An Interview with Yutian Wong, New Assistant Professor of Dance and Asian American Studies

Interview by Kapila Sankaran

The Asian American Studies Program and the Dance department are pleased to announce the joint hire of Yutian Wong. Yutian received her B.A. in Art History from the University of California, Davis and her Ph.D. in Dance History and Theory from the University of California, Riverside. She recently completed a two-year Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at Bryn Mawr College where she held a joint appointment in Dance and Feminist/Gender Studies.

Q: How did you become interested in Asian American Studies and Asian American Dance?
A: I have always been interested in the arts and studied dance and Chinese brush painting since I was a child. When I went to college I continued to dance. Although U.C. Davis did not have a Dance department at that time, Bobby Bolden, the director of the dance program, managed to bring in guest artists to teach master classes on campus. In this way, I was introduced to contact improvisation and postmodern dance. During my senior year I took two Asian American Studies courses. I had never heard of an Asian American choreographer even though I had spent my entire life studying dance. So I began to think about the possibility of melding my interests in Asian American Studies and dance.

Yutian Wong

After graduation, I spent a couple of years choreographing my own work and dancing in local companies in California before I began to make some initial inquiries into graduate programs. At that time, no one was doing work in Asian American Dance studies and everyone suggested that a Dance program might be more appropriate. Additionally, in the early 90’s the M.F.A. or M.A. was the terminal degree in Dance. This meant that anyone wanting to do doctoral work on a dance topic had to do it via another academic discipline. Luckily, the University of California, Riverside had just launched the first Ph.D. program in Dance History and Theory in the U.S. It was a truly interdisciplinary program, making it a very exciting program to be in at that time. Riverside’s proximity to Los Angeles also made it the perfect place for me to do research in a vibrant and diverse dance and performance art community.

Q: What are you currently working on?
A: I’m finishing a book manuscript based on my dissertation which is an ethnographic study of Club O’ Noodles, a Los Angeles-based Vietnamese American performance ensemble. I examine how their work articulates cultural, political, and artistic identities. I am also working on a new project that examines how Orientalism is both deployed and denied within canonical narratives of American modern dance history to explain the presence of Asian and Asian American choreographers in the United States in the early twentieth century.

Yutian will be teaching Asian American Dance History and Theory in Fall 2003 (AAS 390 section AA, meets with Dance 351). This class will introduce students to a wide range of movement practices and choreographic projects created by Asian American choreographers and performers. It will look at both social and theatrical forms in order to examine how Asian American artists use ideologies of artistic “traditions” and “innovations” to embody cultural heritage, stage political protests, and express artistic visions. For information on how to register for this course, see page 4.

Asian American Culture Center to Be Built

After years of student activism, the campus learned in July that a culture center for Asian Pacific Americans will be built in the near future. UIUC Provost Richard Hermann and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Patricia Askew announced these plans to the campus-wide Ad Hoc Committee on Asian Pacific American Campus Life which had been appointed by Chancellor Nancy Cantor and Vice Chancellor Askew to assess APA student needs during the 2002-2003 year. A culture center had been on the top of the list of the committee’s recommendations. Additionally, last year a campus-wide Diversity Initiatives Committee had also submitted recommendations to the Provost and the Chancellor which included the creation of an Asian Pacific American culture center.

Students have been advocating for an APA culture center since the 1960’s, with renewed activism in the early 1990’s through the present. Asian Pacific Americans constitute nearly 14% of the undergraduate students on campus but do not, as of yet, have a centralized location in which to access services and resources. While the campus has created academic, counseling, advising and mentoring, and programming support over the years, there was no centralized cultural space for APA students. Currently, African American and Latina/o students have both an academic program and a cultural center. A Native American House, serving as both a studies and a cultural center had been also recently established.

Senior Sherwin Yen, member of the Ad Hoc Committee and co-director of the Asian Pacific American Coalition, said that he hopes the new center can serve Asian Americans the way that La Casa Cultural Latina and the African American Cultural Center have served those minority groups. The proposed center could combat stereotyping of Asian Americas as the “model minority” and reveal the challenges that exist for the APA community, such as the rash of attacks on Asian/ Asian American women that took place on campus last Fall.
Comments from the Director

Dear Friends of Asian American Studies at UIUC,

The Asian American Studies Program at UIUC celebrated its sixth anniversary in August. The Program has maintained considerable growth during its early phase and seems poised to becoming a top program in Asian American Studies in the U.S. This past year was an exciting one. In addition to installing a new director, thus concluding the highly successful five year directorship of Professor George Yu, we witnessed an incredible amount of programming (including hosting the East of California conference in Fall 2002 and the New Directions in Asian American Studies symposium in Spring 2003). The Program also witnessed the following milestones: its first year of the minor in Asian American Studies, with four students graduating in 2003 with a minor, the shift from courtesy faculty appointments to percentage appointments in the program, and the tenuring of Program member Sumie Okazaki. There are many additions to our faculty, staff, and postdoctoral ranks as well. Please help me welcome new Dance/Asian American Studies professor Yutian Wong, new AAS Program Coordinator Pia Sengsavan, and new member Manisha Desai to our Program. Welcome also to incoming post-docs Brian Locke and Junaid Rana.

