

HORIZON

Sharing ideas, Bridging minds

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HSS Convocation 2012

Humanities and Social Sciences graduates can make a difference

Chinese Creative Writing

NTU-NAC launches first-of-its kind Chinese writing residencies

What Is Interdisciplinarity?

Interdisciplinary research is in vogue. But do we all agree on what it means?

Food For Thought

Environmental sociologist Saidul Islam discusses the effects of development and power on the environment

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Chair's Message



“ I would like to congratulate the Class of 2012 on their graduation. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours, and hope you will join the school’s alumni activities. Do keep in touch with us and tell us the interesting happenings in your lives and careers. ”

Dear colleagues, students, alumni and friends,

I am delighted to share with you that our school and the National Arts Council have joined hands to run a Chinese creative writing programme, the first-of-its-kind held at a Singapore university. The \$1.5 million programme will see our Chinese Division hosting two talented writers annually – one local and one international. In addition to producing literary work of their own, they will offer various creative writing courses for our students in NTU. The programme aims to not only influence the creative scene within the university but also across Singapore. Besides teaching NTU students, the visiting writers will also actively engage secondary school and junior college students through writing camps, workshops, and other literary activities. We are excited to play a part in developing the next generation of creative writers.

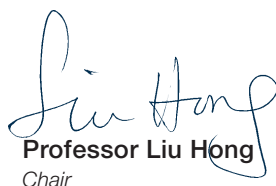
Still on the literary scene, Grace Chia Krakovic, one of our first English writers-in-residence, recently published her collection of poetry *Cordelia*. Penned during her residency here, the collection was extensively featured in the *Straits Times*. Our Chinese major students and alumni have also done very well in local literary competitions, winning the “Rising Talent” Award at the Singapore Chinese Tertiary Literature Awards, as well as sweeping the top and merit prizes in the literary review category at the inaugural Fang Xiu Literature Awards. Congratulations and well done!

On the academic front, our English Division collaborated with the Malaysian Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies to co-publish a special issue of the *Southeast Asian Review of English* (SARE), focusing on Malaysian and Singaporean literature. The collaboration not only provided an opportunity for publication of works by Malaysian and Singaporean creative writers, but also contributed to the development of critical interest in the literatures of both countries through peer-reviewed articles.

In a similar vein, our Centre for Chinese Language and Culture has continued its collaboration with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in publishing the *International Journal of Diasporic Chinese Studies*. The journal has rapidly emerged as one of the leading venues for quality publications on the Chinese overseas and their global networks. For example, the June issue touches on, among other topics, the secularisation of religious life of Chinese Filipinos, as well as the construction of multiple identities among the Chinese in Paris.

All these developments auger well for our endeavours in the Literary and Cultural Studies cluster, one of five interdisciplinary research clusters of HSS. The first three clusters – Humanities, Science and Society; Environment and Sustainability; and Global Asia – were featured in the second issue of *Horizon*. In this issue, you can find out more about the Literary and Cultural Studies and the New Frontiers in Neuroscience clusters. The clusters are excellent platforms for faculty members to come together to explore potential collaborative research, and to put up joint application for research grant.

Last but not least, I would like to congratulate the Class of 2012 on their graduation. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours, and hope you will join the school’s alumni activities. Do keep in touch with us and tell us the interesting happenings in your lives and careers.


Professor Liu Hong
Chair

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

NTU and NAC launch \$1.5 million Chinese creative writing initiative

NTU and the National Arts Council (NAC) have joined hands to nurture a new generation of Chinese creative writers, through a new Chinese creative writing programme. Starting January 2013, talented writers will be able to teach at HSS's Division of Chinese for up to six months, while working on a literary project of their own.



The writers-in-residence will teach creative writing courses in NTU.

The programme is the first of its kind to host local and international Chinese creative writers at a Singapore university. At least two writers – one local and one international – will be hosted in each academic year. NTU and NAC are co-funding up to \$1.5 million over three years for the programme.

“The programme will further enhance NTU’s efforts to make our mark globally and promote research excellence in the humanities, by bringing together the best of East and West,” said Prof Liu Hong, Chair of HSS, who approached NAC for this collaboration in October 2011 and led a series of discussions on the programme structure.

“Furthermore, as the writers-in-residence will actively engage with students in local secondary schools and junior colleges through workshops, public lectures, and writing camps, it will also provide valuable opportunities for them to learn about the rich and versatile Chinese creative writing tradition and its innovative adaptation in Southeast Asia and beyond,” Prof Liu added.

HSS is also home to NTU-NAC’s English writers-in-residence programme which was launched last year. By collaborating with NAC, NTU aims to contribute to the broader strategic goal in developing Singapore’s creative arts scene.

