

# Asian Studies

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Fall 2007

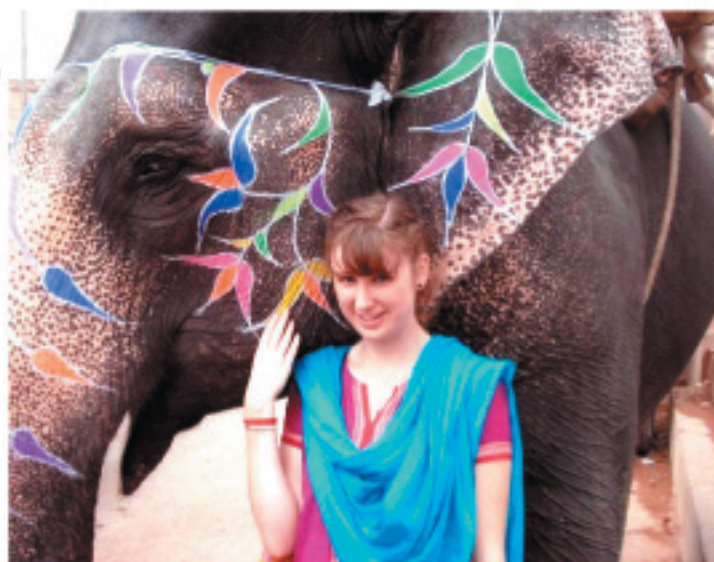
## Dear Alumni and Friends,

It is my pleasure, as Acting Chair of Asian Studies in Fall 2007 (while Gang Yue is serving as the resident director of the Xiamen Study Abroad program in China), to update you on the state of the Department and to share with you news of the growing demand for our language and content classes, the achievements of the faculty, and our plans for the future.

The move into New West in July 2006 has been accompanied by significant and unprecedented growth within the Department. This past year has witnessed the promotion of Dr. Ryuko Kubota (Japanese and School of Education) from Associate to full Professor, as well as the promotion of Drs. Wendan Li (Chinese) and Nadia Yaqub (Arabic) from the rank of Assistant to tenured Associate Professors. Moreover, the searches conducted last year have permitted us to welcome five new faculty members: Dr. Pamela Lothspeich, Assistant Professor of Hindi-Urdu; three lecturers in Chinese, Ms. Hang Zhang, Ms. Yi-hsiu Chen, and Ms. Melody Park; and one lecturer in Arabic, Ms. Fatma Assef (who will join us in Fall 2008). This year we are conducting two searches, one for a lecturer in Japanese and the other for a tenure-track Assistant Professor in Modern Hebrew Literature and Israeli Culture. The Hebrew position is funded in part by a private gift from the Levine-Sklut family. This position will be an especially welcome addition to the Hebrew program and the newly established Hebrew minor.

This growth in our faculty allows us to meet the needs of our majors and the growing demand for courses in Asian languages,

cultures, and literature. In 2006-07, we had 1516 students enrolled in our language classes (compared to 746 in 2003-04), and I have every reason to expect that we will exceed this figure in 2007-08. The number of majors has also increased, thanks to the continued popularity and success of the long-standing interdisciplinary Asian Studies track, the concentrations in Chinese and Japanese, and the newly approved concentration in Arab Cultures (the concentration in South Asian Studies is expected soon). The number of declared



Study Abroad student Julia Furlong in India, Summer 2007

majors has now reached 103 (up from 64 in 2005-06). We graduated 25 students in 2006-07, and expect to graduate close to 40 in 2007-08. Of these students, 10 are writing honors theses on Asia-related topics.

In response to this growing interest in Asia, we have added a significant number of exciting new courses: Film, Nation, and Identity in the Arab World; Advanced Topics in Chinese Literature and

Language; Conversational Arabic; Advanced Reading and Composition in Chinese; Hindi-Urdu Poetry in Performance; Geisha in History, Fiction, and Fantasy; Urdu Script; and Bollywood Cinema. Moreover, we have offered for the first time a LAC (Language Across the Curriculum) section in Arabic. This weekly discussion section allows students to use their Arabic language skills in topics related to other classes in history, literature, etc. taken concurrently. Furthermore, since Dr. Afroz Taj joined the Department last year,

we are now offering Elementary Hindi-Urdu through interactive videoconferencing from UNC to Fayetteville State University and NC Central University. This extremely successful class is made possible through a major grant from the US Department of Education which has allowed Dr. Taj to expand his "Door Into Hindi" website

(<http://taj.chass.ncsu.edu>) and create "Darvazah: A Door Into Urdu," a comprehensive multimedia, web-delivered, elementary Urdu language course.

