



THE REED

Spring 2017



The Reed

Spring 2017

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Summer festival held by
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Greetings from Morningside Heights! This spring semester started off with the exciting news that the Weatherhead East Asian Institute was ranked as one of the top ten Regional Studies Centers in the World in the University of Pennsylvania Lauder Institute's 2016 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report. The ranking (determined by an international survey of over 7,500 scholars, public and private donors, policy makers, and journalists) underscores our Institute's global reach as well as its reputation as a world-class center for East Asian studies.

I am pleased to report that, with new faculty joining the Institute during the academic year, we are only growing as a leading interdisciplinary center of East Asian studies. In this issue of *The Reed*, you will meet Qin Gao, a new Professor of Social Work in the Columbia School of Social Work who is a renowned expert on China's social welfare policy. Professor Gao, a Columbia PhD, is already making important contributions to the Institute by furthering our students' and colleagues' understanding of poverty, migration, and social assistance in contemporary China.

New Institute member Nicholas Bartlett, also featured in this issue, joined Barnard College as Assistant Professor of Contemporary Chinese Culture and Society in the fall of 2016. A medical anthropologist, Professor Bartlett conducts fieldwork involving drug addiction and mental health in China. I look forward to seeing both Professor Bartlett and Professor Gao open new paths of research and inquiry about contemporary China at WEAI in the coming years.

This issue of *The Reed* also introduces you to two of our visiting faculty: Miki Kaneda, a Visiting Assistant Professor of Music who studies transpacific musical and media experimentation; and Victor Louzon, the Institute's INTERACT Postdoctoral Scholar who studies war and political violence in twentieth century East Asia.

This *Reed* showcases several spring event highlights, which, in addressing such topics as state capitalism in China, United States - Southeast Asia relations, and cognitive and material aspects of the hand production of textiles in Asia, reflect the broad scope of conferences, workshops, and lectures that take place at the Institute every year. I hope that students, alumni, and friends of the Institute will join us again in the next academic year for the many events that promise to be equally thought-provoking and enriching.

During the 2017-2018 year, I will be on sabbatical at the Institute for Advanced Study. In my absence, Professor Madeleine Zelin will direct the WEAI in fall 2017 and Professor Xiaobo Lü will take the helm in spring 2018. Both Professor Zelin and Professor Lü have served multiple terms as WEAI Director, and I am delighted that the Institute will again benefit from their wise leadership and dedication to its mission.

Eugenia Lean
DIRECTOR

WEAI NEWS

WEAI Named a Top Regional Studies Center and Think Tank by UPenn's Lauder Institute

Qin Gao Publishes New Book *Welfare, Work, and Poverty: Social Assistance in China*

In March 2017, Oxford University Press published *Welfare, Work and Poverty: Social Assistance in China*, which provides the first systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the impacts and effectiveness of China's primary social assistance program, Dibao, since its inception in 1993.



The Weatherhead East Asian Institute is excited to announce that it has been recognized as one of the top ten Regional Studies Centers and as one of the top 40 University-Affiliated Think Tanks in the University of Pennsylvania Lauder Institute's 2016 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report.

WEAI placed eighth in the "Best Regional Studies Center (University-Affiliated)" category in the report, which has been published annually since 2008 by the Lauder Institute's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program. Additionally, WEAI, along with Columbia University's Earth Institute, was ranked among the top 40 "Best University-Affiliated Think Tanks" in the world.

"The ranking is a real honor, and recognizes the extraordinary and ongoing achievements of our faculty, research scholars, and staff," said Eugenia Lean, Director of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute and Associate Professor of Chinese History at Columbia University. "The honor encourages us to continue our commitment to generating knowledge about Asia, even as we think critically about the role of the regional institute—or 'think tank'—in the twenty-first century. I have every expectation that we will continue to contribute in exemplary fashion to Columbia and beyond."

According to the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP), its rankings of global institutions are "the result of an international survey of over 7,500 scholars, public and private donors, policy makers, and journalists who helped rank more than 6,600 think tanks using a set of 28 criteria developed by the TTCSP." James G. McGann, the author of the report and the director of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, explains that the index's purpose is "to increase the profile and performance of think tanks and raise the public awareness of the important role think tanks play in governments and civil societies around the globe."