Mr Paul Tan, Director, Sector Development (Literary Arts), NAC, said: “We are confident that this collaboration with NTU will enable the flourishing of the Chinese literature scene in Singapore, as we nurture a new generation of writers and readers.

“This programme provides a dedicated and robust platform for local and international writers to collaborate, mutually inspire and create new works which will enrich Singapore’s literary canon. Undergraduates and literary enthusiasts can also take the opportunity to learn from mentors, in order to hone their craft in a quality and nurturing environment.”

Based at HSS, the writers will have the opportunity to immerse in the university’s stimulating intellectual environment.

Prof Alan Chan, Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, said: “NTU provides a unique environment for the experimentation of new creative forms, with artists, writers, scientists and engineers as they work closely together in a highly interactive community. The programme will enhance cross-cultural understanding and provide new avenues for creative expression, contributing significantly to our efforts in becoming a hub for global Chinese literature.”

Applications are now open. Please visit <http://www.chinese.hss.ntu.edu.sg>

Star showing at Fang Xiu Literature Awards



The literary talent of HSS Chinese majors was recognised at the inaugural Fang Xiu Literature Awards.

Current Master’s student Seah Cheng Ta (above), who also completed his undergraduate degree at HSS in 2011, won the top prize in the literary review category.

His thesis “Fang Xiu’s Realism Genealogy and its Controversies” provides a genealogy of Fang Xiu’s Realism in Malayan-Chinese literary field and discusses the debates sparked off by his view on realism.

Liong Hui Min, an alumna from the Class of 2011, won the merit award in the same category.

Her thesis “Myth, Hero, Totem: The Folklore Implication in Lizishu’s Novel” argues that Chinese folklore symbols – Myth, Hero, Totem – in author Lizishu’s novels not only reveal the unique features of Malaysian Literature, but are also metaphors for different aspects of the Chinese experience in Malaysia.

Open to all writers from Singapore and Malaysia, the competition was organised in honour of the late Mr Fang Xiu, a journalist-turned-scholar who pioneered the study of Malayan-Singapore Chinese literature.

NTU's Psychology in global top 50

Psychology, a key discipline in HSS, has entered the world's top 50. In the 2012 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Ranking by Subject, NTU's Psychology was ranked 42nd, while its English Literature, Economics, and Linguistics disciplines were each placed in the top 51st – 100th band. Academic reputation, employer reputation, and citations per paper were the criteria used in the ranking. Prof Liu Hong, Chair of HSS, said: "Although such rankings may fluctuate from year to year, Psychology's entry into the global top 50 is a major



milestone for a young and dynamic school. I am confident that we will continue our rapid progress and contribute further to NTU's growing international reputation."

Commemorative Symposium in honour of Emeritus Professor Lim Chong Yah



Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, congratulates Emeritus Professor Lim Chong Yah at the celebratory dinner.

On 24 August, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences held a commemorative symposium in honour of Emeritus Professor Lim Chong Yah. Six eminent economists, including Prof Edward Lazear, Jack Steele Parker Professor of Human Resources Management and Economics, Stanford University, gave talks on a range of topics. The occasion was rounded off with a celebratory dinner graced by luminaries from the industry, the academia and the government.

National Day honours for HSS staff

Two HSS staff were awarded National Day Awards in August for their meritorious service to NTU and the public sector. Mr Chan Weng Hoo (right), Deputy Director of HSS Undergraduate Office received the Commendation Medal, while Ms Sandy Ong (far right), Higher Executive Office of HSS Research Office received the Efficiency Medal.



Recognising academic excellence



Prof Liu Hong (left), Chair of HSS, presents the HSS book prize to Ng Jin Huai Emil, from Psychology Division.

The School has introduced the HSS book prize to recognise freshmen and sophomores who achieve academic excellence. The cash award will be given to the top first-year and second-year students in each division. The inaugural winners are: Wang Yichun and Liu Sha from Chinese; Chia Kai Xuan and Xu Ningyan from Economics; Seth Koh Xi Liang and Charmaine Ann Thio Shi Min from English; Tan Shen Hui and Tan Xue Er Cheryl from Linguistics; Ng Jin Huai Emil and Lim Kian Leong Ivan from Psychology; and Jacqueline Melissa Hongadi and Sng Tiak from Sociology.

Building up postdoctoral research network

By Neo Ping May

Postdoctoral fellows now have a new avenue to explore potential interdisciplinary research collaborations with other researchers – through a new series of talks introduced by the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CoHASS).

Started in September this year, the bi-monthly talk involves postdoctoral fellows taking turn to present their research findings to academics in NTU.

Initiated by Prof Luke Kang Kwong, Associate Dean for Research, the series aims to enhance networking among CoHASS postdoctoral fellows, to raise their profiles, and also to generate interest in their research.



The series aims to enhance networking among CoHASS postdoctoral fellows.

