



Committee on Regional Studies – East Asia
Newsletter
August 2020

Letter from the Chair

Dear Alumni of Harvard University's Regional Studies East Asia (RSEA) Program,

As I sit and write today, I find it hard to believe that this past January's "Letter from the Chair" already had a brief mention of the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. It is difficult to remember what pre-pandemic life was like. At that time, little was known about the severity of the virus and it seemed the main impact was going to be on the RSEA students' ability to do international research. Little did we know that by mid-March COVID-19 would become a global pandemic, the Harvard University campus would be depopulated, libraries would be closed, and all courses would shift to an online format. Although only six months have passed, it feels like we are living in a totally different world. Everyone's lives have been impacted in significant ways and higher education has been completely transformed. As the unique challenges of the pandemic became a reality during the Winter/Spring term, the RSEA staff, faculty, and students attempted to develop new ways to carry on the sense of a unified program and community that has always characterized RSEA. Virtual Zoom meetings and town halls were held to discuss how the pandemic was impacting everyone's scholarship and personal lives in order to address ways we could continue our academic mission as well as focus on the well-being of the RSEA community. After finishing out the year with on-line courses, in late May we hosted the first ever virtual RSEA Commencement.

As we begin the 2020-2021 academic year, RSEA faces significant challenges. Rather than merely react to the new realities of the COVID-19 pandemic we are exploring ways to treat this as an opportune moment to innovate in our teaching and research and to expand RSEA's connection to the wider world through our online programming. All RSEA activities—including the annual Harvard East Asia Society (HEAS) Conference, the RSEA Alumni Panel, and the various thesis and professional training workshops—will be held virtually. Throughout the year we will be reaching out to our exceptional RSEA alumni who are spread around the world in order to connect them with our current students. There is much we can do to maintain connections with the wider RSEA community despite the physical distancing, but as we approach the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the RSEA program we also appreciate now more than ever how personal interactions between students, faculty, staff, and alumni have been and continue to be such an integral part of RSEA. Indeed, it is the people who make up the RSEA program that have always made it such a special program. As RSEA has adapted to the unprecedented impact and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Professor Alexander Zahlten

(Director of Graduate Studies), Rose Cortese (Program Administrator), and Harriet Wong (Staff Assistant) all deserve a special word of thanks for all they have done during these difficult times. We look forward to seeing you at one of our virtual events, but until then we hope that you will all remain safe and healthy.

As always, we would be delighted to hear from you with any comments or suggestions you might have for future issues of this newsletter or ideas you might have as we develop the RSEA program in new directions. Please feel free to write to me directly at jrobson@fas.harvard.edu.

Sincerely,

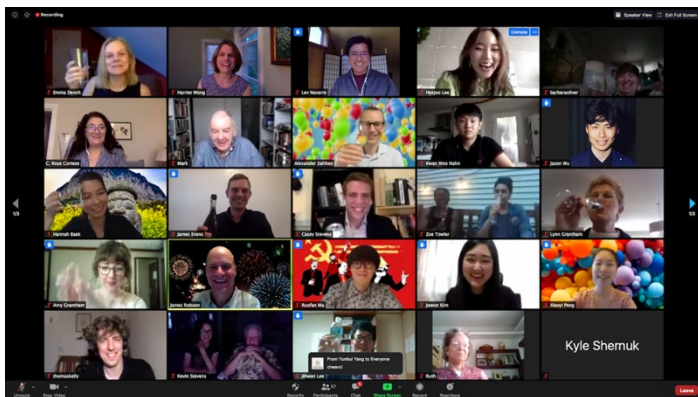
James Robson
James C. Kralik and Yunli Lou Professor
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations
Harvard University

RSEA Student News

We welcome a new cohort of thirteen students to the RSEA program this fall semester. Although we cannot be together on campus, we are enjoying getting to know the students through online meetings and orientations. They, and our twenty-three continuing students, are in the process of registering for fall classes. First-year students will take the RSEA Proseminar course together as a cohort. In addition to the program's regular workshops, we are planning some social events for all RSEA students to get together virtually.

Virtual Commencement 2020

On May 27 the RSEA community of faculty, staff, students and family members met online for a different, yet moving, celebration honoring the accomplishments of the Class of 2020.



