



AFROZ TAJ WITH HIS STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS AT THE TAJ MAHAL.

Asian Studies Newsletter

Fall 2016

Greetings from the Chair

This was a year of impressive accomplishments by our students and faculty. It was also a year of additional committee work, introspection, assessments, and data gathering to prepare a self-study for our first departmental review in spring 2017.

Asian Studies has grown rapidly since its establishment as a department in 2004 (first institutionalized as the Curriculum in Asian Studies in 1992). We teach eight languages (Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Hindi-Urdu, Korean, Japanese, Persian, Turkish), and offer five majors and nine minors, including two new minors in Persian and in Middle Eastern Languages. We have grown to a permanent faculty with nineteen fixed-term and sixteen tenure-track positions.

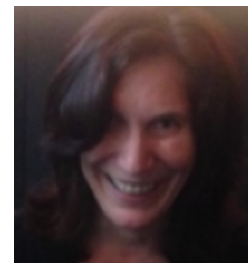
Our collaborative efforts in writing the self-study for our upcoming program review are providing us an opportunity to take stock and reflect on the future of our rapidly evolving department. We are evaluating language proficiency assessments conducted in each of our four major programs, survey results

administered to current majors, alumni, and faculty, and results of focus groups conducted with faculty and current majors. We consider this review an opportunity to convey our strengths to the College and our donors so that we can communicate and build upon them strategically going forward, while also addressing areas for improvement.

The quality of our undergraduate programs and strength of our faculty research is evidenced, in part, by the honors, professional successes, and graduate fellowships won by our students, and the research productivity, engaged scholarship, and pedagogical innovations of our faculty.

Nadia Yaqub returned to her position as Department Chair on July 1, 2016, after a well-deserved leave to complete her second book, *Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution*, and her co-edited volume, *Bad Girls of the Arab World*. As Interim Chair, I was aided by Associate Chairs Wendan Li (fall 2015) and Morgan Pitelka (spring 2016). Li-ling Hsiao will serve as the next Associate Chair (fall 2016). Administrators may come and go

but our staff remain! We owe a great debt to Ash Barnes, Angelika Straus, and our tireless Department Manager, Lori Harris.



Robin Visser
Interim Chair

Robin Visser was awarded an Institute of Arts and Humanities Fellowship (Fall 2016) for *Bordering Chinese Eco-Literatures* (1985-2015).

Meet Dr. Claudia Yaghoobi, Inaugural Roshan Institute Assistant Professor of Persian Studies

This fall Professor Yaghoobi joins Dr. Shahla Adel to lead our growing Persian Studies program. Professor Yaghoobi earned her Ph.D. in 2013 from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in Comparative Literature with a doctoral emphasis in Women's Studies, and was Assistant Professor in International Literature at Georgia College and State University from 2013-16.

The breadth and depth of Dr. Yaghoobi's research is breathtaking, ranging from twelfth-century mystical Persian poetry (the subject of her first book project, *Construction of Subjectivity in 'Attar and Medieval Persian Sufi Tradition*), to twentieth-century Iranian fiction on the institution of Sigheh ("temporary marriage"), the subject of her current project.

Dr. Yaghoobi was awarded a prestigious grant from New York University Abu Dhabi Institute to co-organize and fund a conference, titled "Marriage, Family, Religion, and Culture in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Iran and the Middle East," to be held in January 2017 in Abu Dhabi.

In addition to teaching third-year Persian, Professor Yaghoobi will be offering courses such as "Gender and Sexuality in the Middle East," "Middle Eastern Women Writers," "Iranian Cinema," and a first-year seminar, "Wars and Veterans: Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan."



Morgan Pitelka's Accomplishments and Promotion

This was an exciting year of firsts and impressive accomplishments. In 2015 Morgan led the Carolina Southeast Asia Summer Program, a donor-supported program that brings 25 rising sophomores to Asia. They studied and traveled in Singapore, Malaysia, and Kyoto, Japan. In the fall, Morgan continued directing the Carolina Asia Center and taught the Asian Studies Honors Thesis Seminar (our first joint thesis class with American Studies). In the spring Morgan served as Associate Chair in Asian Studies, overseeing curricular and teaching matters, and coordinating and writing parts of our departmental self-study for our upcoming program review in 2016-17.

Morgan was also promoted to full professor, effective July 1, 2016. His co-edited volume, *The Arts of Reinvention: Kyoto*

Visual Culture in the Early Edo and Meiji Periods (Routledge, 2016), examines cultural production in the city of Kyoto during two periods of political transition. His second book, *Spectacular Accumulation: Material Culture, Tokugawa Ieyasu, and Samurai Sociability* (forthcoming, University of Hawai'i Press) conceives objects of material culture, from the implements of the tea ceremony to weaponry to painted screens, as having agency. The book demonstrates that the fabrication, use, and exchange of high-status objects were integral to systems both of conflict and of sociability among Japan's samurai elite during a volatile transition from an era of feuding clans to the relatively stable Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868).