Postdoctoral fellows are scholars who have recently completed their PhD, and are undertaking research work in the university, to further deepen expertise in their specialist field.

Prof Luke said: "Postdoctoral fellows come to us as already accomplished researchers themselves, very knowledgeable about their fields and therefore adding strength to our research.

"The talks serve as an opportunity for them to come together as a group and develop possible synergies and interaction that would create a stronger impact than if they were working in isolation.

"In turn, interaction may develop into interdisciplinary research and thus contribute to the intellectual life in NTU."

The talks are held on Thursdays at HSS. Details can be found on posters placed on notice boards in HSS. Researchers who want to find out more can contact coordinator Dr Jo Archer (jarcher@ntu.edu.sg).

Upcoming talks in the series

| | | |
|--------|--|---|
| 22 Nov | History, politics, and media representation of the martial body | By Dr Lim Chee Han (Sociology) |
| 28 Nov | Internet addiction among young people: Internet connectedness, online gaming, and academic performance decrement | By Dr Chloris Jiang Qiaolei (Communication Studies) |

NTU writer-in-residence publishes poetry collection

By Evelyn Lee



Cordelia represents the capstone of Grace Chia Krakovic's (above) one-year long writing residency stint in NTU.

While many are dozing off or playing phone games on long MRT train rides, Grace Chia Krakovic whips out her pen and writes some of her best poems on scraps of paper. This eventually led to her recently published poetry collection, *Cordelia*. The book represents the capstone of her one-year long writing residency stint in NTU's Division of English.

The 39-year-old local writer enjoys "being alone with hundreds of people", an anonymity that frees her from her roles of a lecturer, wife and mother. Most of her train rides are spent commuting to and from NTU each day.

Following her first poetry collection in 1998 titled *Womango*, which explored gender issues, *Cordelia* deals with "daddy issues" as the mother of two comes to terms with being a parent.

With the title's reference to Cordelia, the youngest and strong-headed daughter in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, one might expect poems about daughters trying to assert their individual voices and identities against controlling father figures.

However, for Grace, the idea of the father represents one's family and homeland. In

her poems, Grace explores her thoughts about home and renegotiates her relationship with her homeland, after being away from Singapore for 14 years.

Prior to her return, the poet was leading a nomadic lifestyle with her husband, Cirque du Soleil violinist Vuk Krakovic, touring the cities of Europe.

"I was ecstatic to be offered the NTU writing residency. I could finally come home," she said. "I wanted to come home."

The Singapore identity, which she describes as "modern and cosmopolitan", but also "rooted in old world cultural baggage", is something that interests her greatly.

The writer sees a need for Singaporeans to balance their literary appetites with both overseas and local writing. She said: "It is not about patriotism, but the writers of your own country speak the voices you cannot articulate.

"At the bottom line, there is a divisiveness about this society that is hard to understand, unless you let the voices speak. Only then can you understand what the Singapore soul is."

Chinese literary 'Rising Talents'



Newly-minted Chinese graduate Lim Wei Bin (above, right) bagged the "Rising Talent" honour at the 14th Singapore Tertiary Chinese Literature Awards.

He was one of two winners in the category which recognises up-and-coming literary local talent.

His work "Rebelliousness in 'Another Tribe'" is a critique of the first R(21) stage performance in Singapore. It strives to use Nietzsche's notion of the Will to Power to explicate the text, revealing how power struggles, rebelliousness, and various tensions operate in it.

The other winner was Chua Shi Min, from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, now a first-year Chinese undergraduate at HSS. Her story "The Unspoken" is about the 'forgotten spirits' of the now-defunct Tanjong Pagar Railway Station. It is based on rumoured tales that have been around for as old as the railway station is.

The annual competition was co-organised by the Chinese Society of NTU, the Chinese Society of National University of Singapore, and Singapore Hokkien Huay Guan.

Showcasing Malaysian and Singaporean literature

A special issue of the *Southeast Asian Review of English* (SARE) co-edited by HSS English literature faculty members was launched by former Singapore President Mr SR Nathan at the Art House on 6 October.

The special issue of the peer-reviewed journal – which focuses on Malaysian and Singaporean Literature – marks its 30th anniversary in publication. It was co-published by NTU's College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, and the Malaysian Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (MACLALS).

Spearheaded by the Editor of SARE, Assoc Prof Susan Philip, President of MACLALS, and Head of the English Department at University of Malaya, the special issue was co-edited by Assoc Prof Neil Murphy, Head of the English Division at NTU; and Prof Koh Tai Ann, member of SARE International Advisory Board, and Senior Associate of NTU's Centre for Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

The collaboration fostered ties with Malaysian academics and writers, and



Guest-of-honour Mr SR Nathan (centre) with the co-editors of the special issue of the *Southeast Asian Review of English*, Prof Koh Tai Ann (left), and Assoc Prof Neil Murphy.

provided an opportunity for publication of works by Malaysian and Singaporean creative writers. It projects NTU as a knowledge hub that mediates in various cultural projects, in line with the University's New Silk Road vision.