It was good to celebrate the success and resilience of our RSEA graduates who, despite the challenges of a disrupted spring semester, completed their course work and theses to earn the AM degree. Notably, two graduates were awarded a Fletcher prize for an outstanding thesis, and seven more received an honorable mention for their theses (titles and awards are listed below). Read more at [RSEA celebrates Commencement online.](#)

RSEA's **Amy Grantham** was selected by GSAS Student Council to be a Commencement Marshall representing the Class of 2020 during the virtual GSAS ceremony held on May 28, 2020.

Congratulations to the twenty graduates of the RSEA Class of 2020!

Esse Yao Chen – *“Invest Your Retirement for the Market: State-Building, Financialization, and Hong Kong’s Pension Fund Capitalism”*

Cheng Cheng – *“Private is Politics: Implementation of One Child Policy in 1980s PRC”*

Sejan Choi – *“From “Fire and Fury” to the First Summit: Factors affecting North Korea’s strategic decision-making in 2017 and 2018”*

James Evans – *“The Third World’s Maoist Revolution: Maoism, African-American Activism, and Naxalism during China’s Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)”* received the Fletcher Award

Amy Grantham – *“Man in the Mirror: Image and ‘Star Power’ as South Korean Security Management”*

Kwan Woo Hahn – *“Nation and Gangsters: Syngman Rhee Administration and Use of Nonstate Violence Enforcers”* received a Fletcher Honorable Mention

Gene Kim – *“Japan and the Two Koreas: Competing Visions for Japanese Postwar Relations, 1951–1975.”* received a Fletcher Honorable Mention

Juwon Kim – *“The Making of Postcolonial Korean Identity through Newsreel Films in South Korea, 1945-1960”* received a Fletcher Honorable Mention

Hyejoo Lee – *“(De)stabilizing Nation: Mobility, America, and Foreign Location Films of 1980s South Korean Cinema”*

Jihwan Lee – *“Air Pollution that Crosses Borders from China to Korea: Reviewing Possibilities to Reduce It through Cooperation in Law, Energy, and Climate Change”* - received the Fletcher Award

Ruofan Ma – *“Bringing the States Back in Line: Compliance and Enforcement in the ILO”*

Lev Navarre Chao – *“Information Control Strategies of the Chinese Communist Party”* – received a Fletcher Honorable Mention

Yihao Niu – *“Empire Abridged: Propaganda Films in Southeast Asia in the Last Days of The Pacific War”*

Xiaoyi Peng – *“Japan’s Participation in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and the Emergence of Design”*

David Song – *“Diverging Gendered Outcomes: Linguistic Abilities, Gendered Desire, and Taiwanese Migration Narratives in Japan”*

Casey Stevens – *“A Return to Chang An: Wang Wei as Courtier (701–761 CE)”* received a Fletcher Honorable Mention

Junchao Tang – *“Diversity and Public Goods Provision: Evidence from China”*

Jalem Towler – *“Analyzing African Americans in Japanese Film and Media from the 1950s - 1970s”* received a Fletcher Honorable Mention

Jason Wu – *“Regional Integration and its Discontents: The Challenges of Compressed Development under China's Greater Bay Area Initiative”* received a Fletcher Honorable Mention

Chloe Yan – *“Becoming Kawase Naomi: Professional School, National Policy, Female Celebrity in Post-1970s Japanese Cinema and Media Ecology”*

2020 HEAS Conference

Congratulations to all who participated in the successful Harvard East Asia Society (HEAS) Conference, [*Life on the Edge: Borders and Boundaries in East Asia*](#) held at Harvard in February 2020. This was the 23rd annual HEAS Conference and was once again organized entirely by a committee of first year RSEA students. Read HEAS Co-Chair Will Taylor’s account of [the 2020 HEAS Conference](#).



Prof. James Robson with student members of the 2020 HEAS Conference committee Will Taylor, Yunhui Yang, Julia Wang, Bridget Nicholas.

