

A TWO-DAY SYMPOSIUM

WHO CARES?

Stories of Uncertainty and the Work of Care

19–20 November

NTU SHHK Building · HSS Auditorium and Black Box

PARTICIPANT PROGRAMME

Panel schedule, session synopses and paper abstracts

DAY 1

19 November

Care, obligation, storytelling and performance

TIME	SESSION	PAPER	SPEAKER
08:15–08:55	Registration & Breakfast Venue: Outside SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	<i>Light breakfast, coffee and tea; informal arrival and introductions.</i>	
08:55–09:00	Welcome Venue: SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	<i>Michelle Chiang</i>	
09:00–09:15	OPENING ADDRESS	How do we ‘account’ for care?	<i>Clare Herrick (King’s College London)</i>
09:20	PANEL 1 Accounting for Care: Institutions, Infrastructures and Hidden Labour <i>09:15–10:45</i> Venue: SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	What does it mean to care well? Staff Voices, Relationships, and Growth in a Youth Residential Hostel	<i>Katherine Kwan (NUS) & Carmmen Lee (Trybe Limited)</i>
09:40		Kanbyōngin: Biomedicine, American Aid, and the ‘Marginalized Central’ in the Age of the National Health Insurance in South Korea	<i>Park Hyung Wook (NTU)</i>
10:00		“This is community; I want to give back” — the infrastructures of care in the lives of rental flat residents	<i>Yu Jiajia (NUS)</i>
10:20		<i>Panel discussion</i>	
10:45–11:15	Morning Tea	<i>Coffee, tea and light refreshments.</i>	
11:20	PANEL 2 Obligations of Care: Kinship, Dependency and Refusal <i>11:15–12:45</i> Venue: SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	Correspondence as Care in Schizophrenic Autobiographies	<i>Daniel Kong (NTU)</i>
11:40		Making Care Visible: Community Care Workers and the Hidden Work of Helping Families Navigate Care	<i>Yun (Millie) Su & Caroline Lim (SUSS)</i>
12:00		Who cares for the dead?	<i>Lye Kit Ying (SUSS)</i>
12:20		<i>Panel discussion</i>	
12:45–14:00	Lunch	<i>Unprogrammed lunch and rest.</i>	
14:00–15:00	WORKSHOP Venue: Creative Studio, SHHK Level B2	Death and Care: Participatory storytelling through Death Cafes	<i>Facilitators: Clarissa Poon, Lee Yeong Ern David, Lim Song Yi & Sylvia Mun</i>
15:00–15:30	Afternoon Tea Venue: Outside SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	<i>Coffee, tea and light refreshments.</i>	
15:30–16:30	CREATIVE PERFORMANCE Venue: Creative Studio, Level B2	Are we care-full?: Reflections by three instructors of a storytelling module	<i>Chew Yi Wei & Janice Kam (SUSS)</i>

TIME	SESSION	PAPER	SPEAKER
16:30–17:00	Conversation with the Artists Venue: Creative Studio, SHHK Level B2	<i>Moderated conversation following the performance.</i>	
17:00–17:45	Reception & Informal Networking	<i>Drinks and light refreshments.</i>	
17:45–18:00	Transition to Dinner		
18:00–20:00	Conference Dinner	<i>TBC</i>	

DAY 2

20 November

Voice, publics and collaboration

TIME	SESSION	PAPER	SPEAKER
08:15–08:55	Breakfast Coffee & Informal Arrival Venue: Outside SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	<i>Light breakfast, coffee and tea.</i>	
09:00–09:15	DAY 2 OPENING Venue: SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	‘Ableist Fragility’ and Chronic Stress in a Non-Autistic Parent Memoir from Germany	<i>Sonja Fritzsche (Michigan State University)</i>
09:20	PANEL 3 Making Care Legible: Voice, Testimony and Institutional Power <i>09:15–10:45</i> Venue: SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	Language for Justice: Analysing Narrative Strategies that Assist with Reporting Sexual Abuse	<i>Nicole Ong (SUSS)</i>
09:40		Positionality and the work of care in response to sexual misconduct in the university	<i>Shelley Tuazon Guyton (NUS)</i>
10:00		Performing Care Otherwise: Ovidia Yu, Heteronormativity, and Care Ethics in Singapore	<i>Lim Yu Hannah Jade (NTU)</i>
10:20		<i>Panel discussion</i>	
10:45–11:15	Morning Tea	<i>Coffee, tea and light refreshments.</i>	
11:20	PANEL 4 Care in Circulation: Infrastructures, Narratives and Publics <i>11:15–12:45</i> Venue: SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	Medical Campaign Narratives, Care and Authenticity: Does it matter if AI is disclosed?	<i>JoAnne Lim (SUSS)</i>
11:40		Reading the News: Tracing Care in Public Narratives	<i>Lim Yiru (SUSS)</i>
12:00		Uncertain Care: The Albatross File as a Story of What Was Not Told	<i>Lim Lee Ching (SUSS)</i>
12:20		<i>Panel discussion</i>	
12:45–13:45	Lunch	<i>Unprogrammed lunch and rest.</i>	
13:45–15:15	PROJECT STUDIO Venue: Creative Studio, SHHK Level B2	From Conversation to Collaboration (Sign-up required) <i>A structured collaboration session to develop shared questions, project ideas and possible outputs.</i>	<i>Facilitator: Michelle Chiang</i>
15:15–15:45	Afternoon Tea Venue: Outside SHHK Auditorium, Level B1	<i>Coffee, tea and light refreshments; project conversations may continue informally.</i>	
15:45–16:30	Project Pitches & Commitments Venue: Creative Studio, SHHK Level B2	<i>Short group pitches, collaborator sign-ups and next steps.</i>	
16:30–16:45	Closing Reflections & Thanks		