Many other notable activities took place this past year: the creation of an internship course now available for credit hours and applicable to the minor; an ongoing search for two Asian American literature specialists; the promotion of Asian American Studies Program Staff Associate Sharon Lee to Assistant Director; the revision of the Program’s by-laws; and a lecture and film series. We gave fresh new looks to our web site and program brochure; created an undergraduate student research paper contest; completed the first phase of a two phase project to build the Asian American Studies library on campus; established a donation fund for development purposes; and entertained nationally and internationally known scholars Maria Root, Yen Espiritu, Evelyn Hu DeHart, David Eng, Casey Lum, Eric Wat, Tom Nakayama, and Dai-Sil Kim Gibson.

While very much still in the building stages, these many activities have put the Program on good footing that could sustain the addition of an undergraduate major degree and a possible graduate minor or doctoral program in years to come. A retreat at the end of this summer is scheduled to discuss the future direction of the Program.

We have many people to thank for this past year of successful program building. Sharon Lee and Mary Ellerbe deserve thanks for their tremendous efforts which made it possible for us to accomplish as much as we did. The Program Committee and Advisory Committee did a phenomenal job of keeping the program going in a positive direction. The joint English/Asian American Studies search committee deserves a tremendous hand for the work beginning before the MLA Convention, which we all attended, and during the search. The postdoctoral Search Committee deserves much praise for their work, as does the Program Coordinator Search Committee. The combined efforts of the directors of the Afro-American Studies, Latina/Latino Studies, Gender and Women’s Studies, Native American Studies, and Asian American Studies provided a bulwark for the activities of our program. And the work of the campus Diversity Committee, the newly minted Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society, the Asian American Library Committee, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Asian Pacific American Campus Life have produced strong possibilities for future growth. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and upper administration have been very supportive, providing strong financial support. We thank the Provost for considering a proposal to house 100% appointments in our unit as well as the potential formation of an Asian American Culture Center.

To top off what has been a most exciting year, faculty, staff, and students associated with the Program received numerous awards and were recognized for their many achievements (see page 5).

While the Asian American Studies Program has made significant advancements over the past year, much more work has to be done. Possible future directions include: 100% appointments in Asian American Studies; an additional senior faculty hire to help program building; our ability to hire across other programs; a building (or renovation of our current building) to house faculty offices; a fast-track major proposal process; and future development and identification of external funding sources.

Much has been accomplished this past year, and there are many, many people to thank for what we have done. And, there is much to look forward to in coming years to make the Program the kind of unit we all wish it to be. I continue to look forward to working with you to build such a Program. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Kent A. Ono, Director

Asian American Studies Program Staff

Director
Kent A. Ono, Professor and Director, Asian American Studies and Professor, Institute of Communications

Research
Sharon S. Lee

Program Coordinator
Pia Sengsavan

Secretary
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Please direct questions and submissions to the Nexus editors at (217) 244-9530.
Asian American Studies Program Announces New Staff Hire, Program Coordinator Pia Sengsavanh

By Kapila Sankaran

With the continued growth of the Asian American Studies Program, a new staff position of Program Coordinator was created. The Program Coordinator will be responsible for various tasks ranging from overseeing Program funds, assisting with the coordination of conferences, seminars and film screenings, managing the human resources for the Program, assisting with outreach efforts, and establishing the Program curriculum. After a national search for the position, the program hired Pia Sengsavanh who began work in July.

Pia was a year old when her family came to Illinois in 1979 as war refugees from Laos. She grew up in Champaign. During her junior year at Centennial high school, a Filipina graduate student in Social Work from the University of Illinois visited her school and gathered the Asian American students for weekly discussions. A result of these discussions was the creation of the school’s official Asian American club which continues today.

Pia attended New York University and took several courses that continued to feed her interest in Ethnic Studies. She took gender and performance studies courses and moved on to taking courses that further examined the minority experience in America. In reflecting on this curriculum, Pia stated, “These courses gave me a foundation with regard to ideas and terminology often used in Ethnic Studies discourse. I used this to better compare/contrast and discuss my experience as an Asian American with others’ experiences. The Asian American Studies courses I took examined Asian American history and Asian American representation in the media. I learned about what Asian American experiences were being seen and what experiences were missing in mainstream media.”

Pia Sengsavanh

After college, Pia returned to Champaign and in the Spring of 2001 began work as a secretary at the U of I Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. She worked in a research group that included seven faculty members, a staff engineer, and about 31 graduate students. Some of her responsibilities included coordinating various projects, meetings, and annual events; review of financial reports from contracts and grants for accuracy; and maintenance of webpages for the research group.

When asked what interested her in the Program Coordinator position, Pia replied, “What really caught my eye was the sentence in the job posting stated that, ‘key to the position was an understanding of the significance and importance of Asian American Studies and/or Asian American issues and the willingness to learn and work within a diverse setting.’ My understanding of the significance of Asian American Studies comes not only from growing up Asian American but also from the benefit of taking Asian American Studies courses others worked hard to make happen. AAS and other minority studies courses helped me look at my own experiences in a structured way so that I didn’t feel that I was just in a support group. In having courses in Ethnic Studies, minority students, like myself, can realize that their feelings and issues aren’t without merit. There is a saying that states, ‘Luck is when preparation meets opportunity.’ Combining all the things I learned in previous jobs with my education and understanding of AAS is the preparation that met the opportunity for the Program Coordinator position. As luck would have it, I came across the AASP job posting and I couldn’t let it pass by me.”

