UVM Alumnu on Chinese TV Reality Show

Ethen Backus, a UVM alumnus, was on “You Are the One,” a popular reality show by Jiangsu Province TV in China. It was televised on the Chinese National Day, October 1, 2016, and was watched by millions of people in China. The show has 24 single young women who interact with a single man brought on to the stage and decide whether a good match can be made.

Ethen and Miss Tang have found each other attractive and suitable. They have decided to date and go steady with each other as a result of their interactions during the show. Their successful match has won them a free vacation trip to Maldives. They will win more prizes by the show sponsors if they eventually get married.

Ethan now manages a trading company in Chongqing, China, and he says that the factor that got him on is his Chinese language skills.

The show is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MM2ndXyN9D&app=desktop. He comes in at about 18 minutes.

Japanese Major Alumnae Alisa Holm

Alisa Holm, a Japanese Major alumnae and a Peter Seybolt Award recipient (class of 2015), was accepted into the Global Art Practice graduate program at Tokyo University of the Arts, one of the premier art universities in Japan, beginning in April of 2016. Alisa’s Honor’s College thesis, “The Forest in the Depths of Her Eyes” Sayoko’s Silence and Art-Making as a Reparative Force in Medoruma Shun’s “Me no ooku no mori” (Advisor, Kyle Ikeda) was successfully defended in December 2015. Because of her outstanding academic performance and achievement, she was also inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest and most prestigious academic honor society in the United States.

Ms. Corson, senior lecturer of Japanese, and Alisa Holm (on the right) at the Phi Beta Kappa induction ceremony.
I Am Back to UVM to Teach and Learn

I graduated from UVM with a BA ten years ago. I am currently finishing a PhD in Chinese Literature with the Department of East Asian Languages & Literature at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and I came back to UVM and joined the Department of Asian Languages and Literatures as a visiting faculty member in the fall semester of 2015 when Professor Yin was on leave for the year.

My research focuses on medieval Chinese poetry and narrative, ancient Chinese history and historiography, and translation studies. My current projects range from the development of a scholarly monograph examining Shanshui shi 山水诗 or "mountains and waters poetry" dating from the Wei-Jin 魏晋 (265–420 CE) Era to the Tang 唐 Dynasty, to articles that include a study of Wang Wei's 王维 (ca. 669-761) parting poetry which attempts to reassess his intellectual allegiances, a reconsideration of the poetic "self-elegy" in Six Dynasties verse that explores stylized imitations of wange 挽歌 (funeral dirges), and a comparative examination of ambassadors to foreign states in the Shiji 史记 (Grand Scribe's Records). I’ve spent my adult life studying Chinese language and literature, and more than half a decade living, studying, and teaching in Mainland China. Whether it comes from my wife, a member of Nahki people living in China’s southwestern periphery, our soon to be six year old son who clearly takes after her, or from a text written many centuries in the past, I am constantly reminded of how little I understand of Chinese language culture, and how far I have to go before I comprehend the reasons behind this ignorance. One of the Tang Dynasty’s greatest minds, Han Yu 韩愈 (768-824), once famously wrote that teachers are “those who pass on the Way, offer instruction, and resolve doubts.” While I certainly plan providing instruction while helping my colleagues transmit the “Way,” I am glad that the students and faculty at UVM and the surrounding community of Chinese language teachers and learners in Vermont have provided me with help in resolving my own doubts. I’m still looking forward to learning from you all.

--Thomas Noel
UVM Class of 2006

I Would Not Be Where I Am Today

I began studying Japanese on a whim. I had always had an interest in Japan, so when I saw there was an opening in my schedule to take a class I decided to enroll. Looking back now, that was one of the decisions I’ve ever made.

After graduation I was accepted as a participant in the JET Program. They placed me in rural Akita prefecture, far from any metropolitan centers. There I worked as an elementary school English teacher for fifth and sixth graders. It was a difficult transition period in the beginning as none of my coworkers spoke English and I was entrusted with many new responsibilities. However, the challenges presented opportunities to advance my language ability and gain new professional skills. Thanks to the necessity of Japanese in my daily life, I passed the Japanese Language Proficiency Test N1 level in July of 2016.

My time teaching was fantastic, but at the end of three years I decided to advance my career in a different direction. I now work for a tourism-based area revitalization company in my adopted home of Odate City. My day-to-day tasks include translation work, product development, and foreign outreach.

Without the fantastic UVM Japanese program I would not be where I am today professionally or personally. I highly encourage anyone interested in learning about foreign cultures, encountering new perspectives, or challenging themselves to grow to sign up for a class with the Japanese program!

--Colin Flinn
UVM Class of 2013
Faculty Members’ Activities

Kazuko Carlson offered a new course titled Asian Languages Teaching Practicum in Spring 2016 with Ms. Hu, lecturer of Chinese and Dr. Manetta, associate professor of anthropology, as a result of being awarded with the Engaged Practices Innovation Grant. She and Ms. Hu will make a presentation on their course experiences at the Global Education Forum in Philadelphia in October. She also won 2016-2017 Japanese Teaching Material Purchase Grant from the Japan Foundation. She will be working with the Japanese House program students to offer a variety of cultural activities this academic year, including Ancient Food of East and West, a joint event with the Department of Classics, in November.

