

# DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN STUDIES

2018 NEWSLETTER



Students admire lanterns during the Chinese Lantern Festival.

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

DR. NADIA YAQUB

When I reflect back on 2017-2018 I am amazed at all we have accomplished despite limited resources and unexpected challenges. This year was particularly productive in both research and teaching. We set a record for scholarly publications with four books appearing this academic year. This is a stunning achievement by our relatively small tenure-track faculty. We are equally proud of the accomplishments of our students, which include Phi Beta Kappa inductees, honors theses, and prestigious study abroad and graduate studies fellowships. Our students are winning awards for their research and performing important service within local Asian and Middle Eastern communities. More information about some of the accomplishments of faculty and students is available in these pages.

This year we began implementing many of the goals we set during our first external review. These include expanding the number of undergraduates who are exposed to courses on Asia and mentored research opportunities for our majors. Toward these ends our faculty have created several introductory courses which serve the University's goal of preparing students for futures in a globally connected world. We anticipate that they will also expand interest in our language programs as well as in our major and minor areas of study. Our next step involves the creation of capstone experiences for our majors. I will be working with the associate chair and the curriculum committee to conceptualize this goal next year.

As the College revises its general education curriculum, Asian Studies is positioning itself as a significant contributor to the new course requirements. Faculty members have proposed courses to be piloted in 2018-19 and developed concepts for large team-taught interdisciplinary courses that may be taught in the future. These efforts illustrate the intellectual dynamism of our faculty and its deep and ongoing commitment to high-quality undergraduate education.

The Department is also moving quickly to implement its longtime goal of creating a graduate program. Faculty members Yaron Shemer, Morgan Pitelka, Li-ling Hsiao, and Ji-Yeon Jo have prepared a program proposal which I will continue to work on with relevant administrators through the summer.

We envision an MA program that will build on our current undergraduate major, offering students an opportunity to further their expertise in Asian and Middle Eastern languages and cultures.

Looking ahead to 2018-19, we are very pleased to welcome Dr. Jonathan Kief as an assistant professor of Korean Literature and Culture in fall. We welcome Robin Visser, Pamela Lothspeich, and Fadi Bardawil back to campus after their research leaves. Robin will resume her role as associate chair and director of undergraduate studies. I am very grateful to Li-ling Hsiao for ably and efficiently filling Robin's shoes during the past year. We are sorry to bid farewell to Chinese instructor Jing Stimpson who has moved with her family to Michigan. Jing will be sorely missed. To ensure ongoing, professional instruction in the Chinese program, we will be participating for the first time in the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) fellowship program. The TECRO program supports the hiring of highly qualified Chinese language instructors at American high schools, colleges, and universities in order to foster cultural exchange. Li-ling Hsiao invested considerable time and energy this year to enable our participation in this program, and we are hopeful that it will enrich our Chinese program for years to come.

Jan Bardsley will be on leave next year while serving as visiting professor at the Institute for Gender Studies at Ochanomizu University in Tokyo. Yaron Shemer, Claudia Yaghoobi, and Gang Yue will all be on research leave during fall 2018, and Uffe Bergeton will serve as a fellow at UNC's Institute for the Arts and Humanities in spring. It is a challenge to provide adequate course coverage when faculty are on leave, but opportunities like these for an extended period of research focus are indispensable to faculty scholarship. I am grateful to all my colleagues as well as our tireless staff—Ash Barnes, Lori Harris, and Angelika Straus—who make such leaves possible through their own hard work.

Sincerely,  
Nadia Yaqub  
Chair



# FACULTY HONORS

Jan Bardsley has been appointed as a visiting professor at the Institute for Gender Studies at Ochanomizu University in Japan for the 2018-19 academic year.

Uffe Bergeton has been awarded a UNC Institute for the Arts and Humanities fellowship for the spring 2019 semester.

Nadia Yaqub has been promoted to full professor effective July 1, 2018.

Yuki Aratake has been promoted to teaching professor effective July 1, 2018.