In looking towards her new position, Pia expressed her excitement. “I am very excited that I am being given an opportunity to partake in the AASP and its growth here at UIUC. Personally, this will have a karmic effect. Whatever I do in the Program will come back to me three-fold or even ten-fold. I think that’s why the job description called for a person who has an understanding of the importance of AAS in that it wouldn’t be just a job to such a person. The Program’s success would be a personal success.” She added that she is ready to contribute to the growth of the Program, hoping that eventually it “will be as big as anything found on the East or West coast.”

Pia works at the Asian American Studies Program Monday through Friday, 8:30am-5:00pm. She can be reached at 333-3736, piasseng@uiuc.edu.

New Faculty Program Member, Manisha Desai

The Asian American Studies Program is pleased to announce a new member of the Program, Dr. Manisha Desai. Manisha is the new Program Coordinator for the Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Program and also is the Assistant Director of the Program in South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies.

Manisha comes to UIUC from Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY where she was an Associate Professor of Sociology. Her research and teaching have focused on social movements (particularly women’s movements), feminist theory, globalization, human rights, contemporary Indian society, and U.S. minorities and immigration. She co-edited with Nancy Naples, Women’s Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles to Transnational Politics, published by Routledge.

Manisha has completed an edited volume on Women’s Issues in Asia for Greenwood and is now working on how women’s movements in India are reinventing globalization. She has served as the chair of the New York State Independent Colleges Consortium for Study in India for many years and has directed their semester-length study abroad program in India.

You can reach Manisha at mkdesai@uiuc.edu.
Asian American Studies Program Fall 2003 Courses

Asian American Studies 100  Introduction to Asian American Studies
00042  LECD A  1-220  TUTH  124 BURRILL  ONO  3 hours

Asian American Studies/Anthropology/Sociology 184  Asian American Cultures
Meets Gen Ed Cultural Studies: Non-Western/U.S. Minority Culture(s) and Social & Behavioral Sciences: Social Sciences Cultural Studies Requirements.
00043  LECD 1  1-220  TUTH  66 LIBRARY  MANALANSAN  3 hours

Asian American Studies/ Educational Policy Studies/Afro American Studies/ Latina/o Studies 210
Race and Cultural Diversity in American Life
Prerequisite: completion of campus composition I requirement. Meets Gen Ed ACP US.
02432  LECT AA  2-350  TU  166 EDUCATION  ANDERSON  4 hours
02433  DISC A1  2-350  TH  385 EDUCATION
02434  DISC A2  2-350  TH  389 EDUCATION

Asian American Studies 290  Internship in Asian American Studies
For more information on the course, see page 10. To register, contact Sharon Lee, Assistant Director of the AASP at 244-9530, lee1@uiuc.edu.
F 10-11:30  1208 W. NEVADA  LEE  3 hours

Asian American Studies/ Social Work 297  Asian Families in America
Meets the LAS U.S. Minority Cultures requirement, the campus wide Social & Behavioral Sciences requirement, and the campus wide Non-Western & American Minority Cultures requirement.
00044  LECD A  10-1130  TUTH  102  1203W ORE  BALGOPAL  3 hours

Asian American Studies/ Educational Policy Studies 300
Asian American Education in Historical and Contemporary Contexts
Meets General Education Composition II & Non-Western and American Minority Culture Requirements
00045  LECD AA  12-150  TU  166 EDUCATION  PAK  4 hours

Asian American Studies/ Political Science 324  Asian American Politics
Prerequisite: Junior or senior standing; 6 hours of Political Science; or consent of instructor. No more than 6 hours of credit may be earned by registration in this course and in Political Science 297. Counts for advanced hours in LAS.
00046  LECD  9-1020  MW  321 GREG HALL  CHO  3 hours

AAS 390 Advanced Topics in Asian American Studies

Pan-Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Modernity and Globalization
SECTION PF MEETS WITH HIST/CINE 200
00048  LECD PF  1-250  M  111 GREG HALL  FU  3 hours
   LECD PF  2  W  111 GREG HALL

Asian American Media and Film
SECTION KAO MEETS WITH COMM 291
SECTION P
00049  LAB  3-450  TU  ARRT U  ONO  3 hours
   LECT  11-1220  TUTH  G20 FOR LANG

Asian American Psychology
SECTION SO MEETS WITH PSYCH 336 SECTION SO
00050  LECD SO  1130-1245  TUTH  32 PSYCH  OKAZAKI  3 hours

American Ethnic Theatre
SECTION AET MEETS WITH THEAT 199 SECTION AET
00051  CONF AET  3-420  MW  ARR KCPA  KIM LEE  3 hours

Asian American Dance History and Theory
SECTION AA  MEETS WITH DANCE 351
08959  LECD AA  1-400  TH  109 907 1/2 W. NEVADA  WONG  3 hours

*there will also be a Program on Intergroup Relations (PIR) course on Asian American Identities in Fall 2003. For more information, see page 11.
SPECIAL ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES AWARDS SECTION

The 2002-2003 year was filled with many achievements by Asian American Studies faculty, staff, and students.

FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS


Manisha Desai, Assistant Director of the Program in South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and Program Coordinator for the Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Program, is the editor of the book Women in Asia and Oceania, published by Greenwood Press. She also presented her research at the Gender, Health and Globalization Symposium at Yale in Summer 2003.

