to find ways to collaborate and support the growth of other Hmong language and culture programs in other states to meet the needs of our students, teachers, and community.

**Presenters VXL & TV** will present on the state of the Hmong BAP at Fresno State and share their experiences teaching in the program. Their section details the successes and challenges faced by student-teachers and instructors. Together, they are invested in collaborating for culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogies & curricula (McCarty & Lee, 2014) for Hmong bilingual educators and communities.

**Presenter MJH** will discuss her experience as a student-teacher in the Hmong BAP at Fresno State and ways her coursework supported her in imagining bilingual education frameworks in her teaching practices and classrooms.

#### **References:**

McCarty, T., & Lee, T. (2014). Critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy and Indigenous education sovereignty. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 101-124.

### **Do Students Benefit from Ethnocentric Niche Charter Schools? The Role of Students' Social Capital and Perceived Academic Competence**

Zha Blong Xiong, Ph.D.  
Ting Xu, M.A.  
Kyle Nickodem, University of Minnesota

Malina Her, University of Connecticut

Research has consistently shown that ethnic minority students continue to fall behind in academic performance, including Hmong students. In recent years, some parents began to switch their children to public charter schools. Today, Hmong ethnocentric niche public charter schools<sup>1</sup> enrolled more than 7,000 Asian (mostly Hmong) students in Minnesota. Using Coleman's (1988) social capital theory, this study investigates the connection between family and school social capital and students' academic competence in three Hmong ethnocentric niche charter schools. The study analyzed 124 students (93% Hmong) who participated in a three-year longitudinal study. Data was collected when students were in third, fourth, and fifth grades and ended when students were in fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. The results of the structural equation modeling showed that school social capital, as measured by school attachment and school connection, is significantly linked to students' academic competence. However, no significant association was found with nuclear and extended family social capital. The findings suggest that the school environment, especially ethnocentric niche charter schools that focus on culture and language, plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions about school. The study concludes by discussing the implications of the results for future research and how these findings can inform educational policies and practices to support student success.

### **Hmong Studies as Buffer to Racism in STEM**

Kong Pheng Pha, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Hmong Studies as a scholarly field has gained strong traction in the academy in recent years. Hmong Studies academic programs and faculty positions in the Universities of Wisconsin (UW) System have enabled creative activity, scholarly research, and community projects with Hmong American communities across the state of Wisconsin. Yet, Hmong American students continue to experience racial exclusion and discrimination in the UW System. I present findings from an NSF-funded racial equity in STEM project to show Hmong American students' ongoing experiences of racism and exclusion at three UW systems (UW-Madison, UW-Eau Claire, and UW-Oshkosh). Data from a UW system survey and interview data from the three sites reveal how Hmong Americans continue to experience pushout, exclusion, and racism in STEM fields, and in higher education more broadly. This presentation shows how Hmong Studies operates as a buffer to racism to ensure Hmong American students' sense of belonging on their respective campus. Hmong Studies allows for students to learn about Hmong history, culture, and language that enables positive identity development among Hmong American students in ways that resist racial exclusion in STEM in particular, and higher education in general.

### **“Personality, Acculturation, and Religious Beliefs and Practices: A Comparative Study of Characteristics” Associated to Barriers to Seeking Mental Health Services Among Hmong Americans and Non-Hmong Populations**

Ethan Xiong

The Hmong people have immigrated to the U.S. following the end of the U.S. led American and Vietnam War in the 1970s. Consequently, as refugees who have settled in the U.S., historical war-related traumas, new cultural contextual-related stress, and adjustment problems created risks that many Hmong would experience various challenges accessing mental health services and finding them beneficial. This study



aims to investigate potential factors related to that, including varying levels of intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to help-seeking which may open the avenue toward increasing utilization and initiation in mental health services. The data found determined there are different factors that influenced barriers to mental health help-seeking behaviors for Hmong compared to non-Hmong population above and beyond demographic information. Hmong Americans reported fewer intrinsic barriers while there was no difference for extrinsic barriers compared to the other ethnicities. Aspects of personality factors suggested that Hmong experienced lower level on the traits of Neuroticism, but higher on the traits of Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness compared to the other ethnicities. There were no differences in Extraversion personality traits among the ethnicities. Aspects of personality configurations showed differences among Hmong Americans and non-Hmong populations with Openness and Extraversion personality traits predicted intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to seeking services for the Hmong compared to the other ethnicities. For the Hmong, acculturation did not explain any variance with respect to barriers to seeking mental health services. However, general religiosity and traditional beliefs and practices contributed to understanding barriers to help-seeking for professional psychological services.