Doria El Kerdany has been promoted to teaching associate professor effective July 1, 2018.

## MEET OUR NEW FACULTY

I am thrilled to be joining the Asian Studies community this fall as an assistant professor. I received my Ph.D. in modern Korean and comparative literature from Columbia University in 2016 and I spent the past two years as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan and the University of Southern California. My research focuses on North and South Korean literature and culture of the mid-twentieth century, exploring how words, texts, and images traveled between the two Koreas despite – as well as because of – the ongoing state of war and division on the peninsula. My work also highlights the transnational, diasporic, and multi-lingual dimensions of these inter-Korean exchanges in order to think critically about what they can tell us about the broader Cold War context and Asia's place within it.

I am extremely excited about moving to Chapel Hill, getting to know the Department's wonderful faculty, and contributing to the rapidly expanding Korean program at UNC. In my teaching, I plan to combine literature, film, and popular culture to help students explore the depth, diversity, and dynamism of modern and contemporary Korean culture. Through courses like "Transnational Korea: Literature, Film, Popular Culture," "Body Politics in Modern Korean Literature," "Gender and Sexuality in North and South Korean Screen Culture," and "Imagining the City in Modern Korea: Text, Image, Space," I hope to encourage students to think creatively about modern Korea, its many voices and perspectives, and their place in the world. I also hope to offer students a way to go beyond the images they see in the news and learn to understand North Korea from a more nuanced and historically informed perspective.

I am looking forward to meeting everyone in the Department and to many fruitful collaborations.



**| JONATHAN KIEF**

# DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN STUDIES WOWS STUDENTS DURING WEEK OF WELCOME

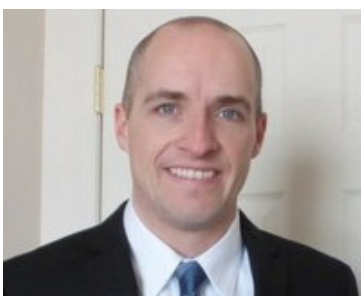
This fall the Department of Asian Studies hosted more than 300 students who came to New West to explore the Department's cultural and academic offerings during Carolina's Week of Welcome. For two hours on the Sunday before classes began, the halls were crammed with students attending mini-sessions on calligraphy, learning and watching dance, music, and video, and tasting regional delicacies while also learning about the department's language offerings and major and minor areas of study. Many thanks to Hebrew instructor Hanna Sprintzik who organized the event and the many faculty members who contributed their time, knowledge and cooking expertise to ensure the event was a success. Asian Studies looks forward to continuing its participation in Week of Welcome as part of its work to encourage more Carolina undergraduates to study Asia and the Middle East.



Shuyi Lin, Jan Bardsley, and Nadia Yaqub staff the WOW event.

## ARABIC PROGRAM OFFERS A NEW ONE-CREDIT COURSE: “THE LANGUAGE OF REFUGEEISM”

In fall 2017 the Arabic program offered a new one-credit language course designed to assist students in developing language skills relevant for refugee work. Based on authentic Arabic materials and enriched with numerous guest speakers, the course contextualizes the current refugee crisis, discusses medical and administrative requirements of refugees, cultural acclimatization, and outreach and assistance. The Arabic program looks forward to continuing to offer this course and is exploring the possibility of creating additional one-credit offerings in language instruction for the professions.



Bud Kauffman, instructor of the new Arabic course.

## DR. YAGHOOBI'S STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE EXCELLENCE

Assistant Professor Claudia Yaghoobi's students, Dhalia Mohamed, Stephanie Cales, Michael Myers, Gregory Sanders, and Jessica Glass, presented their findings at UNC's Celebration of Undergraduate Research. They won an award for the presentation of their topic, "Modernity Versus Tradition in Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass*."