WEAI Co-hosts Second Annual Columbia Association for Asian Studies Reception

WEAI thanks the many students, faculty, alumni, and friends who attended the March 17, 2017 Columbia University Reception at the Association for Asian Studies conference in Toronto. The event was cosponsored by the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, the Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture, the Center for Korean Research, the Burke Center for Japanese Art, the Tang Center for Early China, and Columbia University Press.



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

FEB
8



The Seventh Annual N.T. Wang Distinguished Lecture: The State of State Capitalism in China

This event featured **Yasheng Huang** (above left), the International Program Professor in Chinese Economy and Business and Professor of Global Economics and Management, MIT Sloan School of Management, and was moderated by **Shang-Jin Wei** (above right, on left), the N. T. Wang Professor of Chinese Business and Economy at Columbia Business School. The event was cosponsored by the Jerome A. Chazen Institute for Global Business.

FEB
15



Task Force on U.S.-China Policy: Recommendations for the New Administration

Orville Schell, Arthur Ross Director of Asia Society's Center on U.S.-China Relations, spoke at this event, which was moderated by **Andrew J. Nathan**, Columbia University's Class of 1919 Professor of Political Science. **Benjamin L. Liebman**, Robert L. Lieff Professor of Law at Columbia Law School, gave a welcome address. The event was cosponsored by the Center for Chinese Legal Studies at Columbia Law School.

OF SPRING 2017

MARCH
6



What's Next? U.S.-Southeast Asia Relations Under the Trump Administration

His Excellency Ashok Kumar Mirpuri (above right), Ambassador of the Republic of Singapore to the United States, gave a lecture on current U.S.- Southeast Asia relations and met with Columbia students. The event was cosponsored by the Asia Pacific Affairs Council and the Southeast Asian Student Initiative.

APRIL
5-8



Weaving: Cognition, Technology, Culture: Third Annual Embodied Cognition Workshop

This workshop brought together scholars from history, economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology and cognitive sciences, experts in textile and craft, entrepreneurs, artists, and weavers to investigate broad questions about craft as cognition. The event was cosponsored by the Center for Science and Society, the Dorothy Borg Research Program of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, and the Department of History, Columbia University.

A portrait of Qin Gao, a woman with short black hair and glasses, smiling. She is wearing a white top, a blue cardigan, and a pearl necklace. The background is a bookshelf filled with books.

QIN GAO

Professor of
Social Policy and
Social Work

Qin Gao, who joined the Columbia School of Social Work in 2016, is a Faculty Affiliate of the Columbia Population Research Center and the Weatherhead East Asian Institute. She is also an Academic Board Member of the China Institute for Income Distribution at Beijing Normal University and a Public Intellectual Fellow of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations. Before joining Columbia, she was a Professor and Coordinator of International Initiatives at Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service.

What led you to your career as an academic and social policy researcher?

I lived with my paternal grandparents growing up. They both cared about social issues in their own ways, which had a profound impact on me. My grandmother, who was illiterate, was one of the most empathetic people I have ever known. She was always ready to listen and offer help, be it to a relative, a neighbor, or a stranger. I deeply admired her quiet, positive energy and was determined to pursue work that would promote human wellbeing and social justice. My grandfather, who was a government official, cared a lot about social and political affairs—local, national, and international—and was constantly reading or discussing them. From him, I understood that policy changes were not abstract; they were real and could improve or damage people's lives. In college, I was among the

first cohorts of students to major in social work. While I appreciated the power of direct practice in serving individuals, groups, and communities, I decided to pursue a career in social policy research, with the goal of enhancing human livelihood through rigorous research and advocating for the most effective policy changes.

How did you decide to focus your research on issues of poverty, social assistance, and rural-to-urban migration in China?

China has had significant economic growth and poverty reduction in the past four decades. The other side of this story, however, is the rapid increase in income and wealth inequality, which has left behind the urban and rural poor as well as rural-to-urban migrants. My research focuses on the living conditions and survival strategies of these populations, and examines the

effectiveness of social policies that aim to provide a safety net for the poor and increase social protection for migrants.

Your new book, *Welfare, Work, and Poverty: Social Assistance in China*, was recently published by Oxford University Press. What are some of your main findings?