### **Utilizing a Critical Pedagogy and Participatory Learning Framework in Teaching Hmong Mental Health in Social Work Education**

Pa Nhia Xiong, Ed.D., California State University, Fresno

A critical pedagogy and participatory learning framework were used to contextualize Hmong mental health education within historical/cultural contexts. Hmong's history of war-torn, ethnic persecution, and genocide caused mental health issues. This presentation focuses on a pedagogical framework for social work students to integrate Hmong cultural practices into mental health courses.

#### **Background**

Hmong have a history of migration due to war, slavery, ethnic persecution, and genocide. Hmong relied on oral history, storytelling, cultural ceremonies, and spiritual practices to preserve their heritage. Distinguished by culture, language, and a history of trauma, Hmong face significant mental health barriers, including limited mental health literacy. Hmong remain underrepresented in social work literature, with limited attention given to their mental health needs. Existing literature lacks pedagogical strategies for teaching students about the unique mental health concerns of the Hmong population.

#### **Methods**

The course was positioned within a critical pedagogy and participatory learning framework to contextualize Hmong refugee mental health education within historical and cultural contexts. It enabled students to critically assess contested perceptions of mental illness among the Hmong, juxtaposed with other diverse cultural contexts.

#### **Results**

The pedagogical framework enabled students to engage in a critical exploration of the experiences of Hmong refugees within socio-political and historical contexts, emphasizing their impact on Hmong mental health.

#### **Conclusions**

This critical and participatory learning framework for teaching Hmong refugee mental health contributes to the social work literature by informing the integration of cultural practices into the teaching of behavioral health among underserved populations.

**Love Me Like a Hmong Daughter/Woman: A Discussion to Contest and Critique Love, Loving, and being in Love**

Roundtable Description

This roundtable will facilitate a discussion on Hmong women's theorization of love. The panelists will take a Hmong-centric approach to delineate and distinguish different forms of love, such as loving and being in love. Specifically, this roundtable, which critiques the gendered ideology of womanhood, will focus on facilitating discussions of selflove, family love, and romantic love. Through a Hmong-centric approach, the panelists theorize transborder love—which is a type of love that binds the living and the dead together across time and space—to contest, critique, and extend current understanding of what love is. Scholarly, by engaging in a Hmong-centric approach to theorize love and loving relations, this roundtable discusses how Hmong women take agency in their everyday lives to radically resist patriarchal love. The panelists will examine their scholarly work and personal lived experiences to reclaim Hmong women's love as a powerful force of agency.

Panelist & Chair:

Mao Lee, PhD Student, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

[Lee02941@umn.edu](mailto:Lee02941@umn.edu)

Mao is from Wat Thamkrobok, Thailand. Her lived experiences as a Hmong woman and refugee have inspired much of her scholarly work and research interests on how state violence exacerbates gender inequality at the family setting. Her current and past research projects have examined how gender inequality, specifically gender-based violence, affects Hmong American and Hmong Thai women's conceptualization of home and belonging. Through ethnographic research with Hmong women in diaspora, Mao has attempted to theorize transborder love, which is an endless love between Hmong women that stretches over time and space where the dead and the living are bound together through means of love. Her critical, feminist, and gendered lens on the implications of state violence that displaces people for generations invite us to rethink and retheorize gender inequality in a time of mass global displacement. She engages Hmong-centric and refugee-centric epistemologies in her critical analysis of gender inequality across multiple social settings, including the family setting, to uncover how transborder love can serve as a leeway toward liberation for Hmong women. Mao's scholarly work is deeply personal as she seeks to bring in marginalized perspectives into the academy to critique hegemonic ways of knowledge (re)production and to retheorize gender inequality not as personal failure but as an extension of state violence.