Morgan looks forward to a well-earned research leave in 2016-17 to work on his

third monograph, a study of the important archaeological site of Ichijodani.



DR. MORGAN PITELKA

2015-16 Film Series: Transnational Connections of Language and Culture

A year-long seven-film series featuring diverse border cultures and languages.

Each film began with an informal reception featuring Indian food.

Asian Studies faculty members conducted a discussion session after each film.



SALATA BALADI

A FAMILY'S 100-YEAR HISTORY
OF MIXED MARRIAGES
BETWEEN MUSLIMS,
CHRISTIANS, AND JEWS.



WOLFTOTEM (LANGTUTENG)

A BEIJING STUDENT LEARNS
ECOLOGICAL WISDOM FROM
NOMADIC MONGOLIANS.



THE JOURNEY OF VAAN NGUYEN (HA-MASA SHEL VAN)

A PARABLE ON THE LOSS OF IDEN-
TITY AND THE FATE OF REFUGEES
FROM VIETNAM TO ISRAEL.



GURU

A FICTIONALIZED BIOGRAPHY OF INDIAN
BILLIONAIRE DHIRUBHAI AMBANI. THE HERO
LEAVES HIS GUJARATI VILLAGE TO MAKE IT RICH
IN THE TURKISH SPICE TRADE. RETURNING TO
INDIA TO EXPAND HIS BUSINESS EMPIRE, HE
DISCOVERS THAT SUCCESS BREEDS ENEMIES.



DOOMAN RIVER (TUMAN-GANG)

NORTH KOREANS SEEK REFUGE AND
MORE FROM GENEROUS ETHNIC KOREAN
VILLAGERS IN CHINA.

Ramila: The Story of Ram

Associate Professor Pamela Lothspeich co-curated the Fall 2015 exhibition "Ramila: The Story of Ram in Indian Devotional Theater" at the FedEx Global Education Center, and a smaller, concurrent exhibit at the Chatham County Library in Pittsboro. Both exhibitions featured props, costumes, and performance photos collected during research trips to India.

A beloved style of theater in North India, Ramlila tells the enduring story of Lord Ram's travels on earth, from his birth, marriage, and exile, to his war with the

demon-king Ravan and triumphant return to Ayodhya. In India, Ramlilas are spectacular theater festivals which take place every fall, often lasting 10-15 days. Even in the U.S., community groups often stage small Ramlila programs.

Students in Dr. Lothspeich's Asia 382 class, "The Story of Rama in Indian Culture," worked with a theater expert, actor, and director from India, Dr. Devendra Sharma, Associate Professor of Communication and Performance at California State University, Fresno, to

stage a famous Ramayana scene at the reception for the GEC exhibition on October 21, 2015. Two more scenes were presented by a local Ramlila team organized by the Hindi Vikas Mandal of North Carolina, which included department faculty Dr. Afroz Taj and Mr. John Caldwell. Dr. Paula Richman, William H. Danforth Professor of South Asian Religions at Oberlin College, capped off the evening with a keynote lecture, "Performing the Story of Lord Ram: Narrative, Theater, and Devotion."



RAM'S ALLY HANUMAN (ABHISHEK KHANNA) IS DISTRAUGHT AFTER A SETBACK DURING THE WAR, AT A RAMLILA IN BAREILLY, UTTAR PRADESH, IN 2012.



ABOVE: BHARAT (ROHIT SAXENA) REACTS TO NEWS THAT HIS BELOVED ELDER BROTHER HAS BEEN EXILED, AT A RAMLILA IN SHAHJAHAN- PUR, UTTAR PRADESH, IN 2012.



LEFT: THE HERO RAM (AJAY SHARMA) CRADLES THE VULTURE JATAYU WHO WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED TRYING TO RESCUE RAMA'S WIFE SITA, AT A RAMLILA IN BAREILLY, UTTAR PRADESH, IN 2013.

Meet Our New Faculty



Dr. Didem Havlioglu

I did my M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Washington, Seattle, in Near and Middle East Studies. My research focuses on Ottoman and Modern Turkish language and literature, in particular, gender and women in literature. My book project, entitled *Mihri Hatun: Performance, Gender-bending, and Subversion in an Early Modern Ottoman Woman*, is a study of the first Ottoman woman poet's works.

I have been teaching Modern and Ottoman Turkish language for 15 years, since I started my Masters program. Before coming to UNC, I taught at Istanbul Sehir University in Istanbul, for the past five years. During my tenure at Sehir, I helped start the Turkish language and literature department and develop the Turkish for International students program.

I believe language learning consists not only of learning linguistic structures but also of understanding how meaning, mentality, and worldview vary in different communities that use similar words. Therefore, I believe, learning Turkish, just like any other language and culture, can be instrumental in students' ability to become world citizens where there is more difference than similarities.