This book offers a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the impact of China's primary social assistance program, Dibao, or the Minimum Livelihood Guarantee. Despite significant expansions in both urban and rural areas over time, Dibao assistance standards remain low, manifesting its fundamental role as a last-resort, bare-minimum safety net program. Dibao's effectiveness in alleviating poverty is at best modest, largely due to its targeting errors and gaps in benefit delivery. Dibao recipients face a variety of barriers to

work, leading many to be unwillingly labeled “welfare dependents.” Dibao recipients also tend to live a more isolated and detached life and engage in fewer leisure and social activities than their non-recipient peers. Needless to say, many improvements can be made in Dibao’s policy design, implementation, and coordination with other programs to fulfill its anti-poverty goal. In the book, I propose a series of policy solutions that can help make such improvements.

How do you envision your role as a faculty member of WEAI?

Joining WEAI as a faculty member is a kind of homecoming for me. I earned my Ph.D. from the Columbia School of Social Work in 2005. WEAI awarded me the V. K. Wellington Koo Fellowship, which enabled me to concentrate on the writing during the last stage of my dissertation. I believe it was the first time in the history of WEAI that this prestigious fellowship was awarded to a social work Ph.D. student. My dissertation, honored with Distinction, was one of the first studies to quantify the size, structure, and redistributive effects of the Chinese social welfare system.

I remain enormously grateful for the support, and am glad to return as a faculty member. It’s thrilling to be able to pay this generosity forward by mentoring and supporting the next generation of scholars. Looking ahead, I plan to be an active WEAI member and contribute to the scholarship, programs, and community building of the Institute. I would particularly like to assist in the development of the Master of Arts in Regional Studies—East Asia (MARSEA) program by engaging with students who are interested in social transformations and policy issues in East Asia.

What aspects of teaching at Columbia excite you? What classes do you teach?

Many aspects of teaching at Columbia excite me. I’ll highlight two: the students, and the interdisciplinary nature of many courses. Columbia students are bright, aspiring, and hardworking. They come from diverse backgrounds and are eager to learn and change the world. I have enjoyed the stimulation and inspiration from my students and always look forward to interacting with them. Most courses I teach are interdisciplinary

by nature. I am teaching two courses this semester. One is an advanced seminar on poverty, inequality, and public policy. This course examines the causes, contexts, and consequences of poverty and inequality, and evaluates the impacts of various public policy responses. The most important and exciting part of the course is that students work to complete a research paper cumulatively throughout the semester, from question formulation to data analysis and writing up conclusions and discussion. The current cohort of students chose to examine issues in China, Korea, Iraq, and the US, and we enjoy pushing and learning from each other every week as each paper gets developed. The other course I currently teach is research methods and statistics for policy practice, a hands-on experience of addressing policy questions across nations through analyzing large-scale survey data. This course is similarly enriching and exhilarating to me. In the future, I would also like to offer a course on Chinese social policy and social development and attract a group of students from across disciplines who are interested in these issues.



Beihai Park in Beijing - Photo by Olena Zakharian

NICHOLAS BARTLETT

Assistant Professor of
Contemporary Chinese Culture
and Society, Barnard College

Nicholas Bartlett received his Ph.D. in Medical Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley and the University of California, San Francisco. Before joining the Barnard faculty, he lectured in anthropology at UCLA and the University of Southern California. He is currently studying psychoanalysis and participating in videoconferencing exchanges with Chinese psychotherapists in preparation for a new research project that will investigate the reception of Freud in China.

How did you become interested in the field of medical anthropology?

My interest in medical anthropology grew out of previous experiences in public health. I started working on HIV prevention projects in China in 2002, and later participated in research studies and interventions targeting injection drug users. I came to feel frustrated by how my interactions with this group centered on questions relating to the transmission and treatment of infectious diseases. I wanted to learn more about who they were as people. Medical anthropology, which explores both the social production and individual experience of illness, offered me the opportunity to ask new questions about addiction in China and create deeper relationships with individuals whose lives had been affected by heroin.

What led you to conduct your research and fieldwork in China?

The first time I lived in China was immediately after college as a Freeman Fellow conducting a research project on how the privatization of table tennis training ventures affected aspiring young athletes. My dissertation research grew out of contacts I made with NGO activists and service providers with heroin use history who I had met while working for a foundation that



supported harm reduction programs in the region. They convinced me to do fieldwork in southern Yunnan, and were incredibly supportive during the time I lived there.