In his speech, Mr Nathan said: "SARE is thus – and this 30th Anniversary issue reinforces this – a valuable platform for both established, new or emerging writers and new books, reflecting the complex multicultural and multilingual diversity found in societies like ours."

The special issue reviewed notable new Singaporean/Malaysian literary works and books in the field, contributing to the development of critical interest in the literatures of both countries. It also endorsed the multicultural diversity of the two societies by featuring and reviewing Malay and Chinese poetry, in both their original languages and in English translations.

The launch event featured readings by contributors from both countries, including Dr Chuah Guat Eng, Malaysia's first English-language woman novelist, and Mr Yeng Pway Ngon, Singapore Cultural Medallion Winner in 2003. Students from the HSS English Creative Writing Programme also read from their works, showcasing their literary talent.

Novel team-teach approach at Tianjin Summer School

An international group of faculty from different universities came together in China to co-teach a summer exchange programme. This took place at the NTU International Summer Programme in Tianjin from 30 June to 5 August.

Organised by NTU's College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, the programme gathered 28 students at the Tianjin University campus. They came from NTU, Tianjin University, Nankai University, Bryn Mawr College, Haverford College, and the University of Toronto. Students took two interdisciplinary courses which were team-taught by NTU and Bryn Mawr faculty members.

Dr Susan Sutton, Senior Advisor for International Initiatives, Bryn Mawr College, said: "There are summer schools based at institutions where an international group of students come on their own volition to be taught by faculty from that institution.

"But deliberately putting together an international group of faculty who will team-teach to a group of students selected to represent a range of countries, so as to engender fully cross-national insights – this is pretty unusual."

Asst Prof Francis Lim, Division of Sociology, co-taught the course *Space Place and the City* with Prof Gary McDonogh, Bryn Mawr College; while Asst Prof Daniel Jernigan,



Through courses and field trips, students gain a deeper understanding of China and of each other's diverse cultures.

Division of English, and Assoc Prof Cindy Wong, Bryn Mawr College, co-taught *Cultural Encounters: Understanding and Deconstructing East and West*.

Through courses and field trips, students gained a deeper understanding of China and of each other's diverse cultures.

Briana Alterman, an undergraduate from Bryn Mawr College, said: "It was a wonderful experience. We really got into some very interesting cultural exchanges with our fellow students both inside and outside the classroom."

Students also learnt about Singapore's

effort in promoting sustainable urban development when they visited the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City.

Teo Seow Tian, a final-year business and accountancy student from NTU, said: "I learnt quite a bit from the Singaporeans working there regarding the construction of an eco-city out of wastelands – a remarkable feat in itself."

Planning for the second edition of the Summer Programme has begun. Faculty members who wish to take part in the programme can contact Ms Seeto Wei Peng, Deputy Director (Academic Affairs).

LCC launches the Communication Cube

By Charisse D'Souza



Students can register for coaching sessions online individually or in groups up to five and they are entitled to 2 sessions per semester.

The HSS Language and Communication Centre has launched the Communication Cube, a centre for NTU students to learn new writing skills and receive feedback on their writing. It also serves to encourage critical thinking about writing elements such as style, structure, coherence and argumentation.

The Communication Cube was the brainchild of Prof Alan Chan, Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. He explained that good writing and communication skills are critical to the future career development of students.

"Most top universities have a writing centre where students can discuss their assignments with peer tutors," he said.

The coaches are students pursuing Masters or PhD degrees in English or Linguistics and Multilingual Studies. They were handpicked and trained to teach both academic and professional writing genres.

Ms Susan Wong, a coach pursuing her PhD in English, said that the Communication Cube is essential because many NTU students have strong ideas but are unable to communicate them effectively in class.

This is particularly useful for students who do not speak English as their first language.

"As a non-native English speaker, writing is my weak point," said Wang Zhizheng, a first-year Electrical and Electronic Engineering student. "Hence the sessions are useful from a general learning standpoint and can help me with any kind of writing assignment."

The sessions also aim to help students effectively, without taking up too much time.

"My coach and I had a good discussion on how to improve my content; within the 30-minute session, I learned a lot," said Syuhada Binte Sam, a first-year Maritime Studies student.

Students can register for coaching sessions online individually or in groups up to five and they are entitled to 2 sessions per semester. The Communication Cube is temporarily housed on Level 6 of the HSS Building. It will take permanent residence on the 7th floor of the new Learning Hub in 2014.