The Department of Asian Studies continues to play an active role in promoting study abroad as an integral part of the UNC experience. In 2007, 193 students studied abroad in Asia, the most ever in a single year. The Department has been largely responsible for the



creation of many of UNC's initiatives in Asia. The first year of the UNC Summer in India programran successfully this past summer, under the leadership of Dr. Afroz Taj, with 20 students, including four winners of the prestigious Phillips Ambassador Scholarship. The SE Asia Semester program had its first run in Spring of 2007; six UNC students spent a semester at Mahidol University in Bangkok focusing on Thai language and Southeast Asian Studies, followed by a three-week research practicum in May on Burmese migrant worker experience in Thailand, led by Asian Studies Professor Kevin Hewison. John Stewart of the Department of Economics will lead the research practicum in Spring 2008 to look at health care systems in Vietnam and Thailand. The UNC Summer Program in Tokyo finished its second year in 2007, again under the leadership of Ms Yuki Aratake, lecturer in Japanese. This seven-week program offers intensive Japanese language study, a course in Japanese culture, and homestays with Japanese families. In summer 2008, an Anthropology faculty member, Chris Nelson, will be the resident director for the program. The UNC Fall Semester in Xiamen (China) program is now in its second year. For Fall 2007, Associate Professor Gang Yue is leading 18 UNC students on this program funded in part by a grant from the Grier/Woods Presbyterian China Initiative. In addition to an intensive Chinese language program (equivalent to three semesters at UNC), the program offers two interrelated field seminars: "Globalization and Contemporary Chinese Culture," taught by Dr. Yue, and "Changing Images of 'Made in China'," taught by a sociology professor at Xiamen University in collaboration with Dr. Yue. The program also offers a nine-day excursion in southern China and a dozen weekend trips

to historic sites, museums, factories, and other business and cultural events.

A new faculty-led study abroad program in Amman (Jordan) has also been created, and is scheduled for Summer 2008. Associate Professor Nadia Yaqub will lead the pro-



Student Mike Mallah (above) and Arabic lecturer Nasser Isleem (below) at the Arabic Coffee Hour



gram and will offer a class entitled "Women and Leadership in the Arab World," which will include a service-learning component.

The Asian Studies faculty continues to be strong in research and to gain national and international prominence. In addition to dozens of scholarly articles, and too many co-edited volumes to list here, the most notable professional accomplishments of the faculty include four books: *Pens, Swords, and the Springs of Art: The Oral Poetry Dueling of Palestinian Weddings in the Galilee* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) by Dr. Nadia Yaqub; *The Eternal Present of the Past: Illustration, Theater, and*

*Reading in the Wanli Period, 1573-1619* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) by Dr. Li-ling Hsiao; *The Court of Indra and the Rebirth of North Indian Drama* (Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu Hind: 2007) by Dr. Afroz Taj; *Working Mandarin for Beginners* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007) by Ms. Yi Zhou (with Lynne Gerber).

Some exciting new ventures are being planned for Spring 2008. The Hindi-Urdu program, in collaboration with the Center for South Asian Studies and the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, has organized a landmark conference on "Poverty, Inequality, and the South Asian State" scheduled for January 11-12. The Arabic program, in collaboration with the Department of Romance Languages and various area centers at UNC, is planning an international interdisciplinary conference entitled "Franco-Arab Cultures Today: Developments, Dialogues, and Challenges" that will take place on April 17-19. Another international conference on "Marketing Muslim Women" is also being organized in collaboration with Duke University and will take place on April 10-12. If you are in the Chapel Hill area at these times, please do join us for the lively debates and conversations that are sure to take place during these conferences.

As we witness the growth of our programs, the increase in the number of students majoring in Asian Studies, and the tremendous achievements of our faculty, we are also noting the areas where we hope to grow, and they remain those of our minor language programs. The Korean program, now in its second year, and funded by a gift from the UNC Korean American Student Association, needs more support in order to become a sustainable program. The Persian program continues to grow but is still taught only by part-time



faculty. We need more financial support in order to establish it more solidly.

I could not end my report without informing you of the recent changes in our administrative staff. Ms. Pat Maroney, whom many of you undoubtedly remember, retired from the university in June 2007 after 17 years of dedicated service. We miss her cheerfulness and wisdom, but we wish her all the best. Ms. Lori Harris, who was our administrative assistant over the last three years, has been promoted as the new Department Manager, and we now have on board a new administrative assistant, Ms. Sara Beaman, a UNC graduate (class of 2007) with a Japanese minor.

We would very much like to hear from you. Please send us your news, and do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or requests. And of course, let us know when you are in Chapel Hill for a visit.

Sincerely,



Sahar Amer  
Acting Chair



Hebrew instructor Luceil Friedman and Hebrew minor Danny Stellini  
at the Hebrew Coffee Hour

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[www.unc.edu/depts/asia](http://www.unc.edu/depts/asia)

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*(Above) Department Chair Gang Yue in Xiamen (China) with this year's Study Abroad students*

*(Left top) Kortney Richardson, John Labban and Sun Min Lee participate in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony during the 2007 Summer Program in Tokyo (Japan)*

*(Left bottom) Sally Beth Moore and Sarrin Smith in Kamakura, Japan during the 2007 Summer Program*