Please describe your current book project

My current book project is a phenomenological study of recovery among long-term heroin users in a tin mining city. Heroin use in the region proliferated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a time when the Maoist “iron rice bowl” state employment system was threatened by a tumultuous mining boom. Young workers’ early encounters with the opiate were often inextricably connected to their participation in a nascent private

sector. Today in their late 30s and 40s, members of the group that I call the Heroin Generation are encouraged to “return to society” (huigui shehui). But this frequently repeated government slogan provoked practical and existential questions—How were recovering drug users to “return” to a city that had been radically transformed since their childhood? What type of future could they expect? What aspects of their past lives might be retrieved?

The book’s later chapters explore how individuals imagined and attempted to realize their post-addiction lives. For example, one struggling long-time heroin user argued that his only chance for a decent life required breaking not just his relationship to heroin, but also a host of other bodily habits he had acquired as an aspiring mining boss in the 1980s. Seeing his task as adapting to a new historical moment rather than returning to the past, he looked to successful 21st century entrepreneurs as models for how he should move through the world. Another chapter focuses on a small group of unemployed workers who argued that certain Maoist ideas about the therapeutic value of labor offer powerful alternatives to more recent state policies. I also follow a couple who hoped that their wedding rituals might help others recognize them both as newlyweds and people who had successfully “walked out” of addiction. And finally, I interpret the claims of an activist who insisted

that the only way to break from the past was to develop a political self-consciousness. In attempting to navigate their precarious positions in a rapidly transforming industrial city, members of this cohort display a historicity and desire for both familiar and emergent ideas of living that draw attention to frequently neglected aspects of postsocialist life in the new millennium.

What kinds of questions drive your research and teaching?

I have a long-standing interest in mental health and healing. In addition to exploring how broader political, social and economic processes contribute to individual maladies, I am interested in the symbolic and dialogic aspects of clinical encounters, whether they occur in biomedical hospitals, psychodynamic consulting rooms, or Traditional Chinese Medicine clinics. My research and teaching engage conversations about history and embodiment, with a particular focus on how individuals narrate and experience time. I am

also interested in the concept of civil society in China, and how participation in non-government collectives shapes the subjectivity of marginalized citizens. I find that I continually return to questions relating to changing conditions of labor and its role in workers' pursuit of meaningful lives.

I have also become interested in the dialogue between psychoanalysis and anthropology. In particular, I am curious about how psychoanalytic concepts come to be interpreted in China and how attention to the unconscious can enrich our understandings of the production of needs, fantasies and desires within a complex global field. I hope my future course offerings can explore the political economy of affect and examine the role of emotions in the production of anthropological knowledge.

What aspects of being at Barnard and WEAI particularly excite you?

This is a fantastic place to be teaching and learning about topics related to

East Asia. I am very excited to have the opportunity to interact with undergraduates in a small liberal arts college environment while also having the chance to work with graduate students. It is also inspiring to be around so many people doing amazing work in Barnard and EALAC, anthropology, sociomedical sciences, and psychoanalytic communities, not to mention all the great events at WEAI and other institutes.

What classes are you introducing to Barnard and Columbia?

In the spring of 2017, I taught two new courses. One focused on the politics of desire in contemporary China and the other was called Culture, Mental Illness and Healing in East Asia. Next year, I will offer a seminar that will think about methodological issues and epistemological challenges of conducting research in East Asia. I also plan to develop a survey class that will provide an overview of topics in contemporary Chinese culture.



Yunnan, China- photo by Ariel Steiner

MIKI KANEDA

Visiting Assistant Professor of Music, Department of Music

Miki Kaneda received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in ethnomusicology and new media. An assistant professor of music at Boston University, Dr. Kaneda previously was a postdoctoral fellow with the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard University. Her current book project, *The Unexpected Collectives: Intermedia Art in Postwar Japan*, is an ethnographic and historical study that uses intermedia as a vehicle to examine collaborative artistic and social processes in postwar Japan.

What led you to focus your academic research on the musicology and ethnomusicology—as well as the larger media ecology—of postwar Japan?