Linguistics student releases debut EP

By Samuel Wee

The next time you feel like complaining about your heavy course load, think about local singer-songwriter Siti Zahidah.

To enchant audiences with her brand of merry indie-pop is one thing – but to do it while deftly coping with schoolwork is another.

The final-year Linguistics and Multilingual Studies student has just released her debut five-track EP, *Ethereal*. The record features her first Malay single, "Malam Ini", which was once ranked 10th in Warna Radio's Top 20 Hit Chart. However, her musical journey wasn't always smooth sailing. She confessed that a few years ago, juggling her dual commitments wasn't easy.

"It was a challenge to learn to adapt and balance two completely different environments," said Zahidah, who had decided to pursue music during her freshman year in 2009.

Nevertheless, Zahidah joined the Noise Singapore Apprenticeship Program and learnt under the guidance of local producer Jason Tan. She also started performing early, securing her first gig at the Esplanade Concourse stage in 2010. In November last year her hard work was rewarded when she won 987FM's music talent contest The Next Big Thing.



"It was very, very surreal," said Zahidah, recalling the media hype that followed her victory. "After the Malay media got news of it, they went crazy and booked me for radio and television appearances.

"All the while I was panicking because the time I'd set aside for exam revisions was being consumed."

To compensate for lost time, Zahidah cut down on socialising after her press commitments, opting to head home to catch up on her schoolwork.

The hard work eventually paid off. Despite the various media distractions, Zahidah achieved her best ever academic performance last year.

"I've matured as a songwriter since I started and I want people to hear that in my music," she said. "It's my way of showcasing my journey and rewarding the people who've followed me since the beginning."

Interested listeners can purchase her EP, *Ethereal*, at zahidah.bandcamp.com or email 20oneproductions@gmail.com for a physical copy.

HSS Convocation: Making a difference

Humanities and social sciences graduates at NTU are well-equipped with the analytical, critical and creative thinking skills needed to make a difference to society.

In her address to graduands at the Convocation of NTU's School of Humanities and Social Sciences on 2 August, guest speaker Ms Sim Ann, Senior Parliamentary Secretary of Ministry of Education and Ministry of Law, observed that although much has been said about how science and technology function as key drivers in improving our lives, the role of humanities and the social sciences should not be scanted.

She said: "As our world grows in complexity and interconnectedness, new perspectives and attitudes which transcend narrow specialisation and conventional disciplines are required to navigate modern-day challenges and demands.

"In whatever field that you may choose to enter, this textured understanding of our world provided by the humanities and social sciences will help better serve the needs of our people and improve their lives."

About 50 students graduated from the pioneer cohort of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies programme, alongside some 400 students from English, Chinese, Economics, Sociology, Psychology programmes. Over 80 postgraduate students graduated from the PhD, Master of Arts, and Master of Arts in Contemporary China programmes.

Ms Sim, who is also a HSS alumna from the Translation & Interpretation Class of 2005, noted that the school's graduates have taken up positions in education, counselling, arts management, civil service, social research and various other industries, each contributing to the community in his or her own special way.

For instance, Shannon Ong, an alumna from the Chinese Class of 2009, co-founded Woods in the Books, an independent bookstore specialising in picture books. The store aims to promote "simple truths" and "valuable lessons" by using children stories.

In the case of Michelle Mah, who graduated from Psychology, Ms Sim said that she is "a social worker, counsellor and administrator all-rolled-into one". Michelle is currently an assistant manager of social assistance at North West CDC.

Another example from the graduating class was Nigel Jude Decruz from Sociology, who took a slightly unusual route to university,



Guest speaker Ms Sim Ann, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Law, addressing the graduands.

"In whatever field that you may choose to enter, this textured understanding of our world provided by the humanities and social sciences will help better serve the needs of our people and improve their lives."

– Ms Sim Ann, Senior Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education and Ministry of Law

working hard through 5 years of secondary school and another 3 years at Millennia Institute before enrolling in NTU.

During his time in the university, Nigel created and conducted various English preparatory programmes for secondary school students. Today his entrepreneurial journey continues through the company he founded. Named SG Live, the company provides photo-video production services and is supported by NTU ventures.

Ms Sim said: "There are many more stories that I could share, but I believe all point to the same conclusion – the humanities and social sciences prepare our students well to contribute to their community and society in different ways.

"The road ahead may be more uncertain, and may bring new challenges. I wish you all the best, as you draw upon your training and your shared experience to make the most of exciting new opportunities that lie before you."



Graduates of the pioneer cohort of the Linguistics and Multilingual Studies programme.

Pursuing philosophical harmony

By Ayesha Shakya



Randall Hoon (right) aspires to be an academician in Chinese philosophy.