Programme details are subject to final confirmation.

REFERENCE

Panel Synopses & Paper Abstracts

The following synopses and paper descriptions are included for reference during the symposium.

OPENING ADDRESS How do we ‘account’ for care?

PAPER	SPEAKER	DESCRIPTION
How do we ‘account’ for care?	<i>Clare Herrick · King’s College London</i>	Taking a cross-section of classic medical and nursing textbooks, Herrick traces how care has been defined, mobilised and communicated across their many editions, following changing expectations of care as a practice and as a professional and legal obligation. Stepping back from the apparent universality of the textbook, she reflects on how cultural expectations of care are embedded in curricula across the UK, US and Singapore, and asks why so few histories of healthcare pause to interrogate ‘care’ itself.

PANEL 1 Accounting for Care: Institutions, Infrastructures and Hidden Labour

PANEL SYNOPSIS

What becomes visible when we account for care, and whose work remains outside the account? Care is indispensable to health and social systems, yet the labour through which it is sustained is often difficult to name, value or even see. This panel asks what happens when care enters — or is left outside — systems of professionalisation, administration and service provision. Moving across a youth residential hostel in Singapore, the history of hospital care workers in South Korea, and a public rental flat neighbourhood where food relief is organised by residents themselves, the papers examine how some forms of caring become codified and recognised while others remain peripheral, informal or hidden. Together, they ask what it means to “account” for care without reducing it to what institutions can readily classify or measure, and whose labour becomes visible or disappears when care is organised through formal systems.

PAPER	SPEAKER	DESCRIPTION
What does it mean to care well? Staff Voices, Relationships, and Growth in a Youth Residential Hostel	<i>Katherine Kwan (National University of Singapore) & Carmmen Lee (Trybe Limited)</i>	Against an understanding of youth rehabilitation as the delivery of programmes and the management of risk, Kwan and Lee centre the voices of residential care staff — the joy when a young person thrives, the grief and self-questioning when one does not — to offer a relational account of care in practice, and of what it takes to sustain that care as restorative and trauma-informed approaches reshape the work.
Kanbyōngin: Biomedicine, American Aid, and the ‘Marginalized Central’ in the Age of the National Health Insurance in South Korea	<i>Park Hyung Wook · Nanyang Technological University</i>	Park traces the history of kanbyōngin, the predominantly female hospital care workers whose intimate labour American-trained physicians dismissed as a bad old custom, and who were nonetheless never replaced by professional staff. Organising themselves into lucrative businesses outside the National Health Insurance, they became so costly that their work came to exceed the price of many biomedical services — marginal in status, central in cost.
“This is community; I want to give back” — the infrastructures of care in the lives of rental flat residents	<i>Yu Jiajia · National University of Singapore</i>	Following one resident through a community-led food distribution initiative in a public rental flat neighbourhood, Yu reads food relief as an infrastructure of care — material and relational at once, emergent and situated — and argues that caregiver and recipient are not fixed positions but roles people move between. Care, on this account, is produced inter-subjectively through practice, which is also what makes its distribution unequal.

PANEL 2 Obligations of Care: Kinship, Dependency and Refusal

PANEL SYNOPSIS

Who becomes obligated to care, who carries the labour of that obligation, and who is permitted to refuse? Care is frequently understood as an ethical good, but it is also an obligation unevenly distributed through relations of kinship, gender, illness and cultural expectation. This panel examines who is expected to care, and on what terms that care is given, withheld or resisted. Through epistolary negotiation between patients, doctors and families in autobiographies of schizophrenia, through the identity work demanded of family caregivers in a super-aged society, and through the gendered labour of Chinese practices of caring for the dead, the papers explore how caring responsibilities are socially assigned and morally enforced, and how much interpretive work is demanded of those who care and of those who are cared for. They consider the tensions between autonomy and dependency, care and resentment, duty and refusal, asking what happens when individuals resist the identities that families, institutions and cultures have prepared for them.