Ms. Jing Stimpson

Greetings, everyone! I am honored to join the department officially as a permanent lecturer in Chinese. I started working for the Department of Asian Studies at UNC in 2014 as a visiting lecturer. I have been very enthusiastic in working with the department and my students and I am thrilled to continue working here.

I was born and raised in Tumen, a town in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Northeast China. My hometown is a border city between China and North Korea, divided by Tumen River (Dooman River in Korean). However, I am a Manchurian, a Chinese ethnic minority which is descended from the Jurchen people who established the Jin dynasty. Growing up in a multilingual and multicultural environment, I have been inspired and challenged by cultural conflicts and the

integration of Korean-Han-Manchurian culture. This experience has driven me to bridge the cultural gap and raise cultural awareness for my students in the language classroom.

I came to the U.S. in 2008, and received an MBA and MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Massachusetts. Before I joined the department in 2014, I taught at the Chinese Institute of Language and Arts in Boston, UMass, and Boston University. I am interested in sociolinguistics, parameter setting of Chinese for heritage speakers in Chomsky's UG theory, and implementing OPI criteria in the classroom of heritage speakers. In my spare time, I am a volunteer caretaker and social specialist for Independent Animal Rescue in the Chapel Hill-Durham area.

I am looking forward to becoming an official member of the Asian Studies family!



Asian Studies Honors Colloquium

Five students this year successfully defended an honors thesis in Asian Studies! Their theses and awarded honors are listed below:

"Air Pollution and Environmental Activism: A Study of Environmental Awareness and Behavior in College Students from Jiangsu, China"

Ms. Virginia Callison, Honors Advisor, Dr. Robin Visser

"HERpetology: Gender, Power, and Snake Transformation in Edo Period Japan"

Ms. Haley Petersen, Highest Honors Advisor, Dr. Morgan Pitelka

"Training Medical Professionals in Japan and the US: Changing Medical Education Curricula"

Ms. Juliana Powell, Honors Advisor, Dr. Morgan Pitelka

"Spirits And The Ethic of Zhen 真: Analyses of Spirits in *The Story of Purple Hairpin* and *The Story of Handan*"

Ms. Yihui Sheng, Highest Honors Advisor, Dr. Li-ling Hsiao

"Building a New Economic Silk Road: Advancing the Chinese Approach"

Mr. James Williams, Highest Honors Advisor, Dr. Gang Yue

Asian Studies Faculty Committed to Improving Language Teaching Standards

The American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) certifies faculty in Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI) through a series of rigorous workshops and interviews. Dr. Wendan Li first introduced Asian Studies faculty to OPI in 2008 by organizing a 5-day OPI workshop attended by all Chinese faculty. A follow-up OPI workshop was organized in 2014 by Hanna Sprintzik, and was attended by lecturers across our language programs.

Congratulations to the faculty members to date (Shahla Adel, Farida Badr, Lini Ge, Fumi Iwashita, Jia Lin, Jackie Relyea, Yi Zhou) who have also completed additional work to become certified as ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview Testers. We have found that attending OPI workshops and incorporating ACTFL standards into our language curriculum is helping us systematically improve pedagogical standards in all eight languages offered in Asian Studies.

DID YOU KNOW?

Since the first Korean language and culture courses were offered in 2006, the program has grown rapidly!

ONE

27 students declared Korean minors in Spring 2016, an all-time high!

TWO

Fourth-year Korean language courses will soon be offered for the first time! Ms. Dongsoo Bang will teach KOR 407: Modern Korean Literature and Culture in Fall 2016. Students will improve written and oral communication skills in Korean through the study of literary works in their social, cultural, and historical context.

THREE

New course on Korean diasporas! Dr. Ji-Yeon Jo will teach KOR 327: Korean Diasporas (Spring 2017), based on her research expertise in migration and cultural studies. The course (in English) explores historical, political, social, and educational contexts of Korean communities around the world.

Asian Studies Student Accomplishments



FARIDA BADR'S STUDENTS ATTEND A LECTURE WITH DR. SAMIER ABDEL-FADIE, A FAMOUS EGYPTIAN ARTIST.



STUDENTS LEARN CALLIGRAPHY WITH MR. LEHCEN, A VISITING MOROCCAN CALLIGRAPHIST.



CHINESE STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE FIRST EVER CHINESE CHARACTER COMPETITION!



STUDENTS HAVE FUN LEARNING ABOUT DEBKAH DANCING.



MAKING NIGIRI WITH IWASHITA-SENSEI.



DR. TAJ'S BOLLYWOOD CINEMA CLASS CELEBRATES THE FIFTH ANNUAL CHOLLYWOOD AWARDS FOR BEST STUDENT FILM PROJECTS.

Asian Studies
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Make a Gift to Asian Studies

Your gift to Asian Studies supports a number of important initiatives by faculty and students, including outside speakers, cultural events, projects by student groups, and faculty travel to pedagogical workshops and professional conferences. All contributions are tax-deductible. Thank you for your support.

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