Panelists

**Sheng Lee, Undergraduate Student, Department of Communication Arts University of Wisconsin-Madison**

[Slee997@wisc.edu](mailto:Slee997@wisc.edu)

Sheng is a junior in Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where her passion for radical self-love and advocacy shines through her work. As a child, she penned a heartfelt letter to her high school self, telling herself not to be married yet, an early sign that expressed her skepticism on the fallacy of young marriage. With a curious mind, Sheng delves into the intersection of self-love and agency, viewing it as a potent currency in personal empowerment. Her experiences navigating interracial relationships, parental dynamics, and close friendships have deeply informed her perspective on both the obstacles and joy of giving and receiving love as a Hmong daughter/woman. She continues to enrich her understanding of self-love as agency through both journalism and art as she seeks to uncover stories of love and resilience. Join Sheng as she shares insights and reflections on the profound impact of self-love on individual growth and societal change.

**Mai Yer Lee, Undergraduate Student, Department of English  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point**

[Mlee082@uwsp.edu](mailto:Mlee082@uwsp.edu)

Mai Yer is a second-generation immigrant and first-generation college student. She currently studies at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point majoring in English: Writing, Editing, and Publishing, and Sociology. She presented her research on the development of attitudes towards race at UWSP's 2024 Student Research Symposium. She currently works at the university as a news reporter, peer mentor, and office assistant. Mai Yer enjoys deep talks and philosophical concepts, hence her theories regarding the differences of love and conditions that categorize them. She grew up in a traditional Hmong shaman family, experiencing love from a traditional Hmong view. As a Hmong woman, she aspires to be the change in her life that can bring empowerment and understanding.

### **At the Doorway**

**(Ethnographic film screening and discussion; Run time approximately 14 minutes)**

Scott Christopherson

#### Synopsis:

This poetic, ethnographic film highlights Hmong txiv neeb's spiritual healing and communal leadership in Northern Thailand. The subjects' Electrodermal Activity, a type of physiological response, is visualized as they perform healing ceremonies.

The film's narration, written and read by award-winning author Kao Kalia Yang, offers the perspective of a descendant of txiv neeb. Regardless of relation, all members of a community benefit physically and spiritually from the nurturing natures of these sacred leaders.

#### Logline:

In rural communities in Northern Thailand, Hmong women act as healers and mediators between spirits, ancestors, and their living posterity. These grandmothers, mothers, and daughters labor in their different roles to provide for and spiritually strengthen those around them.

### **Returning Home**

**(Ethnographic film screening and discussion; Run time approximately 45 minutes)**

Directed by Xib Fwb Yaj Ceeb Vaj and Jacob R. Hickman

Over centuries, Hmong have moved from mountain to mountain, home to home, country to country, crossing rivers and valleys and crafting new lives in the wake of oppression. The *Txiv Xaiv (Plig)* rite has survived this serial exodus and modern diaspora, encoding Hmong historical and cosmological understandings as an oral text, passed down from master to student, and performed at funerals. The *Txiv Xaiv (Plig)* connects past, present, and future generations. A funeral without a *Txiv Xaiv* is like a tree without its roots. Its ability to preserve Hmong history, morals, and traditions is unparalleled, but the dispersion of Hmong communities across a now global diaspora threatens the vitality of this oral text.

*Returning Home* is an ethnographic film that draws on the affordances of visual and sonic mediums to both depict this oral text and the practices associated with it, and to unpack the cosmology of personhood encoded in the text—namely the three souls whose ultimate fates are managed through *Txiv Xaiv (Plig)* and related rites. The film centers on a particular form of the *Txiv Xaiv Plig* that was preserved by a paramount Master, Shong Ger Thao, who passed down a critical version of the ritual to Xib Fwb Yaj Ceeb Vaj (co-director of the film) before he passed away. This version of the ritual has the unique capacity to manage the soul of a person who did not receive a complete funeral and proper burial when they passed away, such as those who died in the Secret War and its aftermath. By fate or coincidence, the first time that Xib Fwb Yaj Ceeb Vaj was called upon to perform this *Txiv Xaiv Plig* was for an ex-post-facto funeral for Master Shong Ger's wife, Kia Yang, who had passed away during the lock-down phase of the Covid-10 pandemic, when large gatherings were not permitted, preventing the enactment of a traditional *Txiv Xaiv*. This film depicts this poetic circle of the passing down of knowledge and putting it into practice,

