

Asian Studies Program Newsletter



UVM, COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Spring 2014

From the Director



The Asian Studies Program at UVM had another fabulous year of exciting campus events in 2013, and our students continued to enrich their understanding of the Asian world through study abroad adventures across the region. This latest edition of our program newsletter offers a colorful glimpse of these many terrific opportunities for learning about the cultures of the Asian world in the College of Arts and Sciences at UVM. Enjoy!
— Prof. Erik Esselstrom



Asian Studies major Eugene Kinlow during his study abroad semester in Kunming, China



Alumni Michael Hoffman in Taiwan as a 2013-2014 Fulbright English Teaching Assistant

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Majors in Chinese and Asian Studies from UVM enjoying a trip to the Great Wall during their study abroad term in China



Alumni Grace Stanford in Japan as a JET Program English Teacher

Student Adventures in Asia

From Alisha Sud



Living in Kunming, China for seven months both drastically improved my ability to communicate in Mandarin and enabled me to have an inside look at all of the dramatic change that is sweeping modern Chinese society. It's amazing how quickly it becomes second nature to speak in a foreign language that you've only been studying for a few years when very few people speak English outside of your university campus—everyday activities become learning experiences and new adventures. The Yunnan province is full of beautiful scenery and is famous for its Pu'er, which is my new favorite variety of fermented black tea. It's also home to the largest number of ethnic minorities in China, and it was fascinating to observe those peoples keeping ancient traditions alive amidst an era of globalization.

One of my favorite parts of my experience in China was making new friends in unexpected places. As a foreigner, a lot of Chinese people were often fascinated that I was able to speak Mandarin. I tried to strike up conversations with everyone I met and was introduced to a lot of interesting people this way. Reflecting on my time abroad, I'm amazed by how easy it was to adapt to a new environment and engage with cultural practices that were completely foreign to me. I came home with a heightened interest in China's history and language, deepened love for Chinese cuisine, and friendships that will truly last a lifetime. I'm already eager to start planning my next trip back!



From Eugene Kinlow



I would say that it was more than an experience, it was a lifestyle. My name is Eugene Kinlow and for seven months in 2013 I lived and studied in the southwestern Chinese city of Kunming. It was late in May when we first arrived in what is known as the "spring city." I can distinctly remember the entire group being on a travel bus after just leaving the airport. You could see the tired and groggy looks on the faces of most of the group with the glow of iPods and iPads as the only light. We were heading toward what would be our home for the summer and a glorious beginning of this journey.

I had so many fabulous experiences in China (including a wild Fourth of July BBQ in a public park!), but one adventure really stands out in my mind. It was early October and I was on my second three week break of the school session. During the last break I had decided to travel with friends to Hainan, a tropical island off the coast of southern China, but this time I decided to stay in Kunming and practice my Chinese. Since May I had made many friends in China, both westerners and Chinese, but my closest friend was definitely my Chinese buddy Xiao Qiang. He was a regular-sized Chinese guy around my age, height and build, but he also had dreadlocks just like me. Hanging out with Xiao Qiang during much of my spare time in Kunming had really improved both my Chinese listening and speaking skills.



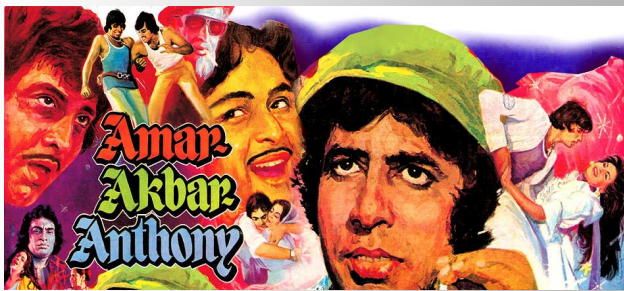
It was around 9 or so in the morning when he called. He asked where I was and wanted to know if I would meet him at his store. It sounded a bit strange, but I threw on some clothes and headed to the shop. When I arrived Xiao Qiang gave me a good reason for waking me up before 10 during my vacation. He asked me if I wanted to go traveling with him and he said we would just take a bus 3 hours or so out of town to his friend's house. He assured me we would be back the next day. I had a phone and 50 kuai to my name, so I was surely in for something special. The bus ride was actually pretty enjoyable, just sitting next to a couple Chinese country men who were very interested in me, and then enjoying a showing of *Rush Hour*, starring Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker. The food at Xiao Qiang's friend's house was delicious—a never ending table of vegetable and meat dishes. My favorite was the crispy pork bits, deep fried little chopped up pieces of pork eaten off the bone like a drumstick. After dinner I got a chance to go to a KTV, which is a place for young Chinese to gather socially and sing karaoke. The night was wild and filled with singing, food, and laughter. It was a nice taste of regular Chinese life, and afterward I felt like my life in China was also becoming less a mysterious adventure and more just my everyday experience.

