

Yalong (Allen) Chen 陈亚龙 was born in 1995 in Sichuan, China, and attended high school in his second hometown Zhongshan, Guangdong. At the age of eighteen, Yalong moved to the US to attend college at NYU, where he graduated with a dual BA in Mathematics and Economics; and Media, Culture, and Communication in 2017. Yalong began his Ph.D. studies in Linguistic Anthropology at Penn in 2017, and advanced to candidacy in 2020. He spoke Cantonese, Mandarin, English, and Japanese.

Yalong contributed to the Penn Anthropology Department and the field of anthropology with his inquisitive nature and attentiveness to detail. Engaging questions of labor, computer languages, and corporate culture, his dissertation work focused on vocational school students and future IT workers in China. His fellow students remember him as a thoughtful and energetic presence in his classes, asking questions that always seemed to pull apart tricky differentiations in anthropological theory.

Yalong's doctoral advisor, Asif Agha, says: "Yalong approached the world around him with a freshness of outlook that brought clarity to his work and joy to all who knew him. His research was poised to open up new frontiers in the study of media and society. He enlarged our sense of what is possible. His warmth brought us together when he spoke of it."

"Yalong lived in wonder of the world, and left those who had the pleasure of knowing him struck by his ceaseless generosity and brilliance," notes doctoral committee member Andrew Carruthers.

In addition to being extremely dedicated to his studies, Yalong was a generous friend and an exemplary colleague. He frequently took time to help members of the department. His cohort mates have fond memories of him explaining concepts in linguistic anthropology ahead of their comprehensive exams. Those who co-taught with him benefited from his openness to collaborate on lesson plans and the sharing of useful teaching approaches. Yalong supported peers and students with patience and understanding. He was quick to reach out and include others. Though he had a sharp wit and delightfully cutting sense of humor, he was always ready with an empathetic ear and an open heart to support his fellow students.

Apart from his studies at Penn, Yalong was committed to introducing Science and Technological Studies as well as studies of digital labor to Chinese literary publics. He had [published a Chinese translation of Lorraine Daston's "Enlightenment Calculations" \(1994\)](#) with an introduction concerning digital platform, algorithm, and delivery service in China. Yalong also devoted his time to introducing recent English-language anthropological publications to a growing Chinese audience, covering topics like energy, oratory, language, and labor. He taught a small classroom of students in China on technology, language, and identity as well.

Over the last two years, Yalong lived in China, conducting fieldwork at a vocational school in Guizhou. In this period, Yalong organized and participated in talks and public events regarding vocational education. In April, he had also just started a research project on the entextualization of contemporary vernacular Cantonese literature, originally scheduled to be presented at the 2022 AAAs.

His friends will also know Yalong as a talented photographer, meticulous culinary expert, and an immaculate host. His broad culinary expertise included sashimi cutting, Hainanese chicken, and smoked steak. He was also a fastidious sommelier, collecting and amassing an archive of whisky and sake. As a young adventurer, he traveled to Japan, Indonesia, Vietnam, Australia, as well as many parts of the United States and China. Yalong was also a poet, who occasionally shared his [poems and short stories on social media](#) concerning social issues. He had expressed an interest in writing a Chinese-language novel.

On May 30th, Yalong passed away at home in Zhongshan, preceded by a sudden bout of illness. He is survived by his parents and fiancée.

Yalong Chen's photographic work at Yellowstone in 2014:



One of Yalong's last poems on May 8th, 2022:

牧场共和国

陈亚龙

他们为了我们的健康殚精竭虑
每天的病患数哪怕加了一
也要竭力消灭
他们希望我们都可以健康地活着
因此他们把我们隔离起来
有的关在高耸的墓碑、巨型的棺材里
有的在一个个不避风雨的小隔间里
好抵御流行的瘟疫
但我知道
因为他们还指望着我们
继续产奶产肉，继续长羊毛，继续生崽子
延续他们不朽的业绩
看着兢兢业业的他们
我从不怀疑
这是一个尊重生命的国度
但是活着的都成了畜生

Pastoral Republic

Yalong Chen

They tax their ingenuity to maintain our health
Even one more daily new case
Must be eliminated desperately
They hope for us all to live healthily
So they pen us in
Some are locked in erected tomb stones and giant coffins
Some are locked in small cubicles that hardly shelter from the rain
So as to ward us against the epidemic plague
Oh, but I know
They are counting on us
To keep giving our milk and flesh, harvesting wool, and breeding
To extend their immortal deeds
Look at them, how diligent
I never doubt
This is a country that respects life
Oh, but I know,
To be living is to be livestock