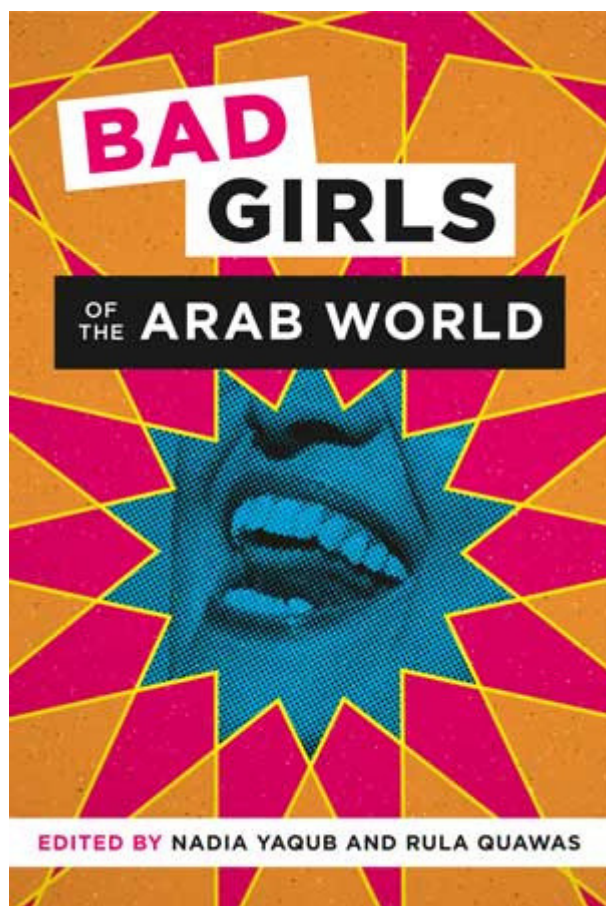
Another of Dr. Yaghoobi's students, Rain Tiller, had their work accepted by *Sprinkle: An Undergraduate Journal of Queer and Feminist Studies* for publication. Their work was entitled, "A Forbidden Act: Illicit Sex and the Colonial Heterosexual Matrix."



Dr. Yaghoobi and her students with Dean Guskiewicz.