Augusto Espiritu, Assistant Professor of History, published “Asian American Global Discourses and the Problem of History” in After the Imperial Turn: Thinking Through the Nation, Post-Colonialism, edited by Antoinette Burton, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. This coming year, he will be leading an Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (IPRH) Reading Group called “Resisting Empire,” which explores the perspectives of the colonized and racialized “others” of the American Empire. If interested in joining, you can contact Augusto at aespirit@uiuc.edu.

Moon-Kie Jung, Assistant Professor of Sociology, was selected as one of the 2003 UIUC’s Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society Faculty fellows for his project “‘We Are Like Mochi’: The Making of Hawaii’s Interracial Working Class.” Faculty Fellows receive release time from teaching responsibilities for a semester and will contribute to the Center’s activities for the next academic year, presenting their work in an ongoing seminar series convened around the question “What is Multiracial Democratic Research?”

Martin Manalansan, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, was recognized for two of his publications this past year. In the August 16, 2002 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education, Martin’s book Queer Globalizations was reviewed as part of new research on “Extending Queer Theory to Race and Ethnicity.” Chronicle reviewer Robert Reid-Pharr pointed to Manalansan as part of a new group of scholars who, “insist that the project of queer theory is essentially dead in the water if it does not take seriously the ways that race and ethnicity interact with sexuality.” Manalansan’s book Cultural Compass: Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America was also selected for the 2002 Association for Asian American Studies Cultural Studies book award. He was also awarded a UIUC Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society’s 2003 grant for his project “Altered States: Beyond a Palatable Multiculturalism.” Manalansan has a forthcoming Fall publication, Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora, by Duke University Press.

Sumie Okazaki, Associate Professor of Psychology, received tenure and was promoted to Associate Professor. Her work in Asian American psychology and mental health is widely known; she received the Early Career Award for Distinguished Contribution from the Asian American Psychological Association in 2000. She, with Nancy Abelmann (Anthropology) and Angela Wiley (Human and Community Development) received a grant from the UIUC Critical Research Initiatives Program for their proposal “Korean American Mental Health in its Familial Context.”

Yoon Pak, Assistant Professor of Educational Policy Studies, was selected as one of the 2003 UIUC’s Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society Faculty fellows for her project, “Democratic Citizenship Education for Intercultural Relations in the Public Schools, 1930s-1950s.” Yoon also delivered the address “Americans All, Immigrants All:” Forging Racial and Religious Tolerance through Intercultural Education in the Public Schools, 1930s-1950s” for the Educational Democracy, Citizenship, and the New Immigration Symposium hosted by the UIUC Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society in Spring 2003.

GRADUATE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Sieglinde Lim de Sanchez, Ph.d. Candidate in Educational Policy Studies, was selected as one of the 2003 UIUC’s Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society Graduate Student fellows for her project, “Red Lanterns on the Levee: Chinese Education and Multiethnic Exchanges in the Mississippi Delta, 1910-1940.” Graduate Student Fellows will also participate in the year-long Center’s research seminar series “What is Multiracial Democratic Research?”

Awards continued on page 6
STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

David Chih, Assistant Dean of Students for Asian Pacific American Affairs, received the 2003 Outstanding Faculty/Staff award at the annual Asian Pacific American Leadership Awards Ceremony for his strong leadership and mentorship the past year. He also was invited to present “Envisioning Comprehensive Asian Pacific American Student Services” at Miami University, April 2003, Oxford, OH. With Teresa Mok, Clinical Counselor, he presented “Advising Asian Pacific American Students,” at the Illinois Academic Advisors Spring Conference, Conference, February 2003, Urbana IL. And with Jeffrey Sichaleune, Visiting Assistant to the Dean of Students, he presented the workshop, “Asian Pacific American Masculinity,” at the Midwest Asian American Student Union Spring Conference, Bloomington, Indiana, April 2003.

Sharon Lee, Assistant Director for Asian American Studies, was elected to the national board of the Association for Asian American Studies, as the Midwestern/Mountain/Canada representative for 2003-2005. She also serves as the co-chair of the Oberlin Asian Pacific American Alumni Association. At the 2003 Association for Asian American Studies conference, her comments were read (in absentia) on the panel, “Parallel Tracks: APA Administrators and Academic Professionals in Higher Education.” She delivered the keynote address, “On Being an Asian American Woman: the Struggle to Be,” for the Alpha Kappa Delta Phi Midwest Sisterhood banquet in Champaign in March 2003 and had an article, “Building Asian American and Ethnic Studies in the Midwest: Challenges, Growth Prospects, and New Opportunities in the Heartland,” posted at the Imdiversity.com web site, March 2003.

Susan Maul, Director of the Illini Union and outgoing ex-officio member of the Asian American Studies Advisory Committee, retired in May 2003 after 31 years of service to the University of Illinois. In April 2003, she was selected as one of the recipients of the Robert P. Larsen Human Development Award, sponsored by the UIUC Counseling Center. The Robert P. Larsen Award was created as part of the Counseling Center’s efforts to enhance student development and maximize student capabilities to make effective and satisfying life choices. In pursuit of the goal, the Center’s efforts extend beyond services for individuals to impact the campus environment in which the students operate.

