

# Friday Seminar



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

Fall  
2022

## Psychogeographies: Counseling in a Himalayan Disaster Zone

Date : 4 November 2022  
Time : 1:00 - 2:30 pm (GMT+8)



**Aidan Seale-Feldman**  
Department of Anthropology, University of Notre Dame



**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/94621893802>

**Meeting ID:**

946 2189 3802

**Passcode:**

327521

In the Spring of 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake and 7.3 magnitude aftershock struck Nepal. Over 9,000 people died and half a million lost their homes. In response to the seismic rupture, humanitarian psychosocial projects arrived with funding to mitigate an emergent “mental health crisis.” As psychosocial counselors flooded the 14 affected districts, over 300,000 “beneficiaries” received psychiatric and psychosocial support services, many for the first time in their lives. This talk explores the desires, risks, and ambivalences that counselors carried as they crossed a landscape in ruins to provide care for others in the aftermath of disaster. Based on collaborative ethnographic research alongside a Nepali NGO, it follows three psychosocial counselors as they navigated rough and unstable terrain of the Himalayan foothills to reach clients. Walking to reach the clients was not a peripheral aspect of counseling, but a central element and form of solidarity that shaped the therapeutic work. By expanding the spatial frame of the therapeutic encounter from the bounded session into the crisscrossing mountain paths that lead up to it, it becomes possible to trace psychogeographies of care that emerge at the intersection of a trembling earth and the counselor’s internal psychic landscape.

**Dr. Aidan Seale-Feldman** is an Assistant Professor of Medical Anthropology at the University of Notre Dame. Grounded in ethnographic explorations of disaster, mental health, and mass hysteria, her research asks how to approach forms of affliction that are not bound within the individual but instead move across bodies, environments, and generations. Based on two years of fieldwork in Nepal, her first book project is an ethnography of the psychic life of disaster. Dr. Seale-Feldman’s research has been published in *Cultural Anthropology*, *Ethos*, *HIMALAYA: The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, and *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*.

**ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME!**