PAPER	SPEAKER	DESCRIPTION
Correspondence as Care in Schizophrenic Autobiographies	<i>Daniel Kong · Nanyang Technological University</i>	Reading Chan Lishan's <i>A Philosopher's Madness</i> and Esme Weijun Wang's <i>The Collected Schizophrenias</i> , Kong examines the letters and emails woven through autobiographical writing about schizophrenia. Correspondence, he argues, makes care a textual negotiation between patient and addressee — doctor, family or outside party — one that re-centres the individual as interpreter of their own experience while burdening them with the responsibility of making that experience legible to others.
Making Care Visible: Community Care Workers and the Hidden Work of Helping Families Navigate Care	<i>Yun (Millie) Su & Caroline Lim · Singapore University of Social Sciences</i>	Drawing on interviews with 23 community care workers, Su and Lim examine the often-unrecognised work through which practitioners help family caregivers make sense of their emotions, of caregiving as an identity distinct from being a spouse or child, and of their own strengths — arguing that in a super-aged Singapore care is not carried by families alone but sustained across formal and informal networks.
Who cares for the dead?	<i>Lye Kit Ying · Singapore University of Social Sciences</i>	Chinese death rituals demand great attention to the very thing they teach people to fear. Lye asks why Confucian teaching assigns formal responsibility for ancestral care to sons while the tedious labour of food and paper offerings falls to women, who are instructed to comply or face torture in hell — and how fear of hungry ghosts and the shame of unfiliality sustain a gendered death care economy in a modernising Singapore.

DAY 2 OPENING 'Ableist Fragility' and Chronic Stress in a Non-Autistic Parent Memoir from Germany

PAPER	SPEAKER	DESCRIPTION
'Ableist Fragility' and Chronic Stress in a Non-Autistic Parent Memoir from Germany	<i>Sonja Fritzsche · Michigan State University</i>	Through Tessa Korber's memoir <i>Ich liebe dich nicht, aber ich möchte es mal können</i> , Fritzsche defines "ableist fragility" in the context of non-autistic parenting of autistic children, examining how explicit and implicit bias and assumptions of neurotypicality shape parental identity and contribute to chronic stress. Where caregiver support focuses on the child, she asks what self-work is required of caregivers within an inherently ableist society.

PANEL 3 Making Care Legible: Voice, Testimony and Institutional Power

PANEL SYNOPSIS

Care often depends upon experiences becoming intelligible to others. Yet the burden of producing that intelligibility is rarely distributed equally. This panel examines what happens when people must narrate suffering, vulnerability or illness in forms that can be recognised by others and by institutions. Moving from survivor testimony and the reporting of sexual abuse, to the positional work of responding to sexual misconduct inside the university, to dramatic representations of women's encounters with biomedical care, the papers consider how care is mediated by language, positionality and unequal relations of interpretive authority. Together, they ask who bears the burden of making experience legible, what forms of narration institutions and caregivers are prepared to recognise, and how practices intended to enable care may simultaneously constrain the terms upon which a person can speak and be heard.

PAPER	SPEAKER	DESCRIPTION
Language for Justice: Analysing Narrative Strategies that Assist with Reporting Sexual Abuse	<i>Nicole Ong · Singapore University of Social Sciences</i>	Where there is rarely tangible proof of a violation of consent, a survivor's testimony must serve as both accusation and evidence. Reading Rachael Denhollander's memoir <i>What Is a Girl Worth?</i> as a text that deliberately models how to report abuse in writing, Ong argues that care means not only letting survivors choose their path to justice but equipping them with the rhetorical resources to see that path through.
Positionality and the work of care in response to sexual misconduct in the university	<i>Shelley Tuazon Guyton · National University of Singapore</i>	Composing "object biographies" around items from her first semester as an academic — a gift from two students, the proposal to form a departmental Care Committee — Guyton examines the tension between care as the university defines it, in policy and reporting systems, and the personal, relational and positional work of responding to sexual misconduct as both employee and survivor.
Performing Care Otherwise: Ovidia Yu, Heteronormativity, and Care Ethics in Singapore	<i>Lim Yu Hannah Jade · Nanyang Technological University</i>	Reading Ovidia Yu's plays <i>Hitting (On) Women</i> and <i>Breastissues</i> through Joan Tronto's phases of care, Lim argues that Singapore's biomedical model remains insufficiently attentive to women's lived realities, particularly where illness and recovery unsettle heteronormative and able-bodied ideals of femininity, and that dramatic representation generates relational resources for more responsive and inclusive patient care.