I began my graduate studies as a musicologist because I was interested in Western music of the twentieth century and beyond. As an extension of Western classical tradition, this is usually the domain of musicologists. But I wanted a way to look at musical and artistic practices around me as social processes, not just as finished “works.” Ethnomusicology, a discipline committed to the study of music as culture, gave me the tools to study avant-garde music in the broader social and political landscape of 1960s Japan. Music studies is my home discipline, but the idea of media ecology is one lens that I have found useful for looking at experimental and contemporary musical practices that don’t sit neatly within traditional frameworks of music scholarship. It lets me ask questions about music as a vehicle mediating social and political relations of power, as well as about the media technologies surrounding the production and circulation of music. Thinking about music as media also helps to put into question the idea of “sound” as the privileged object in music studies. A favorite example that I keep coming back to is something that Yoko Ono once wrote: “When a violist plays, which is incidental: the bow sound or the arm movement?” Who is to say that this can’t be musical? But harmonic analysis isn’t going to be much help when it comes to discussing the kind of music Ono is thinking about here. The fun thing about studying experimental music is that it pushes you to experiment and be creative with the tools that you use as a scholar of that music.



Can you tell us about your first book project on transpacific artistic exchanges and ‘intermedia’?

Intermedia is both an artistic practice and a kind of philosophy practiced by artists that fundamentally challenges so many assumptions: about the relationship between art and the everyday, the role of media culture, and about who and what counts as an agent of aesthetic experience. The intermedia art I examine is a kind of performance-based multimedia experimental practice that drew a lot of artistic and critical attention in Japan (as well as the U.S.) in the 1960s. My book project discusses some of the major places, events and people associated with intermedia art in Japan—including Shiomi Mieko, Yoko Ono, Tone Yasunao, Kosugi Takehisa, Yuasa Joji, Ichiyangi Toshi, the Sogetsu Art Center, the Cross Talk Intermedia Festival, and Expo ’70. Intermedia has mostly been studied by scholars focused on visual arts, but I’m focusing on the musical aspect. I’m also interested in the broader critical implications of the idea of “intermedia” that compels us to pay attention to the spaces, people, and media in-between—or, the places in which social interactions, aesthetic debates, and processes of artistic production unfold. The transpacific framework simply reflects the reality of the work and lives of the artists I discuss. When I started my research, I thought the project would be an investigation of intermedia art in Japan. But speaking with the artists and composers, and learning more about the topic, I found that limiting the scope to “Japan” gives a really incomplete, and perhaps even misinformed characterization of what intermedia art and the people associated with it were about. For instance, all the artists I mentioned above spent time in the United States for periods ranging from a few years to several decades. Some might legitimately be considered American artists. Without downplaying the role of the Cold War geopolitics of the time, I nonetheless want the term transpacific to stress the continuous movement across the Pacific, rather than the idea of an encounter between two separate nations.

What do you find exciting and what do you find challenging about studying and writing about music and art?

For my research and fieldwork, I listen to music, go to shows, and hang out with musicians and artists. I don't think I need to explain how that is exciting! The challenge is to make a case for the value of this kind of work. On one hand, it is a huge privilege to be able to study the arts, in my case experimental and avant-garde music, which some people have valued precisely for their uselessness. On the other hand, I urgently want to insist on the social and political significance of experimental arts. It might be easier to make a case for the importance of preserving and studying centuries-old cultural heritage practices, or the "usefulness" of protest songs. Both of these are of course very important and powerful forms of expression, but at the same time, it's also dangerous to rely on venerable traditions and utility as the measure of artistic value. Rather—I am thinking of Audrey Lorde's words "poetry is not a luxury" here—I think it's also important to understand how music and art and related sonic and visual practices in their many guises permeate our daily lives from the mundane to the extraordinary—from ringtones to sporting events and sirens to lullabies. The arts can also create visions of other ways of being, and offer hope to overcome struggles in the present. In this sense, experimental arts are absolutely essential. They cannot be relegated to the realm of luxury reserved for the few.

What kinds of questions tend to drive your research and your teaching?