# ASIAN STUDIES FACULTY PUBLICATIONS



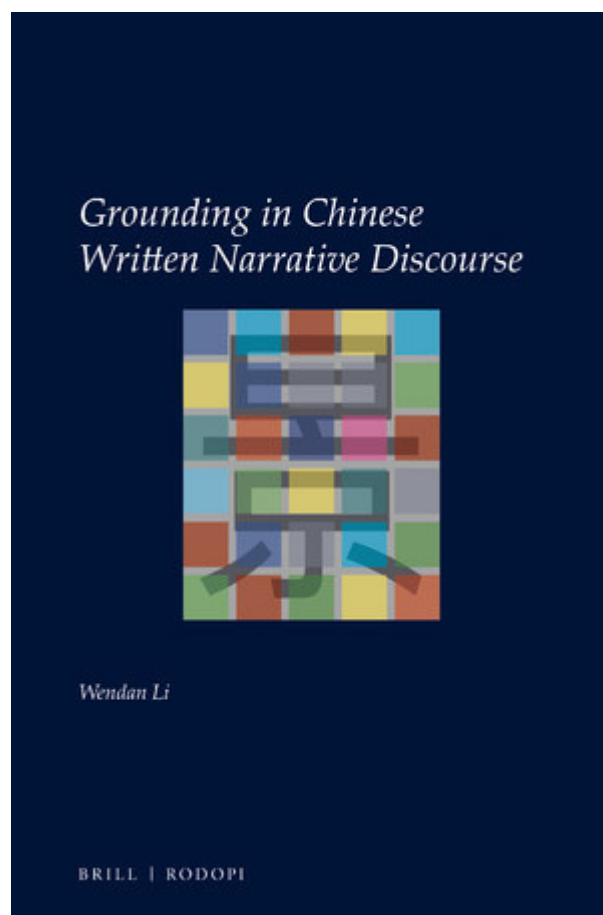
## NADIA YAQUB

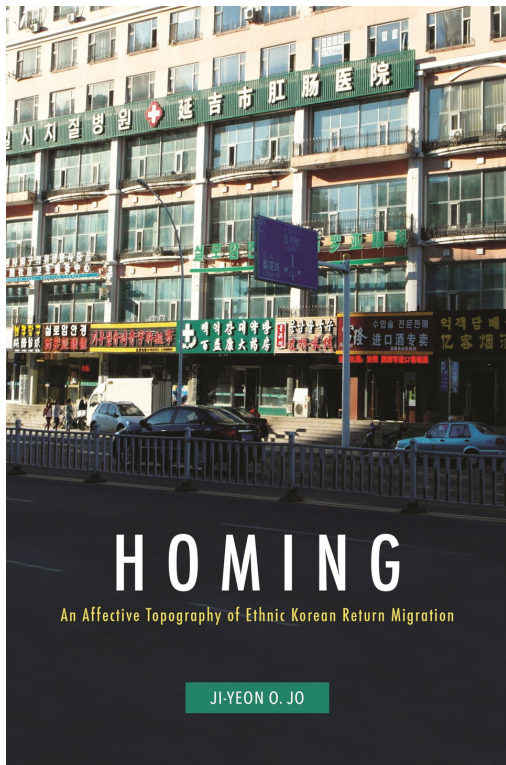
Women's transgressive behaviors and perspectives are challenging societal norms in the Arab world, giving rise to anxiety and public debate. Simultaneously, however, other Arab women are unwillingly finding themselves labeled "bad" as authority figures attempt to redirect scrutiny from serious social ills such as patriarchy and economic exploitation, or as they impose new restrictions on women's behavior in response to uncertainty and change in society. *Bad Girls of the Arab World* elucidates how both intentional and unintentional transgressions make manifest the social and cultural constructs that define proper and improper behavior, as well as the social and political policing of gender, racial, and class divisions.

The works collected here address the experiences of women from a range of ages, classes, and educational backgrounds who live in the Arab world and beyond. They include short pieces in which the women themselves reflect on their experiences with transgression; academic articles about performance, representation, activism, history, and social conditions; an artistic intervention; and afterwords by the acclaimed novelists Laila al-Atrash and Miral al-Tahawy. The book demonstrates that women's transgression is both an agent and a symptom of change, a site of both resistance and repression. Showing how transnational forces such as media discourses, mobility and confinement, globalization, and neoliberalism, as well as the legacy of colonialism, shape women's badness, *Bad Girls of the Arab World* offers a rich portrait of women's varied experiences at the boundaries of propriety in the twenty-first century.

## WENDAN LI

*In Grounding in Chinese Written Narrative Discourse*  
Wendan Li offers a comprehensive and innovative account of how Mandarin Chinese, as a language without extensive morphological marking, highlights (or foregrounds) major events of a narrative and demotes (or backgrounds) other supporting descriptions. Qualitative and quantitative methods in the analysis and examinations of authentic written text provide extensive evidence to demonstrate that various types of morpho-syntactic devices are used in a wide range of structural units in Chinese to mark the distinction between foregrounding and backgrounding. The analysis paves the way for future studies to systematically approach grounding-related issues. The typological viewpoint adopted in the chapters serves well readers from both the Chinese tradition and other languages in discourse analysis.