Dean of Students Bill Riley recognizes Susan Maul at the APA Leadership Awards


STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

This past year, the Asian American Studies Program created, for the first time, an Academic Research Paper Contest in Asian American Studies. This contest was created to encourage undergraduate student research in the field. Awards were determined based on an academic paper that advances the knowledge of Asian Pacific Americans and contributed to the field. The Program thanks the hard work of the Awards Committee which received numerous outstanding papers for the award. We are proud to announce the recipients of the awards.

Honorable Mention: Danny Kim, sophomore majoring in Advertising, minoring in Asian American Studies for his paper, “Model Minority: An Invention, a Myth, a Life.”

Third place: Jocelyn Hare, senior majoring in Sociology, for her paper, “Finding Chinese Americans in Early Hollywood: Stereotypes and Resistance.”

Second place: Hau Yu Christine Tang, senior majoring in psychology, minoring in Sociology, for her paper, “Biculturalism and Depression: An Investigation Among Asian Americans.”

First place: Christine Stepanski, junior majoring in History for her paper, “Korean Adoptees, Adoptive Parents, and Ethnic Identity.”

Asian American Minors

Congratulations to the first degree recipients of our program, the minors in Asian American Studies.

Katherine Chuu, senior majoring in Political Science (December 2003)
Raechelle Delarmente, senior majoring in Political Science and minoring in History
Frances Gestoso, senior majoring in English and Rhetoric
Lauren Shieh, senior majoring in Psychology

Interns

The Asian American Studies Program recognizes the hard work and efforts of the following interns this past year:

Fall 2002 interns
Katherine Chuu
Frances Gestoso
Bonnie Hsueh
Riddhi Patel
Judy Shen
Lauren Shieh
Linda Shin

Spring 2003 interns
Jenny Choi
Danny Kim
Maricor Kimoto
Dave Loreto
Lisa Nonzee
Andy Park
Linda Park
Hannah Son
Grace Sue
Annie Yoo
Congratulations to those honored at the 2003 Asian Pacific American Leadership Awards

The Asian Pacific American Leadership Awards recognize and reward excellence among those who have dedicated countless hours to campus-wide activities. Past award recipients have exemplified a high level of leadership and dedication to the APA community in developing and implementing activities, programs, and services that promote unity among APAs and awareness of APA issues. The APA Leadership Awards are presented at a ceremony at the end of each academic year in several categories including Faculty/Staff, Student, Registered Student Organization, and Program/Event. The ceremony is organized by the Dean of Students’ Office for APA Affairs.

Yuki Llewellyn Award for Outstanding Asian Pacific American Registered Student Organization
Asian American Association
Asian Pacific American Coalition

Outstanding Asian Pacific American Student Leader
Pauline Chow, Junior
Frances Gestoso, Senior
Peggy Ho, Junior
Sandra Kim, Senior
Jennie Ly, Senior
Annie Yoo, Junior

Outstanding Asian Pacific American Program/Event
Community Responses to Attacks on Asian Women - Asian Pacific American Coalition
Filipino Americans Coming Together Conference - Philippine Student Association
Filipino Sampler: A Taste of Everything Filipino - Philippine Student Association
Unseen Unheard Conference - Asian Pacific American Coalition

Outstanding Asian Pacific American Faculty/Staff
David Chih, Assistant Dean of Students for APA Affairs

Asian American Awareness Month Competition
Dennison Mayapis, Senior - Winner
Grace Sue, Junior - Honorable Mention

Academic Research Paper Contest
Christine Stepanski, Junior - First Place
Christine Tang, Senior - Second Place
Jocelyn Hare, Senior - Third Place
Danny Kim, Sophomore - Honorable Mention

Special recognition upon her retirement
Susan Yung Maul, Director of the Illini Union

The Asian American Studies Program is pleased to announce a 2003-2004 Workshop series, “Eccentric Locations.” The workshop provides an important site throughout the academic year for interested faculty and students to exchange ideas in relation to an important theme that helps structure the discussion. Each session of the Workshop will focus on one scholar’s work in progress. A short presentation of the work will be followed by an open dialogue and conversation. The workshop environment is designed to enhance interaction among participants and to strengthen scholarly research. The workshop format makes it possible to discuss research in detail, to provide feedback to writers who are working to complete projects, and to investigate research questions and problems beyond a surface level. Such a forum is key to the development of an intellectual community of scholars built on trust and the open exchange of ideas.

The roots of Asian American Studies are grounded in criticism of structural powers relations that serve to foster the marginality of Asian Pacific Americans in mainstream society. While the field has become more institutionalized, hierarchical structures within the field have emerged which continue to marginalize certain groups such as Filipinos, South Asians, and Southeast Asian Americans. We chose this year’s theme to ask how Asian American Studies might be transformed by placing issues focusing on marginalized groups at the center. What are the implications for history, criticism, the arts, and the human sciences? We hope that interested faculty and students will use this series to engage these and other questions to reframe and rethink Asian American Studies.

All workshops take place at the AAS building, 1208 West Nevada Street in Urbana. For more info, call 244-9530; aasp@uiuc.edu.

Workshop Presenters, Fall 2003

Junaid Rana, Post-doctoral fellow, Asian American Studies Program University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. “Terror and Asian American Studies: Peril, Panic and Racism.” Monday, October 27, 2003, 1-3pm. The recent exposure of Muslims in America, and their long history of vilification, can be located in a genealogy of various national perils and panic. By asking how this form of racism has shifted in time, this paper draws parallels from the history of Asian America. Further, the often tenuous position of Muslims in Asian American Studies is brought into question through the challenge of ethnic-based and issue-based models of inclusion.

