

[Tuberculosis in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literatures and Film from Asia](#)

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Call for Papers

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October 31, 2022

Subject Fields:

Area Studies, Asian History / Studies, Colonial and Post-Colonial History / Studies, Health and Health Care, Literature

ACLA annual meeting 2023 seminar proposal (March 2023)

Organizers: Antara Chatterjee, Peiting C. Li

As we gradually emerge from the latest infectious disease pandemic that hit the world in 2020, this seminar seeks to refocus attention on and reevaluate the impact of another infectious disease that left a momentous impact on cultures and imaginations: tuberculosis. The seminar invites proposals that examine representations of tuberculosis in literature and film from Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Tuberculosis or its nineteenth century name, consumption, had a looming presence in 19th and 20th century European and American literatures spanning across genres from fiction to poetry, memoir to opera. In fact, no other infectious disease has had such a powerful impact on literature and culture over such a long span of time. Several leading European authors themselves succumbed to the disease and left behind letters and diaries recounting their experiences of living with TB before succumbing to the disease. These include John Keats, Katherine Mansfield, Franz Kafka and Anton Chekhov.

Vis-à-vis the representation of TB in Europe and America, this seminar seeks to provide a forum to examine the impact of TB in literary and cultural representations from Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries. We invite proposals that consider particular Asian contexts, histories, as well as literary and film genres that impacted the experience and representation of TB. Proposals exploring the representation of TB in Asia across regions and time periods and spanning different genres are welcome. While TB has been purportedly 'eradicated' in the West now, it continues to be one of the leading causes of death in many Asian countries, and continues to

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be associated in the West with poorer countries and populations from the global South. This seminar thus intends to examine cultural and literary representations of TB in Asian literature, film, media and culture to foreground a non-Western and global South perspective on a disease that remains a persistent one in those regions of the world. In doing so, the seminar seeks to trace the impact of tuberculosis on Asian bodies as well as literary and cultural imaginaries, and thereby critically rethink perceptions and representations of the disease that have been informed largely by Western experiences.

Topics may include but are not limited to:

TB in Asian literatures across regions and periods

Literature as an archive of TB

TB in official narratives vis-à-vis literary and cultural narratives in Asia

Western perceptions of the tubercular Asian body

(Inter)Asian literary, cultural perspectives on TB

Racial and gendered narratives of TB

TB as a 'romantic' disease in Asia

TB in conjunction with other diseases like AIDS and cancer

TB and poverty, industrialisation, or confinement

21st century retellings of earlier TB narratives in Asia

TB and colonialism

TB as an urban disease

TB across written genres - advertising, reporting, medical etc.

The uniqueness of the TB experience in Asia

Deadline for paper proposals: October 31, 2022

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