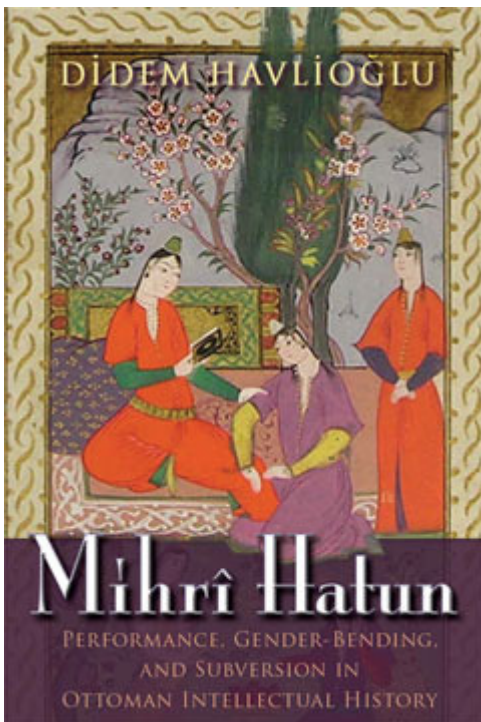


## JI-YEON JO

Millions of ethnic Koreans have been driven from the Korean Peninsula over the course of the region's modern history. Emigration was often the personal choice of migrants hoping to escape economic and political hardship, but it was also enforced or encouraged by governmental relocation and migration projects in both colonial and postcolonial times. The turning point in South Korea's overall migration trajectory occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the nation's increased economic prosperity and global visibility, along with shifting geopolitical relationships between the First World and Second World, precipitated a migration flow to South Korea. Since the early 1990s, South Korea's foreign-resident population has soared more than 3,000 percent.

*Homing* investigates the experiences of legacy migrants—later-generation diaspora Koreans who “return” to South Korea—from China, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the United States. Unlike their parents or grandparents, they have no firsthand experience of their ancestral homeland. They inherited an imagined homeland through memories, stories, pictures, and traditions passed down by family and community, or through images disseminated by the media. When diaspora Koreans migrate to South Korea, they confront far more than a new living situation: they must navigate their own shifting emotions as their expectations for their new homeland—and its expectations of them—confront reality. Everyday experiences and social encounters—whether welcoming or humiliating—all contribute to their sense of belonging in the South.

*Homing* addresses some of the most vexing and pressing issues of contemporary transnational migration—citizenship, cultural belonging, language, and family relationships—and highlights their affective dimensions. Using accounts gleaned through interviews, author Ji-Yeon Jo situates migrant experiences within the historical context of each diaspora. Her book is the first to analyze comparatively the migration experiences of ethnic Koreans from three diverse diasporas, whose presence in South Korea and ongoing relationships with diaspora homelands have challenged and destabilized existing understandings of Korean peoplehood.



## DIDEM HAVLIOĞLU

The early modern Ottoman poet Mihrî Hatun (1460–1515) succeeded in drawing an admiring audience and considerable renown during a time when few women were accepted into the male-dominated intellectual circles. Her poetry collection is among the earliest bodies of women's writing in the Middle East and Islamic literature, providing an exceptional vantage point on intellectual history. With this volume, Havlioğlu not only gives readers access to this rare text but also investigates the factors that allowed Mihrî to survive and thrive despite her clear departure from the cultural norms of the time. Placing the poet in the context of her era and environment, Havlioğlu finds that the poet's dramatic, masterful performance and subversiveness are the very reasons for her endurance and acclaim in intellectual history. Mihrî performed in a way that embraced her marginal position as a woman and leveraged it to her advantage. Havlioğlu's astute and nuanced portrait gives readers a fascinating glimpse into the life of a woman poet in a highly gendered society and suggests that women have been part of intellectual history long before the modern period.



# TWENTY YEARS OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES AT UNC



Students listen to presentations during the 20th annual Religions of India field trip.

On Sunday, February 18, Professor Afroz Taj and John Caldwell conducted their 20th annual Religions of India field trip. With over 150 students from ASIA 164, ASIA 59, HNUR 306, and other classes, they visited the Sikh Gurudwara in Durham, the Hindu Bhawan in Morrisville, and the Raleigh Islamic Center. The participants got to experience three major South Asian religions as practiced in North Carolina, and enjoyed a tasty complimentary lunch ("langar") at the Sikh Gurudwara. At each site members of the Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim communities gave a brief introduction to the basic elements of their faiths, followed by intensive question and answer sessions. As Dr. Taj pointed out, "The main takeaway of the field trip is that despite radical differences in these religions, they share a common message of tolerance, tradition, and community."