S. Mitra Kalita, Reporter for the Washington Post. “Suburban Sahibs.” Wednesday November 12, 2003, 3-5pm. How have immigrants redefined suburbia? This talk will describe the demographic, economic, and cultural trends of South Asian migrants in central New Jersey and the impact of their transformation of a once white commuter’s suburb through the stories of three Indian families.

AAS Co-sponsored Fall 2003 Events

Constructing Pan-Chinese Cultures: Globalism and the Shaw Brothers Cinema, a conference

“Constructing Pan-Chinese Cultures” is an international conference focusing on the pan-Chinese cinema of the Shaw Brothers (SB) Studio, which dominated the film cultures and the entertainment industry in the transnational Pan-Chinese world during the 1950’s and 1980’s. The conference will take place on campus October 2-4, 2003 and will consist of a film series, 12 paper presentations, a public lecture (by Professor Lily Kong of the National University of Singapore and Professor David Bordwell of the University of Wisconsin-Madison), and a public discussion by actress Cheng Peipei (who starred as Jade Fox in Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon).

The conference addresses the little-studied issues of pan-Chinese vision, business strategies, and diasporic networks of SB and its efforts to globalize Chinese-language cinemas. In particular, we are interested in mapping its global business structure (onto the global Chinese diasporic business network) and the cultural politics of its transnational pan-Chinese identity construction. A preliminary look at these issues will historicize the development of Pan-Chinese cultures and shed new lights on the complex history and politics of Chinese cinemas as part of a global popular culture that have contributed not only to the transformation of social systems and values, gender relationships, and identity formation in the Asia Pacific region but also to the growth of racial consciousness and ethnic politics in the North America.

For more information about the conference, contact Poshek Fu at poshekfu@uiuc.edu. The conference is sponsored by Cinema Studies and the Department of History.

Asiantation

Asiantation is the annual orientation for students interested in organizations, programs, and services available to Asian Americans or to those interested in Asian American issues. Attendees are presented information at booths and through informational packets while also being entertained by presentations, skits, and addresses by campus administrators, faculty, and fellow students.

This year’s Asiantation will take place on Saturday, September 6th, at 7:00pm in the Illini Union Ballroom. For more information, contact Lisa Nonzee at snonzee@uiuc.edu or Diana Lin at dianalin@uiuc.edu.

AAS Co-sponsored events, continued on page 9...
Playwright Gives Voice to the Palestinian-American Experience

by Julia Walker

Betty Shamieh, a fresh new talent in the American theatre, will be performing her play *Chocolate in Heat: Growing Up Arab in America* on Monday, October 27, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the Krannert Art Museum. Comprised of several monologues, the play tells the story of Aiesha, a Palestinian-American girl, who was raised in Spanish Harlem during the 1980’s, and who ends up at a prestigious college where she finds herself in trouble. A series of interlocking monologues, interspersed with music and dance deal with many critical issues, including the clash of Arab and American cultural ideals. By portraying a character who loves, lusts, strives, and struggles the play hopes not only to entertain but also to educate audiences that people all over the world are not much different from themselves. (cited from [http://www.umass.edu/fac/calendar/asian/events/Chocolatein.html](http://www.umass.edu/fac/calendar/asian/events/Chocolatein.html)).

“Being a Palestinian-American is an enormous part of who I am as a person and as an artist,” Shamieh explains. “Almost everything I write has to do with the experience of Palestinians living throughout the world, particularly Palestinian refugees who are unable to return to their homeland.” By representing the joys, aspirations, frustrations, and indignities experienced by her Palestinian characters, Shamieh hopes to change the way Americans see the Palestinian people.

Unlike the “suicide bombers” or “terrorists” featured on the nightly news, Shamieh’s characters are palpably human, insisting that we recognize them—and their plight—as such. “I believe [that] if more of my fellow Americans saw Palestinians as human beings with all the dreams and hopes that other people have, [then] our foreign policy could not and would not be the same. That is what motivates me to write during this very difficult time for our nation and our world.”

Shamieh’s commitment to the Palestinian cause was recognized last year when she was invited to visit the occupied territories as part of a delegation of American playwrights. Along with Tony Kushner, Naomi Wallace, and Kia Corthron, Shamieh worked with Palestinian theatre artists who were struggling to create a vibrant theatre for their communities, despite the occupation.

Back at home, Shamieh is currently performing *Chocolate in Heat* across the country. It premiered at the New York International Fringe Festival in 2001, where it played to a sold out auditorium.

This event is part of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities’ (IPRH) year-long focus on “violence.” Co-sponsors include Asian American Studies and the Program on South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. For more information, contact Chris Catanzarite, Associate Director of IPRH at catanzar@uiuc.edu.

2003-04 Korean Studies Workshop to Focus on Transnational Korea

By Nancy Abelmann

In the Spring of 2002, various campus scholars convened to begin discussing Korean Studies issues in a workshop series. The group met monthly and workshops were advertised among 15 campus units and departments. On average, 20 people gathered for each workshop which included a presented paper which was circulated beforehand. Workshop presentations included those by on-campus faculty and graduate students, as well as off-campus faculty and graduate students.