Program Events in 2013



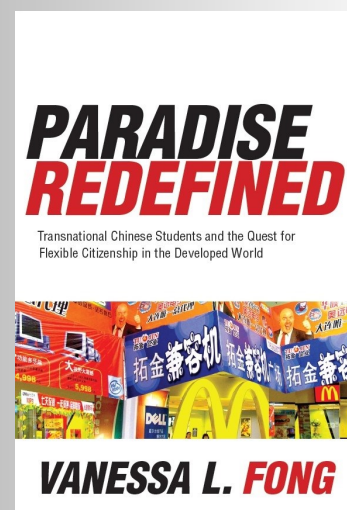
Andy Rotman speaks on South Asian Cinema

On Friday, April 12, 2013, Associate Professor of Religion from Smith College, Andy Rotman, presented a talk entitled "The Making of Masculinity in a Landmark Bollywood Film: Amar, Akbar, Anthony and the Politics of Muscular Hinduism." Sponsored by the UVM Asian Studies Program Lintilhac Seminar Series and the Departments of History and Religion, the talk explored the 1977 Bollywood film *Amar Akbar Anthony*, which tells the story of three brothers who are separated from their parents and each other in early childhood and then adopted by fathers of three different religions—Hindu, Muslim, and Christian. The film chronicles how the brothers recover from this loss, highlighting the roles played by religion and love, the state and family. Professor Rotman argued that, while usually celebrated as a story about secularism, the film also makes pointed claims about gender, politics, and modernity, and the ways that a muscular Hinduism is necessary for healing the Indian nation.



Vanessa Fong shares her research on Chinese students

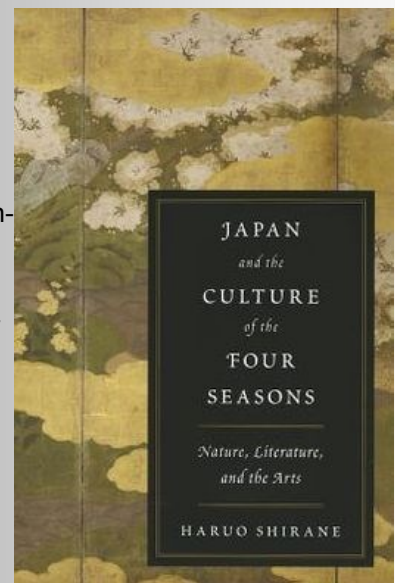
In early February of 2013 the Asian Studies Program' brought China expert Dr. Vanessa Fong to UVM for a public lecture entitled Paradise Redefined: Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developed World and a meet-the-author session with students who had read her most recent book in Professor Jeanne Shea's Anth 152: Chinese Culture and Society course. Dr. Fong is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Amherst College and author of numerous articles and two books, including *Only Hope*, a groundbreaking ethnographic exploration of the social, economic, and psychological development of children born since China's one-child policy was introduced, and *Paradise Redefined*, an analysis exploring China's globalization through the expectations and experiences that affect how various Chinese only-children make decisions about studying abroad, staying abroad, immigration, and returning home. Bringing together a broad range of students and faculty, local and international students and scholars, as well as community members, Dr. Fong's visit enriched the ties of understanding that are being continually renewed as new generations of students at UVM come to study about China and new cohorts of Chinese students come to UVM to learn about the US.



Haruo Shirane discusses Japanese literature



In April 2013, the Asian Studies Program and Department of Asian Languages and Literatures hosted Professor Haruo Shirane (Columbia University), preeminent scholar of premodern Japanese Literature, who gave a presentation about his recent book *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons: Nature, Literature, and the Arts*. Professor Shirane illuminated the interconnected and shifting meanings of the four seasons within Japanese culture across historical eras and various social classes. UVM students asked thoughtful questions during the discussion session and had the opportunity to purchase signed copies of professor Shirane's book.