Afroz and John also celebrated the 20th anniversary of the UNC Summer in India program this year, establishing it as one of the longest-running faculty-led programs offered to college students across the country.

## JAPANESE PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Sean Jung, a sophomore studying fourth-year Japanese here at UNC, participated in the annual Duke Speech Contest in March. The title of his speech was "We Who are Lost." He received first prize.

Our Japanese teaching faculty (Katsuhiko Sawamura, Fumi Iwashita, Yuki Aratake, and Yuko Kato) also presented a paper regarding Extracurricular Cultural Activities at the 32nd Annual Southeastern Association of Teachers of Japanese conference.





# SHAC'S MANDARIN INTERPRETERS HELP THE CAROLINA COMMUNITY

SHAC's Mandarin interpreting leaders [L to R]: Jacky Zheng, Jessica Blanks, Alyssa Guo, and Jimmy Chin. Photo by UNC Health Care.

When the Student Health Action Coalition (SHAC) campus clinic noticed an uptick in Mandarin-speaking patients in 2016, SHAC's leaders contacted Carolina's Department of Asian Studies and asked if there were any students who would be interested in providing interpreting services at the clinic. The response was swift. Within a week, more than 30 students had expressed their willingness to get involved and desire to learn more.

Jimmy Chin, a senior majoring in Asian studies and economics, was one of the students who answered the call.



"I don't necessarily have an interest in medicine, but I thought this was a cool idea, an opportunity to serve the community, and a chance to practice my Chinese," Chin said. Jessica Blanks, a senior studying biology and Asian studies, said she's hoping to pursue a masters in public health after graduation and ultimately go to medical school.

"I was really inspired by the mission of SHAC and the commitment to providing care for all people and fighting health care inequality," Blanks said. She went on to add, "The patients that we see are so thankful. When they realize there is someone there who can speak with them in Mandarin, you can see them relax."

Anecdotally, many of the Mandarin-speaking patients are family members of visiting scholars at Carolina or other surrounding universities. Word of SHAC's free services has spread through the community by word of mouth and the patients value SHAC as a place they can take their children for checkups, school physicals and vaccinations. "I've observed that many of the Mandarin-speaking families that come to the clinic seem to know each other, or reference someone who told them about SHAC," said Kyle Riker, the leader of SHAC's interpreting services. "This is a community that's very engaged and in constant communication."

As the need continues to grow, Riker credits Blanks, Chin, Zheng, Guo, and their team of interpreters.

"They've done so much work on their own to build this team," said Riker. "They have so much energy, are so excited, and have really allowed us to provide a great service."



## ASIAN STUDIES HONORS COLLOQUIUM

Three Asian Studies students (shown at left with American Studies students) wrote and defended honors theses and presented their research in the annual joint colloquium. Their theses are as follows:

"Rethinking Images of Violence: Abounaddara and the Right to Dignity"  
Sam Barber

"Making Space and Women's Activism in the Arab World"  
Marisa Breathwaite

"Confronting Modernity in Kawabata Yasunari's Literature"  
Quade Robinson



[L to R]: Sam Barber, Quade Robinson, Mackenzie Kwok, Morgan Vickers, Marisa Breathwaite, and Chris Garcia.

# DID YOU KNOW? THE ASIAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT PROUDLY SUPPORTS...

- 14 Arabic majors and 44 minors
- 70 Chinese majors and 89 minors
- 3 Hebrew minors
- 6 South Asian Studies majors and 11 Hindi-Urdu minors
- 32 Japanese majors and 42 minors
- 34 Korean minors
- 8 Persian minors (that's doubling last year's number!)
- 2 Middle Eastern Languages minors
- 16 Interdisciplinary Asian Studies majors and 23 minors
- ...in addition to thousands of other Carolina students who enroll in our language and culture courses!



## WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUPPORT US?

### 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.

To make an online gift, please go to <https://give.unc.edu>. Click the **Search Funds** tab and enter fund designation **101030** to find Asian Studies.

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