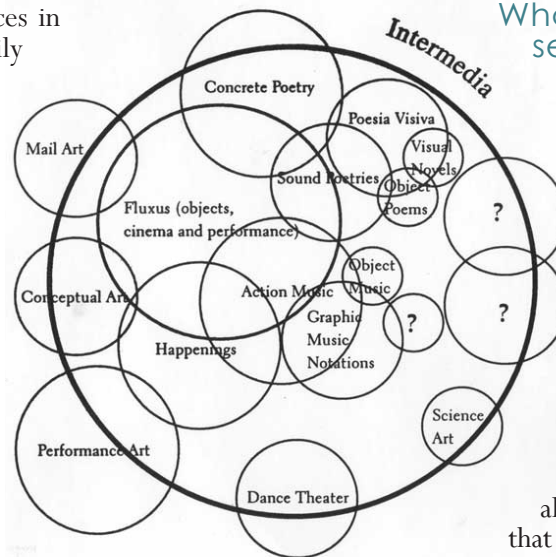
Whenever something seems self-evident, I try to ask, what is being assumed? What are those assumptions serving? I ask my students to try this as well. To give an example from my research, at the outset, I assumed that experimental music and art happening in 1960s Japan was radical and revolutionary. This was certainly the case for many of the visual artist collectives and works now considered important—groups like Hi Red Center, Zero Dimension, and Nihon University Cinema Club are some that come to mind. But by only looking at radical practices, we miss part of the picture. In fact, a lot of the experimental music of that decade was not as explicitly politically engaged. As a result, the framework of radical politics in 1960s Japan ends up imposing a limited view of experimental music of the time, or simply excludes works and people who were not able to, or resisted being part of the leftist energies that characterize so much of the contemporary stories we hear about the arts and the 1960s.

How do you like working at Columbia?

I am very excited about the institutes and centers like the Weatherhead East Asian Institute and the Heyman Center for the Humanities that have such distinct personalities, and energize intellectual life at Columbia by drawing together people from so many parts of campus. Just the other day, I was invited to take part in an extraordinary event on the global histories of music theory that brought together people from music, history of science, neuroscience, and area studies! And the libraries! I had a baby last August and one of the last places I visited before that was the C.V. Starr East Asian Library. Then, one of my first solo outings post-baby was the Butler Library. But what I've come to value most are the people at Columbia that work in the libraries, institutes, and departments. I'm not at all surprised by the wonderful energy and drive of the students and scholars I've had the chance to meet, but on top of that, I've been very moved by the genuine openness and generosity of the people creating the community here.

What are you teaching next semester?

In the fall, I'm teaching a class called Transpacific Musicology. It grows out of a course called Transcultural Musicology that I designed at Boston University, but my affiliation with the WEAI this year presented an opportunity to focus on musical practices and issues related to the Asia-Pacific region. Broadly, these courses reflect my interest in asking questions about processes of musical exchange and artistic alliances in relation to cultural politics that don't take for granted the idea of nation-state as the de facto framework for studying music across cultures. The idea for this comes out of my conversations with musicians working in contemporary avant-garde and experimental music and arts. When I began my research, I was asking avant-garde composers in Japan about what made their music "Japanese," it quickly became very clear that "expressing" national identities were not priorities for them. If you listen to the music, this is often pretty clear as well—for example, for me, to discuss Yuasa Joji's 1967 piece *Icon on the Source of White Noise* (an amazing piece built on manipulations of white noise) in terms of its "Japanese" qualities is just not the most pressing issue. But the class is not a call for doing away with analyses tied to the idea of nation-state. Rather, I am interested in finding ways to take more seriously other lenses that can add to or complicate national frameworks, and at times provide alternatives. Both at Boston University and Columbia, I am seeing a lot of exciting student work going in this direction too so I am very excited about where this class will go in its second iteration.



VICTOR LOUZON

2016-17 International Network to Expand Regional and Collaborative Teaching (INTERACT) Postdoctoral Scholar

Victor Louzon holds his PhD from Sciences Po. He received his undergraduate training at Sciences Po, the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, and the University of British Columbia. He was a Fox Fellow and Fulbright doctoral student at Yale University. Dr. Louzon originally specialized in modern Chinese history, but his research interests now extend to war and political violence in East Asia in the 20th century, and to contemporary tensions in the region.



What led you to become a scholar of Chinese history?

Chance. I decided to learn Chinese as a freshman, out of mere curiosity about the language. The instructor turned out to be terrific and got me fascinated with Chinese culture and society. I decided to combine my interest in the humanities and social sciences with my budding passion for China, and here I am.