A promotional graphic for the 'Jiro Dreams of Sushi' event. It features a group photo of students and a man in a white chef's coat. Text includes 'UVM Asian Studies Program Jiro Dreams of Sushi Night April 30, 2013' and a quote from Yoshikazu Ono: 'ALWAYS LOOK AHEAD AND ABOVE YOURSELF. ALWAYS TRY TO IMPROVE ON YOURSELF. ALWAYS STRIVE TO ELEVATE YOUR CRAFT. THAT'S WHAT HE TAUGHT ME.' There is also a small inset image of Jiro Ono and a tray of sushi.

In late April a group of majors and minors gathered to watch and discuss the fabulous documentary film *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* while devouring an enormous tray of sushi themselves.

Alumni News

From Grace Stanford (2013)

Since August 2013, I have been living in Japan, working in one junior high school and three elementary schools as an Assistant Language Teacher through the JET Program. These past 5 months have been more full than I imagined 5 months could be: moving across the world, living in a small, rural town 95% destroyed by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, adopting a lifestyle that has Japanese as the language in which most of my daily social-interactions are conducted, traveling and adventuring around my new home, and of course, learning how to teach.



There is nothing quite like standing before a group of twenty-five 6th graders with blank, uncomprehending looks on their faces as you try, and fail, to explain a homemade game that, you slowly realize, nobody in the room (yourself included) actually understands. In my short teaching career, that class from early September marked a low point that I still look back on with a shudder. However, I am happy to report that since then, I have learned much about teaching, and can confidently say that the blank looks have largely been dropped and, dare I say, replaced by something akin to excitement. I can't say that it's universal, but of the 8 elementary classes I regularly teach, I can see a growing excitement for English that asks me to feed it, and the challenge of leading a class that can do so is what makes each day at an elementary school thrilling.



That thrill grew even larger when, towards the end of November, I was able, in one of my elementary schools, and in addition to my regular 5th and 6th grade classes, to hold class in the younger grades. I decided that the simple exchange of, "How are you?" "I'm ___" was the natural place to begin their English journey, due to its simplicity, importance, and the meaningful communication it accomplishes with such few words. I executed four such classes, teaching a variety of answers, drilling, and practicing with hilarious games of charades that had even the shiest students rolling on the floor in a mimed, agonized hunger, leaping into the air in silent happiness, and yawning until their jaws threatened to pop off with a fatigue unrivaled by even the most overworked of peoples.

The first fruits of those classes were revealed two weeks later when I visited the school again. Helping the first graders roll the carpets during cleaning time, I was already basking in the satisfied glow of having been greeted by those eight smiling faces with an enormous "HOW ARE YOU!?". One 1st grader was repeating that phrase to herself as she cleaned, and a passing 6th grade boy heard. Intrigued, he took a step closer and replied, "I'm fine. How are you?" At first taken aback, the 1st grader quickly recovered, leapt to her feet, and in an enormous voice, bellowed, "I'm HAPPY!!!"

Although small, this English exchange between the 1st grader and the 6th grader held me on a euphoric high for days. Teaching English has ignited within me a new passion for my native language and an appreciation for the art of communication, and I want nothing more than to spread that to my ever-increasing body of students. In the months to come, I hope that many such moments can occur with my students at all levels, and that their use of English can become something in which they take great pride in and, even more importantly, enjoy.

From Michael Hoffman (2013)

I graduated from the University of Vermont with the class of 2013 and had three declared majors: Chinese, Asian Studies and Spanish. I am currently serving on an English Teaching Fulbright Fellowship in Taiwan. My interest in Chinese language and culture was what prompted me to apply for this opportunity and I am very glad I did.



Living in Taiwan is a constant adventure, and while I cannot pretend that teaching elementary school is my calling it is nonetheless a very valuable experience. I am stationed in the northwest of the Island in a town called Yilan, about an hour outside the capital Taipei. Here in this small town, located on a plateau of flat land between the mountains to west and the Pacific Ocean to east, I teach in two public elementary schools. My students range from first graders to sixth graders and almost all have only a limited understanding of English. This is however a blessing in disguise, as it prompts me to have to use Mandarin to communicate with them and thus provides me with a lot of much needed practice.