RSEA Events & Alumni Opportunities

This year's **RSEA Alumni Panel** is being planned for October and the date will be announced soon. At this annual gathering of our RSEA community we traditionally enjoy an engaging panel discussion and informal conversations over dinner. This year's event will be different, as it will be held online. Although we cannot share a meal together, we will get to hear from several invited alumni panelists (to be announced) about their careers since RSEA, and we will connect with current RSEA students and fellow alumni. We look forward to gathering online, and we are excited that the virtual format will enable many more RSEA alumni to take part from wherever they are in the world. Please be on the lookout for an invitation to the Alumni Panel virtual event. We warmly welcome your participation!

Meet some current RSEA students!

Our students are very interested to connect with RSEA alumni in all fields and areas of the world, and to hear about your career steps since RSEA. This is particularly important this academic year when students will not get to experience the typical richness of life on campus. RSEA would like to arrange virtual gatherings for an alum to chat with a small group of students. We welcome and encourage you to get involved! Please email rsea2@fas.harvard.edu if you would be interested in a virtual Zoom meeting with a few current students.

RSEA's 75th Anniversary is coming up!

Next academic year 2021-22 will be the 75th year of the RSEA Program. The program dates back to 1946, when renowned China scholar John King Fairbank launched a full-time seminar leading to a master's degree known as Regional Studies China; the seminar was later expanded to include Japan, Korea and Vietnam, and became the A.M. program known as Regional Studies East Asia. As we plan to celebrate this milestone we look forward to the participation and support of many RSEA alumni around the world. We welcome your suggestions and will keep you informed as planning continues for the event.

Alumni News in Brief

Pablo Barrera (AM '14) has recently become Oklahoma Contemporary's inaugural Curatorial Fellow. In this role he will collaborate with local art communities to produce exhibitions, raise awareness of Indigenous cultures, and support engagement with art.

Esse Yao Chen (RSEA '20) is joining BlackRock's London office as a product management analyst.

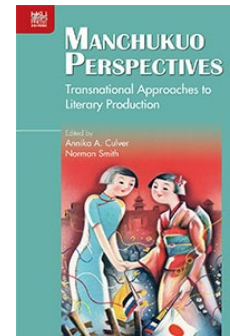
Matt Brazil (AM '87) gave a talk on Chinese communist espionage to the Royal Society for Asia Affairs. The [webinar can be viewed on YouTube](#).

Bao Kham Chau (AM '15) wrapped up his summer associate position at Orrick and Fish, and will soon be an intern at a federal agency called Administrative Conference of the US (ACUS).

Jannis Jizhou Chen (AM '17) gave a talk about his current research project in Chinese literature for the [Harvard Asia Center's Research Talk Series](#). Chen is a PhD candidate in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard. A video of Chen's talk, titled "*The Literature of Things: The Mansion of Secluded Books, Shu Yin Lou*" can be viewed [online here](#).

Sejan Choi (RSEA '20) returns to Seoul for a position in the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Annika Culver (AM 2000) published her first co-edited volume in December 2019, [Manchukuo Perspectives: Transnational Approaches to Literary Production](#), Hong Kong University Press. The book features ground-breaking transnational work on literary views of Manchukuo by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean intellectuals during the period of Japanese occupation, with a preface by Karen Thornber, Professor of Comparative Literature and East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard. Annika is a tenured associate professor of East Asian history at Florida State University, and a scholar in the US-Japan Network for the Future.



Ambassador **Karl Eikenberry** (AM '81) has begun a new faculty position at Schwarzman College, where he will be offering the course: Leadership in Diplomacy and Security.

James Evans (RSEA '20) will be studying for a PhD in modern Chinese history in Harvard's History department.

Rong Huang (AM '16) was selected as an Ethics Pedagogy Fellow at Harvard University for the academic year 2020-21. Rong is one of four current PhD students from various departments and schools at Harvard named Ethics Pedagogy Fellows by the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics.

Ted Hui (AM '14) received his PhD from EALC, Harvard University, completed his dissertation on Chinese literature, "*Writing Empire: Culture, Politics, and the Representation of Cultural Others in the Mongol-Yuan Dynasty*". Ted begins a postdoc position at the University of Oxford.

Gene Kim (RSEA '20) is entering the PhD program in History and East Asian Languages (HEAL) in the department of EALC at Harvard.