while highlighting the cosmological knowledge that Master Shong Ger worked his life to preserve—knowledge of the three souls and their ultimate destinies. The film depicts the use of this knowledge to manage the souls of Kia Yang, completing the circle from one generation to the next in Master Shong Ger's family, and allowing her souls to ultimately return home.

### Conference Presenters

Alex Greene	accidentalshrike@gmail.com	French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)
Alexander Hopp	ashopp@wisc.edu	University of Minnesota-Twin Cities & University of Wisconsin-Madison
Bao Xiong	bxiong39@wisc.edu	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Chali Lee	chalilee@stanford.edu	Stanford University
Chong Moua	mouac@uwosh.edu	University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
Choua Xiong	xiongc@uwosh.edu	University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
Dr. Y. Jonathan Vang	yengjonathanvang@gmail.com	
Elizabeth Chiu	zhaaelizabeth960@gmail.com	United World College Red Cross Nordic
Ethan Xiong	Ethantengxiong@gmail.com	Ralph H. Johnson Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Huang Xiurong	hxrjaime@swu.edu.cn	Southwest University of China
Ian Baird	ibaird@wisc.edu	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Kaozong Mouavangsou	mouavakn@uwec.edu	University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire
Karen Vang	Kbva@ucdavis.edu	University of California-Davis
Karen Vang	Kbva@ucdavis.edu	University of California-Davis
Kaylee Moua Nok	kmnok@nyu.edu	N/A
Kong Pheng Pha	kpha@wisc.edu	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Magnolia Yang Sao Yia	myang053@ucr.edu	University of California-Riverside
Mai See Thao	maisee.thao@wisc.edu	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Mai Xiong	mxiong84@wisc.edu	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Mai Xiong	mxiong84@wisc.edu	University of Wisconsin-Madison

Mai Yer Lee	myerlee@gmail.com	
Maichou Lor	mlor2@wisc.edu	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Mai See Thao	mthao3@wisc.edu	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Malina Her	malina.her@uconn.edu	University of Connecticut
Mao Lee	Lee02941@umn.edu	University of Minnesota
Margiana		
Petersen-Rockney	margiana@berkeley.edu	University of California Berkeley
May Kao Xiong	mxiong58@ucmerced.edu	University of California-Merced
Ong Thao	ot.thaoong@gmail.com	Shanghai East China Normal University
Pang Yang	ED@mnzejzog.org	MN Zej Zog
Rachel Grandey	Prreg@leeds.ac.uk	University of Leeds
Scott		
Christopherson	scott_christopherson@byu.edu	Brigham Young University
Soul Vang	soulvang@gmail.com	Hmong American Writers' Circle
Thi Le Thu Dinh	dinh6@wisc.edu	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Thong Vang	vang2825@umn.edu	University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Tian Shi	shitianchina@hotmail.com	Wenzhou University, China
	tianshichina@hotmail.com	
	touleeresearch@gmail.com,	
Tou SaiKo Lee	tou.lee@metrostate.edu	Metropolitan State University (MN)
Jacob Hickman	jhickman@byu.edu	Brigham Young University
		University of Management and Technology, Ho Chi
Trieu Huy Ha	huy.hatrieu@umt.edu.vn	Minh City, Vietnam
tsim nuj vang	vangeugene2@gmail.com	
	vxionglor@mail.fresnostate.ed	
Vicky Xiong-Lor	u	California State University-Fresno
Weidong Zhang	wzhang@winona.edu	Winona State University
	johnston.william_christopher@	
William Johnston	courrier.uqam.ca	Université du Québec à Montréal
Yee Thao	yeethao@g.ucla.edu	University of California-Los Angeles
Zha Blong Xiong	xiong008@umn.edu	University of Minnesota