How did you decide to focus your dissertation on the “February 28” Incident in Taiwan?

When I embarked on the PhD program, my goal was to study the mechanisms of political violence in the aftermath of World War II, during the Civil War period. An analysis of political violence at the grassroots requires access to

sensitive and often inaccessible archival material. A project on the “February 28 Incident” seemed both practically feasible—the sources are mostly located in Taiwan—and highly relevant to the present day, because the event pertains to Sino-Taiwanese and Sino-Japanese relations, and to the legacy of World War II in a broader East Asian context.

What kinds of questions tend to drive your research and teaching?

In Jean Renoir's classic film *The Rules of the Game*, there is a famous line that goes: "The awful thing about life is this: everyone has their reasons." This is what I'm interested in: the reasons that drive people to act, sometimes to do awful things, which nevertheless appear logical to them. The tragic dimension of history lies in the fact that these reasons are diverse, often incompatible, and sometimes incommensurable. This is of course a perilous intellectual endeavor, particularly when dealing with such painful subjects as political violence: we must avoid lapsing into relativism. But I do believe

a historian has the duty to try and understand the motivations of historical acts, even when they are criminal. Only then can one pass an informed moral judgment. This is what I would like to convey to my students.

How has it been to be a part of the Columbia community?

I've been excited by the concentration of talented scholars of modern history here all specializing in different areas of the world. It is a privilege to enjoy both an exciting work environment in East Asian studies and opportunities to engage with a broader, vibrant academic community.

Can you tell us about the classes you taught this academic year?

This past fall, I taught a seminar called East Asia in the Long Cold War, where I tried to give the students a sense of how East Asian history and the Cold War—a Western business at first—became entangled with one another. In the spring, I taught the history of empires in the making of Modern East Asia, from the late Qing period to the end of World War II. This course ended where the previous one began.



Postcard from Taipei, Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule.

Sophie Kovel

Recipient of a Weatherhead Undergraduate Training Grant

Sophie Kovel is an undergraduate student at Barnard College.

With my undergraduate training grant, I set out to study art in Japan: to see historical sites, temples, shrines, and museums throughout Kyoto and visit contemporary art sites in Naoshima and galleries in Tokyo. A program through Kansas University: Art in Japan enabled me to do just this, bolstering my art historical and architectural knowledge outside of the Western canon. I also sought to expand my art practice: to learn the craft of traditional Japanese papermaking (washi) and printmaking (mokuhanga) directly from its source. I encountered unforeseen additional crafts such as indigo dyeing (shibori), washi-covered bamboo baskets (ikkanbari) and bookbinding.

My research interests shifted upon encountering the Awagami Paper Factory in Tokushima, Japan. The washi factory has been in practice for eight generations of family knowledge. I recorded the process, a world-heritage craft, and workers, while locating washi in its cultural and historical context as an element of Japanese architecture: shoji screens, lanterns and also an artful base for other crafts: printmaking (mokuhanga), calligraphy, ink drawing (sumi-e) and fans.

My time in Japan introduced me to artistic hubs and ways of making that are expansive and will manifest in my own art practice. In fact, my interest in visual art now incorporates film. I had long been interested in documentary, but had not until this point found a story, so to speak. The month I spent in Japan provided me with the content and means to create my first documentary film about Awagami Paper Factory. I envision documentary filmmaking to be a new, adaptable mode of storytelling.



At work in a print-making studio, Kyoto, Japan.

Less concretely, I hoped that my experience would inform long-term path: occupationally, linguistically, and in terms of where I want to live. I studied Japanese at Columbia for one semester and now have a heightened comfort communicating in the language.

First and foremost, WEAI contributed to my success in meeting these goals by enabling my travel to Japan. In so doing, it allowed me to enter rare, often unseen spaces: a printmaker's studio in Kyoto still printing the blocks of Hokusai and Hiroshige, painters' and sculptors' studios outside of Tokyo, and Awagami Paper Factory. These on-site introductions humanized and animated historical crafts and provided insight into how contemporary artists use traditional materials and processes. I formed important connections with craftpersons and artists, both Japanese and American. I studied with professors of printmaking and collaborated with students through MI-LAB from Tokyo Zokai University alongside art students at Kansas University, who respectively exposed me to and helped me acquire the particular tools (knives, wood, ink, neri, baren) to create woodblock prints on my own time while introducing me to spaces in New York to continue my papermaking practice.