Living in a multi-cultural society like Singapore, Randall Hoon recognises the importance of understanding each other's religion and culture. Hence the top graduate from the Chinese Division chose to embark on an academic journey to explore how ancient Chinese philosophical teachings can contribute to modern-day multiculturalism.

The Lee Kuan Yew Gold medallist is currently doing a Master's degree in Chinese at HSS, focusing on the cross-fertilisation of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in the late Ming era. He hopes to uncover potential overlaps and harmony between these three distinct systems of thoughts.

While there have been various religious conflicts happening around the world in the past and present, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism have co-existed peacefully since as far back as 6th century BC. Randall hopes to gain insights, through his research, on maintaining harmony between different religions or cultures.

"While each teaching has its own unique significance, they have all co-existed together," said Randall. "Their co-existence hint to the possibility of harmony existing between them."

"I hope my research can delve deeper into understanding their inter-relationship and that it can add value to the society, especially in terms of providing more insight into maintaining harmony between cultures."

His dream is to be an academician in Chinese philosophy.

A NTU President Research Scholar during his undergraduate days, Randall had shown great potential in his scholarly pursuit. One of his research papers was accepted by the 4th Crossing Over Symposium at Cleveland State University.

He hopes to obtain a PhD in History of Thought, focusing on the relationship and the harmony between new Confucianism and religion in the late Ming era.

"In a world of globalisation and increasing cultural contact, it is ever more imperative that we find a basis for their harmony," he said.

Passion over prestige

By Jo-Ann Quah

As one of the top students of Hwa Chong Institution in 2007, Lee Xin Ying had her pick of top institutions worldwide.

She attained 7 As in the GCE 'A' Level Examination – a score good enough to enrol in courses like Law and Medicine at Ivy League universities.

Instead, she chose to enroll in NTU's new Linguistics and Multilingual Studies programme.

She said: "I love that HSS is tightly-knit community, and that the focus is not just on linguistics, but multilingual studies as well.

"The course is the first in the region to place emphasis on multilingual diversity, which is extremely relevant to our world today."

And it was a decision she will not regret.



Xin Ying works as an editor with global publisher World Scientific.

Xin Ying recently graduated with first-class honours, and a double major in linguistics and psychology. She also received the Lee Kuan Yew Gold Medal for academic excellence.

She said: "After four years of rushing crazy deadlines for multiple projects, cramming my readings, and attending stimulating lectures, what I took away was the intangible. I learnt to better manage time, stress, and my expectations."

One of her highlights was her exchange stint in Sweden – where she spent six months as a student at the Lulea University of Technology.

Again, she opted for unconventionality – in contrast to others of her calibre who signed up for exchange programmes at top American universities.

She explained: "I wanted to explore the lesser known Scandinavian lifestyle. I know many view studying in the US as prestigious, but everyone has a different view of what the ideal exchange experience should be like, and mine wasn't an American one."

Now, Xin Ying works as an editor with global publisher World Scientific.

She said: "An integral part of my job involves developing relationships with academicians in diverse fields.

"Working alongside authors in the production process gives me great satisfaction, as it is intellectually stimulating. Every day brings a different challenge, and every day I learn something new."

Teenage rebel turned scholar

By Ankita Ann Jacob

Before entering university, Muhammad Kamal Jauhari was not what one would call a model student.

He smoked, played truant, and was often caned on stage for misbehavior during his teenage years.

But things have changed since then.

He recently graduated with first-class honours in Sociology, and was one of the 30 recipients of the Lee Kuan Yew Gold Medal for academic excellence.

At this year's National Day Rally, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong even referred to Jauhari as someone who had "overcome difficult beginnings to do well."

PM Lee said: "He turned over a new leaf, worked hard, and made it into NTU."

Coming from a single-parent background, Jauhari's mother, Madam Radiah Said Shukor, 55, brought him and his sister up single-handedly. Her sacrifice had motivated him to focus on his studies.

The route to success did not come easy. To support himself through the four years of university, Jauhari worked as a security guard on Sundays. He would spend his 12-hour shifts catching up on reading for school.

In an interview with The New Paper, he said: "It's not a good position to be in. People look down on you. But being a

THE STRAITS TIMES, MONDAY, 27 AUGUST 2012, PAGE A10

PM'S SPEECH IN MALAY

Malay success stories of overcoming the odds

By GOH CHIN LIAN

MANY Malay children who grew up in Darul Ma'wa, a children's shelter, have become successful and productive citizens, the Prime Minister noted last night.

Mr Sufian Anwar, a striker currently in the Liga XI soccer team, is one of them.

Another is Mr Zulfitri Nazahudin, a spacecraft analyst at telco firm SingTel. The polytechnic graduate is now gunning for a degree at the National University of Singapore.

and won the Lee Kuan Yew Gold Medal.

"Jauhari smoked and played truant as a young student, and was often caned. But he turned over a new leaf, worked hard and made it to NTU," said Mr Lee.