Mutsumi Corson has been offering kanji character courses (Kanjí is Key 1 & II) since Fall 2013. She continues improving the courses and is pleased to get positive feedback from students. She hosts the Japanese Book Club every Wednesday. She had a weekly meeting with a student about the Hyakunin Isshu (A Hundred Poems) in Spring 2016. The student is currently in Japan and taking a course of the Hyakunin Isshu in Japanese. Corson enjoys teaching students in the Japanese Program as they inspire her with new ideas in teaching. To explore the educational exchange opportunities for UVM students, she visited Rikkyo University in Tokyo with Ms. Natsumi Ueno in June 2016.

Kyle Ikeda was in Okinawa during sabbatical for Spring 2016 gathering information for and working on a translation of a short story by Medoruma Shun. His article “Writing and Remembering the Battle of Okinawa: War Memory and Literature” appears in the Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature (2016). Professor Ikeda is also writing the ‘Afterword’ for Takuma Sminkey’s (visiting professor at UVM for 2015-2016) translation of Medoruma Shun’s novel In the Woods of Memory (Me no oku no mori) scheduled to come out in June 2017. Professor Ikeda is the faculty advisor for the UVM Taiko Club, which was granted club status in May, and the UVM Anime Club.

Diana Sun presented a paper entitled “Teaching Elementary Chinese in an American Cultural Context” at the 13th International Conference of Chinese Pedagogy, held at Inner Mongolia University in China on July 9-11, 2015. During her sabbatical leave in the academic year of 2014-2015, she wrote four sets of listening and speaking exercises for CHIN001, CHIN002, CHIN051 and CHIN052. As the faculty director of the Chinese House at Global Village, she led Chinese House members and other Chinese language students in a series of events, including learning Taiji fan boxing, making dumplings to celebrate the Chinese New Year, experiencing the art and techniques of Chinese calligraphy, playing traditional Chinese games, listening to Chinese music played with traditional musical instruments, and learning to sing Chinese songs.

Natsumi Ueno is teaching JAPN 001, JAPN 101, and JAPN 295 this semester. She is also serving as a faculty advisor for the a cappella group, Zest, this academic year. Over the summer of 2016, she taught at Princeton in Ishikawa, a Japanese language program organized and managed by Princeton University in Japan. She is currently interested in pronunciation education. She attended conferences and workshops on Japanese pedagogy in both Japan and the US to explore more effective ways to teach pronunciation skills.

Ying Hu took part in UVM’s Hybrid Course Initiative program, and then she designed and taught a hybrid course on Conversational Chinese over the summer of 2016. This semester, besides teaching CHIN 001, 051, 201, and 251, she is also taking care of the Chinese-English Language Partner Program. In October, Ying and Kazuko will be presenting their practice in the Asian Language Teaching Practicum course at the Global Education Forum in Philadelphia.

John Yin was on sabbatical leave in the academic year 2015-2016, working on his textbook project. In April 2016, he signed a contract with a prestigious university press to have the set of Chinese language textbooks published. On October 18, 2015, invited as a keynote speaker, he made a presentation entitled "Two Major Issues and Their Solutions in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language" at the 3rd International Chinese Teaching Conference of Confucius Institutes & Confucius Classrooms in North America at Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He contributed an encyclopedic article on "Chinese Characters" to The Routledge Encyclopedia of the Chinese Language, which was published in in Feb. 2016. 2016 is the second year for him to serve as the Executive Director of the Chinese Language Teachers Association, USA.
Program Events & News

Calligraphy Demonstration and Hands-on Experiences in Three Languages
Towards the end of the spring semester in 2016, a joint workshop on Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese calligraphy was held. Students who were good at calligraphy in one of the three languages demonstrated their talents. Other participating students had hands-on experiences to write in Arabic, Chinese, or Japanese.

Chinese Program Extracurricular Activities
The Chinese-English Language Partner Program helps students find their Chinese or English speaking partners. To apply to get a partner or be a partner, go to the webpage: http://www.uvm.edu/~chinese/?Page=CELPP.htm.

Mid-Autumn Festival Music & Poems Night was held on September 15. "Flowers and Moonlight by the Spring River," a classical Chinese music piece was played by Ms. Ying Hu and Mr. Xiao Ran, an international student from China. Students also recited the poem Jing Ye Si (Thoughts in the Silent Night) by Li Bai (701-762), learned the moon festival legend, and tasted moon cakes.

The Chinese House has its educational cooking events on three times in the fall semester. House members learn to cook Chinese pancakes, scrambled eggs with tomatoes, noodles and dumplings. Other activities include learning to write Chinese characters with a brush pen, doing Taiji fan boxing, and learning to sing a Chinese popular song.

Japanese Program Extracurricular Activities
Japanese language students had a class dinner at Gaku Ramen, a new Japanese ramen noodle shop, in downtown Burlington.

A Japanese calligraphy workshop was conducted by Mrs. Carlson in Summer 2016.

Japanese Program while he was here at UVM, September 2015-March 2016. He hosted Tea Time at Takuma's house.

Time with Takuma. Japanese conversation hour, every Friday.

The Japanese program sponsors Taiko Workshops with Burlington Taiko’s Stuart Paton. Interested students can learn to do Taiko performances. See UVM Japanese Taiko Club performing at the L/L Annual Ice Cream Social: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlyDvXs6o5&feature=youtu.be

Prof. Ikeda, faculty advisor of the Taiko Club, and a student performed Quichi Daiko: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hlbew6LEU5w