In 2002-2003, the workshop theme was “The Politics of Culture in Contemporary South Korea.” For 2003-04 the Korea Studies Workshop has been designated an Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (IPRH) Reading Group focused on the theme “Transnational Korea.” The Korea Workshop is delighted that the Program in Asian American Studies is co-sponsoring this program and looks forward to the active participation of many Asian Americanists on campus. The Workshop will be joined among others by Sheila Jager (whose work is on Korean War commemorations in South Korea and the United States), Hyesung Chung (whose work is on a transnational perspective on Korean cinema), Sonia Ryang (who examines Korean Japanese) and Melissa Wender (who examines second generation Korean Japanese literature.)

The Korea Workshop mailing list includes scholars from Letters and Sciences, the College of Communications, and Fine and Applied Arts. Departments represented at the workshops include Anthropology, Art History, Comparative Literature, East Asian Languages and Cultures, Ethnomusicology, History, Linguistics, the Institute of Communications Research, and Sociology.

Asian Pacific American Mentoring Program Seeks Volunteers

The Asian Pacific American Mentoring Program is seeking faculty/staff to apply as mentors. Undergraduate students who apply to this program are seeking role models who might have had experiences similar to their own. This program seeks to foster community life for APA undergraduates by linking them with mentors who can help provide a base of social, academic, and emotional support. Please announce this program to your students and go to [http://www.odos.uiuc.edu/apaa/mentoring.asp](http://www.odos.uiuc.edu/apaa/mentoring.asp) for more information about this program to apply. For more information, please email Matthew Lee at mrlee1@uiuc.edu, or phone 333-0050 at the Office of the Dean of Students.
Ethnography of the University piloted in ANTH 286, The Ethnography of Asian America

By Nancy Abelmann

The Ethnography of the University (EOTU) is a UIUC project (co-organizers: Nancy Abelmann, Bill Kelleher, and Peter Mortensen) committed to the creation of an archive of student research on UIUC. EOTU is invested in an understanding of universities and in qualitative research that is attentive to narrative practices. EOTU appreciates that universities and colleges, organizations, maps, and histories are composites of diverse prose, visual, and statistical narratives that communicate complex and often conflicting institutional values, commitments, and identities. EOTU directs attention to official narratives on the university in the media, collective practices of university units and groups, and the informal narratives of university constituencies.

EOTU is fast becoming a living archive of student ethnographic research on the university. EOTU is being housed by The Inquiry Page (http://inquiry.uiuc.edu), a dynamic virtual community started at the University of Illinois. The Inquiry Page offers a collaborative environment in which inquiry-based education can be discussed, resources and experiences shared, and innovative approaches explored. Both the processes and products of research are archived in readily accessible forms and are thereby made available to later generations of students who will build on the work of their predecessors.

In Spring 2003 EOTU was piloted via the Inquiry Page in Anthropology 286, The Ethnography of Asian America. Alone or in groups, students investigated diverse aspects of Asian America at UIUC including, for example, bubble tea cafes, bible study groups, Greek life, and Asian Americans in the College of Communications. Over two thirds of the students in ANTH 286 agreed to have their on-line materials (documents that chart both the course and results of their research) archived for future EOTU use and users. These materials will be of particular interest to EOTU participants who join Race and the University, one of EOTU’s nested projects. Race and the University is understood this way: “Whether spoken of as ‘diversity’ or ‘multiculturalism,’ race is at the heart of the American university—its history, its contemporary challenges, and its futures. This project examines ways in which the U.S. university and the American college experience are indelibly racialized. In particular this project examines the longstanding U.S. debates and decisions on affirmative action.”

Over the 2003-04 year, the EOTU Working Group, a group of faculty, administrators, and students interested in conceptualizing and actualizing EOTU, will meet on the theme Globalization and the University with a focus on: (1) international education in U.S. universities; (2) The effects of the global higher education market on U.S. universities; (3) the effects of international students on U.S. universities; and (4) study abroad of U.S. university students. Globalization and the University will continue the commitment of EOTU to fostering student research that is embedded in larger institutional, political-economic, and representational contexts.

Asian American Outreach Displays, May 2003

By Sharon Lee

In May 2003, the Asian American Studies interns created large display cases in the city of Champaign, in honor of Asian American Awareness month. The cases ran through the month of May.

The first display was showcased on the first floor of the city of Champaign office building at 102 North Neil Street. Interns Annie Yoo and Grace Sue created informational sheets on leading Asian Pacific American political leaders in the country and listed statistics of APAs in the state of Illinois and at the University of Illinois and key laws affecting APAs throughout history. The display case was coordinated with the City of Champaign’s Office for Community Relations.

The second display case was held in the Champaign public library at 505 South Randolph Street. Interns Maricor Kimoto and David Loreto created two cases which housed information on Asian American literature for youth and Asian American musicians.

Internship in Asian American Studies Course

By Sharon Lee

The University of Illinois’ Asian American Studies Program (AASP) offers students the opportunity to gain experience and knowledge in Asian American Studies through its internship course. The internship can be taken for 3 credit hours under AAS 290 Individual Study. The 290 course meets weekly for an hour and a half to discuss readings and films on the field of Asian American Studies (this Fall the course meets Fridays, 10:00am-11:30am). Interns also help with various program events throughout the semester and are responsible for two projects and weekly response papers.