He also praised Mr Adil Hakem Mohamad Rafie, a Rafflesian who won the prestigious President's Scholarship this year.

Mr Lee identified several thrusts to ensure continued progress for the community, which he said is an integral part of Singapore's future.



Mr Muhammad Kamal Jauhari Zaini graduated with first-class honours in sociology from NTU and won the Lee Kuan Yew Gold Medal. BY FILE PHOTO

THE NEW PAPER, WEDNESDAY, 7 AUGUST 2012, PAGES 7 & 2

LEE KUAN YEW GOLD MEDAL AWARDS

Single-parent upbringing, youthful mistakes

CAN'T GET HIM DOWN

He worked as a security guard to put himself through NTU

Interview with

Mr Muhammad Kamal Jauhari Zaini

By Priscilla Kham

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Local media extensively features Jauhari's feat in overcoming the odds.

student of sociology, I felt I should take on the job to know how people feel."

He also gave English tuition at self-help group Mendaki.

Jauhari now plans to attain a Master's degree in Sociology – specially focusing on societal groups like single mothers, and children from underprivileged families.

One of his lecturers, Assoc Prof Teo You Yenn described Jauhari as "a sharp thinker who is able to make connections between abstract concepts, theoretical constructs and empirical realities."

"His concern and appreciation for issues of inequalities and social justice have, I think, shaped his affinity to Sociology as a discipline," said Assoc Prof Teo.

The world's his stage

By Priscilla Kham



Joel Low (centre) is currently in the US, exploring his passion in performing arts.

For newly-minted Psychology graduate Joel Low, the song 'Defying Gravity' from the hit musical *Wicked* holds a special meaning.

The 25-year-old was the top psychology graduate, and thus could have easily opted for a scholarship to pursue graduate studies overseas.

But in a bold move, Joel decided to explore a career in the performing arts instead.

He said: "I felt like I needed to pursue something I truly loved, which was performing. As a fresh graduate, I felt free to explore. If you miss such moments in life, you'll never get them back."

Thus, like *Wicked's* free-spirited protagonist, Elphaba, who takes off on a broom, Joel decided to let his dreams take flight.

In September, he headed to the US for a month-long performing arts programme at the New York Film Academy, to hone his acting techniques.

After the stint, he aims to enrol into an American music college.

Joel's move from the lab to stage was not an impulsive one.

He was at a crossroads during his final year in NTU, agonising between doing Psychology research work and pursuing his passion in performing.

"I could not sleep on most nights as I kept thinking about my life. It got to the point where I actually broke down on the train," the ex-choir member from Victoria School recalled.

It was not until a couple of months ago that he managed to convince his parents that he could carve out a career from his interest in performing.

"It came to a point where they realised that I'm old enough to make my own decisions. So, regardless of what decision I make, they said they'd support me," he said.

For now, Joel is just glad to be following his heart.

"To fly, to defy gravity, when people say you can't, well... why not?" he said.

The ascent of Charles Darwin



The figure of Charles Darwin (above) has been “made” and “remade” over the decades to reflect changing views about science and the persona of the scientist.

His theory of evolution by natural selection has become the unifying theory of the life sciences. Charles Darwin was one of the most celebrated and notorious scientists of his time. But the Darwin that people imagine today isn't quite the same as the one celebrated in the past, said Prof Janet Browne, an eminent Darwin scholar from Harvard University and the current Toh Puan Mahani Idris Daim Chair Professor at NTU. She said: “The figure of Darwin was first used by the British to promote national pride, and was later used by North Americans to promote the advance of modern science through rationality and secularism, and again it was taken up by a group of leading biologists to signal that their disciplinary fields were unified.”

Prof Browne, who is the Aramont Professor of the History of Science at Harvard University, was speaking at a public lecture on 18 October on “The Ascent of Darwin: Rethinking the Darwinian Revolution in Anglo-American Culture”. Focusing on

Darwin's legacy after his death in 1882, she showed how he has been “made” and “remade” over the years to reflect changing views about science and the persona of the scientist. She did this by detailing instances where the figure of Darwin was used as “a rallying point for science”.

Defending Darwinism

“History tells us that interest in evolutionary theory rose and fell after Darwin's death,” said Prof Browne. “Darwinism as a system of thought needed a number of ‘reboots’ during the 20th century in order to become the theory it is today.”

Since Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, his ideas have faced strong criticism from religious authorities. To defend science from such attacks, eminent scientists, who were friends of Darwin, held a grand funeral to bury his body in Westminster Abbey as if he was a “national hero”, alongside famous Englishmen such as the missionary David Livingstone, and the novelist Charles Dickens.

“Darwinism as a system of thought needed a number of ‘reboots’ during the 20th century in order to become the theory it is today.”