Thanks to these introductions, I have an invigorated sense of the potentiality an artistic practice carries, in mastery and breadth. I plan to participate in related workshops to deepen my expertise either again at Awagami or MI-LAB or locally such as at Columbia's Pine Tree Program.



Supplies in a print-making studio.



Conducting the workshop with my intern trainer in Myitkyina.

Conflict is no stranger to me or my heritage. My grandparents, devout followers of Catholicism, fled Northern Vietnam due to their fear of religious persecution. My parents were refugees from the Vietnam War—a war spanning nearly two decades—and lived through episodes of direct violence in their communities, their friends killed in combat, their property destroyed and burnt down in warfare, with little hope for the future. It is a combination of my family's history and my upbringing that drive my concern about conflict on a global scale and give me a sense of urgency to think through solutions toward peace in Southeast Asia. This calling toward issues of injustice and conflict has culminated in my protracted work in Burma.

The first half of my summer 2016 activities were supporting Mote Oo's Peace Education Project, for which the organization recently completed a draft workshop on peace and conflict education. This entailed developing appropriate activities that served to introduce the topics within the workshop. I worked with an intern trainer from Mote Oo, who came with me to the workshops, helped me augment the material for a workshop format, and did heavy translation during our workshops. She was an invaluable resource, as I knew any impact from workshops during a short time in the region would not be sustainable without local support.

Traveling to Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan State in Burma this summer gave me the opportunity to interview local civil society organization members on their thoughts on international organizations and their effectiveness with programs, which are posted on the Paung Ku Forum Facebook website and blog. The Facebook page has over 11,900 likes, with high visibility from civil society actors, UN agencies (OCHA, UNHCR), and international organizations. I tailored a series of questions about the work that their communities do and about their views on the role and effectiveness of international organizations. My time interviewing local actors yielded mixed perspectives regarding the work of international organizations, differences which were largely dependent upon regional context.

My first year at Columbia SIPA consisted of exploring skills and themes within humanitarian and human rights work; I also cross-enrolled at Columbia Teacher's College. In particular,

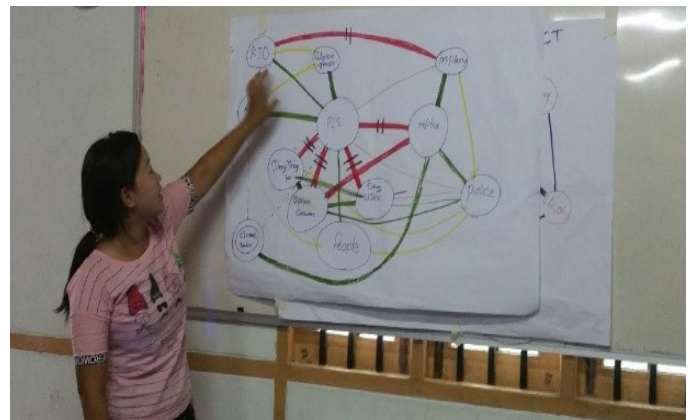
Mary Pham

Recipient of the Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship

Mary Pham is a student at the Columbia School of International and Public Affairs.

the courses "International Organizations, Civil Society, and Peace Education" and "Human and Social Dimensions of Peace" were highly applicable to the work I was doing in Burma, allowing me to reflect upon different actors in peace education and exploring this during my summer fieldwork. Much of my work this summer reconfirmed the technical areas of focus I'd like to deepen (education, peacebuilding) but also made me think about ways to reach a greater number of people. I'm figuring out ways to introduce technology as a form of disseminating peace education and will consider this additional angle in my graduate studies.

I am honored and grateful that the Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund and the Weatherhead East Asian Institute have provided me this opportunity to deepen the knowledge base for my work, and to combine what I have learned at Columbia with practice. I hope that my work—while relatively brief—provides a few seeds of support for future peace education project initiatives in Myanmar and I look forward to returning.



A participant from the Myitkyina workshop explains, through a conflict mapping activity, the stakeholders involved in Kachin State's conflicts.



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