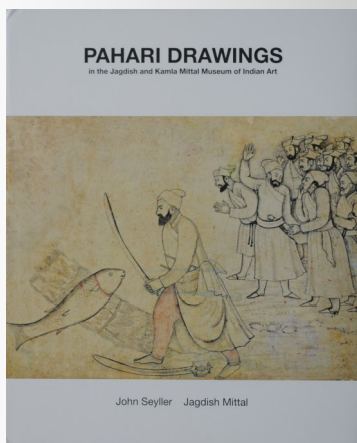
Although my primary job here is teaching English I live for my free time. I spend the time outside of school exploring the island and interacting with the local people and studying Chinese. Taiwan is a magical place that is overflowing with a wealth of culture and natural beauty. From the black sand beaches to the windblown mountaintops, from the cascading waterfalls to a myriad hot springs it is truly a special place and I am blessed to be able to serve my country and the people of Taiwan in such a place. What is more, however, Taiwan is an extremely diverse place that is home to a culture as complex as any I have ever encountered. It is a mix of traditions and has been molded by outside influences for hundreds of years. The result is that the Taiwanese people, given the nature of their diverse backgrounds, are remarkably friendly and welcoming. They are both rooted in tradition and progressive in thought and it is to them that I truly owe my appreciation and gratitude for without their hospitality I could never be here.

Asian Studies Program Faculty News

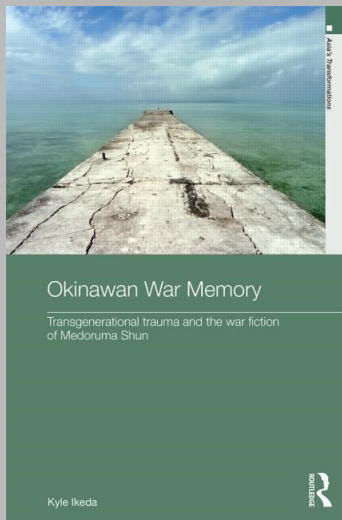


Prof Tom Borchert is spending the 2013-2014 conducting research in Thailand with an award from the Fulbright Foundation.

The Asian Studies Program recently made its inaugural awards from the **Seybolt Faculty Fund in Asian Studies**, an endowment created in 2013 from several generous donations made in memory of our kind friend, colleague and mentor of many years, Peter Seybolt. With her award Assistant Professor of Religion Ilyse Morgenstern-Fuerst will travel to London to utilize the India Office archives for her research concerning Muslims under the British Raj. Associate Professor of Anthropology Jeanne Shea will use her award to facilitate her field work on elder care in Hebei Province, China.

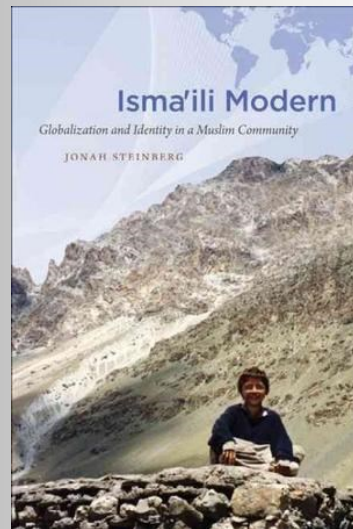


Prof John Seyller saw two new books appear in 2013 in connection with his ongoing research on Indian art.

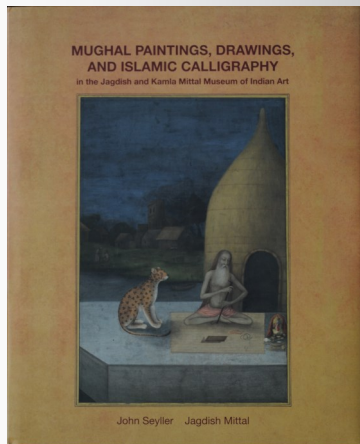


Prof Kyle Ikeda's book *Okinawan War Memory: transgenerational trauma and the war fiction of Medoruma Shun* was published by Routledge in 2013

Prof Jonah Steinberg received the 2013 Book Award in Citizenship Studies from Wayne State University for his *Isma'ili Modern: Globalization and Identity in a Muslim Community* (UNC Press, 2011)



Prof Esselstrom took in some sumo action during a brief trip to Tokyo in May 2013.



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