PANEL 4 Care in Circulation: Infrastructures, Narratives and Publics

PANEL SYNOPSIS

How do infrastructures and stories enable care to circulate, and how can that circulation become uneven, curated or withheld? Care does not move independently of the social and narrative structures through which people encounter one another. It is organised through digital platforms, media systems and institutional archives that determine what becomes visible, who receives attention and how responsibility is distributed. This panel follows care across three sites of circulation: appeals for support on medical crowdfunding platforms, public responses to media narratives of child abuse, and the archival management of political uncertainty surrounding Singapore's separation from Malaysia. Together, the papers ask how infrastructures and stories enable care to circulate, but also how that circulation may be uneven, curated or deliberately withheld. What kinds of care become possible when stories and resources move between people, and who controls the conditions under which they move?

PAPER	SPEAKER	DESCRIPTION
Medical Campaign Narratives, Care and Authenticity: Does it matter if AI is disclosed?	<i>Joanne Lim Yong-Kwan · Singapore University of Social Sciences</i>	Crowdfunding platforms ask patients and families to tell a compelling story of sickness and need, and AI tools increasingly help them tell it, especially where writing is not a skill they have. Lim asks what becomes of the human voice behind such an appeal, how disclosure of AI use bears upon authenticity and trust, and what follows for those who use these tools and for those who, declining to, may find their story never becomes one.
Reading the News: Tracing Care in Public Narratives	<i>Lim Yiru · Singapore University of Social Sciences</i>	Singapore has in recent years been gripped by reports of abused children. Reading that coverage through Tronto and Fisher on care and through the figure of the co-creating reader, Lim asks what happens when a public encounters trauma through its news feeds, whether scrolling past a dead child's case counts as attending or its opposite, and whether the media might function as a steward of care rather than a curator of spectacle.
Uncertain Care: The Albatross File as a Story of What Was Not Told	<i>Lim Lee Ching · Singapore University of Social Sciences</i>	The recently declassified <i>Albatross File</i> , Goh Keng Swee's Cabinet papers and memoranda on Singapore's separation from Malaysia, reveals a public account of involuntary expulsion carefully constructed by the very leaders whose private deliberations it records. Reading it through Derrida and le Carré, Lim examines care administered without consent, on behalf of people not permitted to experience the uncertainty it was designed to manage, and reads the declassification itself as a further act of managed care.

REFERENCE

Workshop & Performance

Additional reference notes for the participatory and creative sessions on Day 1.

WORKSHOP Death and Care: Participatory Storytelling through Death Cafes

PRESENTERS	DESCRIPTION
<i>Clarissa Poon, Lee Yeong Ern David, Lim Song Yi & Sylvia Mun · School of Social Work and Social Development, Singapore University of Social Sciences</i>	Drawing inspiration from Bernard Crettaz's Café Mortel, the Death Cafe offers a model of non-therapeutic participatory engagement in which narratives of death and dying can unfold in an informal setting. By drawing on lived experience within a circle of strangers, Death Cafes break a silence: they hold space for personal accounts, allow grief to be expressed, and make visible forms of care that usually go unspoken. This workshop introduces the history, philosophy and research surrounding Death Cafes, then moves into a facilitated session led by a death researcher and social work students. Participants will be invited to reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes towards death and dying, to consider how care is experienced and expressed through narrative exchange, and to take away a primer on hosting a Death Cafe of their own. Particular attention is given to psychological safety, inclusivity and ethical facilitation, and to the responsibilities involved in holding space for stories that are often difficult to tell.

CREATIVE PERFORMANCE Are we care-full?: Reflections by three instructors of a storytelling module

PRESENTERS	DESCRIPTION
<i>Chew Yi Wei & Janice Kam · College of Interdisciplinary and Experiential Learning, Singapore University of Social Sciences</i>	Three lecturers teaching Effective Communication Through Storytelling begin from the premise that storytelling is an act of human connection, and therefore a humanistic endeavour embedded in the minutiae of everyday life, that is, one that requires attention to context, audience, intention, positionality, truth, authenticity, empathy, listening and narrative identity. Against a neoliberal account of communication as an economic skill, they define care <i>via negativa</i> , and argue that care-full storytelling must be demonstrated in the act of teaching and learning rather than merely taught as an idea. Presented performatively, their reflection examines how instructors and students alike may misunderstand care, remain vulnerable to care-lessness, come to practise care in telling and listening, and encounter moments when prevailing narratives dominate despite their efforts.