Juwon Kim (RSEA '20) is starting a PhD program in the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Toronto in Canada.

Rachel Leng (AM '15) was featured in [The Japan Times Directory of Who's Who in the World of Business in Japan](#). Rachel is currently COO and co-founder of SeiRogai, Inc.

Xiaoxuan Li (AM '14) received her PhD from EALC, Harvard University whose dissertation on Chinese literature was titled "*The Fallible Body in Early Medieval China*" and received her PhD.

Hyejoo Lee (RSEA '20) is embarking on a PhD in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Jingyu Liu (AM '13) received her PhD from EALC, Harvard University, and wrote her dissertation on religion, "*The Unimpeded Passage: The Making of Universal Salvation Rites and Buddho-Daoist Interactions in Medieval China.*" Jingyu will be a visiting Fellow at Harvard EALC.

Ruofan Ma (RSEA '20) is staying at Harvard to pursue a PhD in the Government department.

Huijun Mai (AM '14) received her PhD from EALC, Harvard University, completed her dissertation on Chinese literature, "*Thinking Things: Mediated Materiality in Song (760-1279) Literary Culture*". Huijun will be Assistant Professor of Medieval Chinese Studies at UCLA.

In addition to his position at the Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, **Yusuke Masaki** (AM '18) joined the Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Tokyo as an associate professor and will be teaching "Basics of Policy Analysis and Design" and "Public Management II" this fall semester.

Xiao You Mok (AM '19) has a position as Assistant Director, Emerging Markets Division at the Ministry of Trade and Industry in Singapore.

Lev Navarre Chao (RSEA '20) is working with the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center on US election security support

Yihao Niu (RSEA '20) has a position in the Singapore Ministry of Education, Higher Education Planning Office.

David Song (RSEA '20) is a Presidential Management Fellow working for the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) using quantitative and modeling tools as a data analyst.

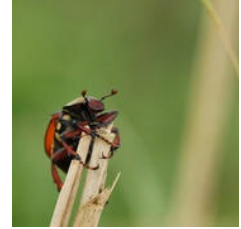
Casey Stevens (RSEA '20) is beginning a PhD program at Cornell University

Mark Szepan (AM '11), Lecturer in International Business at Oxford University's Saïd Business School, wrote a timely article about [Leading the Way Through a Major Crisis](#).

Zech Tan (AM '15) has been promoted to Major, Officer Commanding, 160 Squadron in the Singapore Armed Forces.

Junchao Tang (RSEA '20) begins a PhD in Sociology at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, where he will also be a student associate of the Liberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies. In addition, Junchao has just co-authored a book chapter: Sjö, Sofia, Marcus Moberg, Peter Nynäs, and Junchao Tang. 2020. "A View on Religious Socialization in Contemporary China: The Role of New Media, Literature, Education, and Participation." In *Young Adults, Digital Media, and Religion: An International Perspective*, edited by Marcus Moberg and Sofia Sjö. London: Routledge.

Nathan Vedal (AM '12) has a [Virtual Photo Exhibit – Asia Insecta](#) that can be viewed online. Take a virtual tour of the [online archived exhibition](#) that was displayed at Harvard in 2017. Nathan captured his stunning photographs of insects while traveling in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. The exhibit is sponsored by the Harvard University Asia Center, Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, and Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies.



Jason Wu (RSEA '20) will be studying for a JD degree at Harvard Law School.

Chloe Yan (RSEA '20) is starting a combined PhD in Film and Media Studies and East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale University.

RSEA Faculty News

Congratulations to RSEA Chair James Robson on being named Harvard College Professor in recognition of his contributions to undergraduate teaching and mentoring.

Congratulations to RSEA Director of Graduate Studies Alex Zahlten on his promotion to tenured Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard.

Congratulations to 2019-20 RSEA Committee Member Prof. Si Nae Park on the publication of her book, *The Korean Vernacular Story: Telling Tales of Contemporary Chosŏn in Sinographic Writing*, (Columbia University, 2020).

Send us your news! We love hearing about the new ventures, positions, publications, relocations, or milestones of our RSEA alumni. We hope you will write us at rsea2@fas.harvard.edu with news you'd like to share with the RSEA community.