



Trauma, Mourning, Witnessing: Photographing the Philippine Drug War

Dr. David Chu Program in Asia-Pacific Studies Distinguished Visitor Lecture



FRIDAY,

OCTOBER 12, 2018

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Room 100, 1st floor

Jackman Humanities Building

170 St. George Street

In this presentation, I inquire into one of the earliest responses to the recent Philippine war on drugs: the courageous work of photojournalists. In the context of the drug war, how does photojournalism become a kind of advocacy by becoming a mode of mourning? How is trauma and witnessing braided together in the experience of photographers covering war? What is the role of the camera and what are the ambivalent effects of the technical and aesthetic imaging of the dead and their survivors? What is the fate of photographic images once they travel beyond the control of the photographers? For example, converted into commodities, what happens to them when they circulate in the global mediascape and rendered into items for the daily consumption of anonymous viewers? And among families of the victims, how are the dead remembered in ways that elude photographic capture?

VICENTE L. RAFAEL is the Giovanni and Amne Costigan Endowed Professor of History and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. He is the author of several works on the cultural politics of the Philippines including *Contracting Colonialism*, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*, *The Promise of the Foreign*, and *Motherless Tongues: the Insurgency of Language amid Wars of Translation* (all from Duke Univ. Press). He also wrote the Introduction to a recent edition of Nick Joaquin's stories, *The Woman Who Had Two Navels and Tales of the Tropic Gothic* (Penguin Classics).

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