The internship is a great opportunity for students who are interested in learning more about Asian American Studies and Asian American issues and will allow students to become involved in the AASP on campus. The course also provides a deeper understanding of key Asian American issues and the role of Asian American Studies in higher education. Additionally, the experience encourages a further exploration into Asian American issues and identity formation. The internship can be applied towards the minor in Asian American Studies. The internship is a small seminar course which allows for personal discussion and one-on-one feedback.

For more information, contact Sharon Lee, Assistant Director of the AASP at 244-9530, arenax8@uiuc.edu.
By Teresa Mok

A dialogue course on Exploring Asian American Identities will be offered in Fall 2003. Students will be introduced to the different concepts and meanings of Asian American identities within the United States and explore issues related to Asian American ethnic and racial identity development, pan-Asian American identity, and identity politics. Students will have an opportunity to personally explore, understand, and describe Asian American identities and how those identities have changed over time. The focus of the course will be on both pan-Asian American identities and intra-ethnic Asian identities and implications of those identities for group definition, personal and community identities, and culture. Students will examine the experiences of Asian Americans of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds and discuss the influences of generation, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class.

This course is offered as a Dialogue Course of the Program on Intergroup Relations (PIR), which is administered jointly through the Counseling Center and the Office of the Dean of Students. PIR provides students with a proactive educational experience that promotes the exploration of group identities and open discussion of social justice issues such as discrimination based on class, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. PIR seeks to advance students’ understanding of and respect for diversity and social justice issues and to augment students’ skills in responding to intergroup differences and conflicts.

Dialogue classes are facilitated face-to-face meetings between students from different social identity groups. Students have the opportunity to explore commonalities and differences and address stereotypes, misinformation, and misconceptions. The classes also provide a safe space to explore the intellectual and emotional aspects of identity, oppression, and privilege. Through intergroup dialogue, long-standing or potential intergroup conflict can be brought into the open and be critically examined. Courses have both academic and experiential components; students are encouraged to bring their personal experiences and perspectives to the courses while considering the histories, social contexts, and theoretical frameworks for understanding the topics under discussion.

Dialogue classes meet for seven weeks, for 1 hour and 50 minutes per class period. Exploring Asian American Identities will be co-taught by Teresa Mok, psychologist at the Counseling Center, and Matt Lee, graduate student in clinical-community psychology and Graduate Assistant at the Counseling Center. For more information about the course, contact Teresa at tmok@uiuc.edu.

By Sharon Lee

The Asian American Studies Program is pleased to announce the following student representatives for the 2003-2004 Advisory Committee.

Matthew Lee, a Ph.D. student in the Clinical/Community division of Psychology, will be serving as the Graduate Student Representative. Originally from Brooklyn, NY, Matt earned his Bachelor’s degree in Psychology and English at Rutgers University. His research interests are Asian American mental health broadly and more specifically the experiences of racial and social awareness of Asian Americans and understanding contexts related to Asian Americans’ social anxiety. Matt is also the Graduate Assistant for Asian American outreach for the Counseling Center. He has served on various campus committees for APA student life and is co-teaching the Fall 2003 PIR course on Asian American identities. He helps coordinate the APA mentoring program (see page 9).

Grace Sue, a senior majoring in Political Science and minoring in Asian American Studies, will be serving as the Undergraduate Student Representative. From Flushing, New York, Grace was an intern for the Program in Spring 2003, earned an Honorable Mention in the Asian American Awareness Month Essay Competition, and is a member of the Asian Pacific American Coalition.

AASP Welcomes Post-Doctoral Fellows, 2003-2004

By Sharon Lee


Brian Locke is currently Assistant Professor of English and Ethnic Studies at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. He earned his Ph.D. in American Civilization from Brown University in 2000 with specialities in Asian American History and Literature, Film and Television Studies, and U.S. Cultural Studies. His research project is titled, “Three’s a Crowd: Racial Triangles and the Representation of the Asian in Hollywood films of the 1980’s and 1990’s.”

Junaid Rana is completing his Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin. His research interests include South Asia, Transnational and Diaspora Studies, Asian American Studies, social movements, Postcolonialism, and Islamic Studies. His dissertation project examines the diasporic imaginaries of working-class migrants in their movement from Pakistan to the U.S. His research proposal is a transnational study of race by connecting it to the specific history of Muslims in America and their relationship to Asian American identities.
Would you like to help support AAS?...

The Asian American Studies Program (AAS) at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign is primarily funded by public funds provided by the State of Illinois and tuition revenue. AAS relies on alumni, friends, and supporters to maintain its strong and expansive educational mission to work toward future growth. AAS is committed to expanding the traditions of knowledge within academia to address Asian American epistemologies, activities, and experiences. The program also seeks to render scholarly intellectual efforts integral to those of local, regional, national, and international Asian American communities. Faculty, staff, and students associated with AAS are expected to contribute to this mission not only through teaching, research, and service activities, locally and nationally, but also through active participation in social, intellectual, and advocacy endeavors.

Financial contributions to AAS support our efforts to fulfill our mission and to complete projects that would otherwise be beyond the means of a public university budget. We welcome your support and consider any and every contribution an act of generosity helping us to build an enriching environment for students on the UIUC campus. In addition to supporting AAS, each contribution is also counted as a donation to the University of Illinois.

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