– Prof Janet Browne,
Toh Puan Mahani Idris Daim
Chair Professor, NTU

However by 1909 during the centenary of Darwin's birth, Darwinism was facing a steep decline. The scientific community favoured Lamarckism or mutation genetics over Darwin's natural selection to explain evolution. In response, a group of naturalists and Darwin's family members organised a grand celebration at Cambridge University and deliberately reasserted the primacy of Darwinism against its rivals.

International divergence

Darwin's stocks rose again in the aftermath of the First World War. His home in the UK countryside was converted into a museum of science in 1929 to promote science and technology. It was in this house – not laboratories or university premises – that Darwin worked on his theories and conducted small experiments. Prof Browne observed that the museum seemed to “humanise” science and portray Darwin's science as a “slow and peaceful country pursuit” that “did not need to be threatening or even political”.

But it was a different story across the Atlantic. In 1925, the famous Scopes trial took place in the US. It was a “bitter, bitter clash between science and religion,” with one party turning to the law courts to settle disputes over the right to teach evolutionary biology



Prof Janet Browne (right) engages with the audience during the question and answer session, chaired by Asst Prof Joey Long, Director of History Programme.

in schools. While Americans watched the Scopes trial unfolding in their newspapers and radio reports, the religious consequences of a belief in Darwinism hardly caused a ripple in the UK.

“Here we have an international divergence,” said Prof Browne.

Canonisation of Darwinism

Fast forward to 1959, scientists had by then successfully merged Darwin’s natural selection theory with Mendelian genetics and population genetics. The result was a unified theory of evolution, known as the Modern Synthesis. At the centennial celebration of the publication of *On the Origin of Species* held at Chicago University, American biologists reinvented the legacy of Darwin and applauded him as founding father of the new integrated approach.

They also challenged the religious right wing of North American politics when leading evolutionary biologist Sir Julian Huxley delivered a “secular sermon”. He declared that religion has no other functions except to cohere social groups. The public response was hostile because in 1950s “much of the political structure and the national psyche rested on unshakable religious belief system.”

Here Darwin was portrayed not as a “gentle, peaceful, observant naturalist” – but a “dynamic secular thinker”, and possibly a “dangerous atheist”, said Prof Browne.

Transnational study of Darwinism

Through the successive events in the Anglo-American world, Prof Browne observed that Darwin has gradually become an icon that serves a variety of “personal, disciplinary, institutional, regional and even national functions.” She noted however that there is still a lot of work for scholars to do in assessing the impact of Darwinian concepts in different cultures, and in different places across the globe.

She said: “It is fair to say that Darwinism is a global phenomenon, and it may even be the first of scientific theories to spread across the world and become embedded in local context.

“Our task as humanities scholar is to establish how science has circulated around the world and to seek the local in the global, and the global in the local.”

As a visiting professor at NTU, Prof Browne teaches undergraduate and graduate classes. She also engages in research methodology discussions with colleagues and explores potential joint research projects.

The Toh Puan Mahani Idris Daim Chair Professorship in Humanities and Social Sciences was launched in 2005 with a gift of \$1.5 million from Toh Puan Mahani Idris Daim, the wife of Malaysia’s former finance minister Tun Daim Zainuddin. The professorship aims to appoint internationally renowned professors to teach and conduct research in NTU.

Humanistic medicine

By Sneha Gururaj

Bodies are made up of molecules; people are made up of stories.

This was the overarching theme of the Medical Humanities Workshop held at HSS on 27 September, and conducted by Ms Giskin Day, Medical Humanities lecturer at Imperial College, London.

Organised by the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, and the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKCMedicine), the workshop was attended by faculty members and postgraduate students from diverse disciplines such as Communication Studies, English Literature, Philosophy, Psychology, and Medicine.

Examining how medicine needs to be more humanistic in its approach towards treatment, health and life in general, the workshop explored the grey areas between the supposedly objective science and subjective art, and how NTU can integrate humanities into its medicine curriculum.



Ms Giskin Day from the Imperial College, London, discusses how medicine can get back the ‘human touch’.

Ms Day, who has been teaching at Imperial for 14 years, lamented the degeneration of medicine into a protocol-driven, detached profession. In fact, doctors have begun to see patients as “cases” and their work as the treating of “symptoms”. The workshop discussed how medicine can get back the “human touch”.

“Things that actually matter cannot be put on a spreadsheet,” she said.

She emphasised that disciplines like the humanities remind doctors that having facts and solutions is not the only facet of the medical profession.

Her ideas for bringing poetry, language, communication and sensitivity to the profession generated a lot of interest in the participants.

Throughout the workshop, issues of cultural sensitivity, compassion, ethics and the need for medicine to evolve to be a more humanistic discipline was raised by the participants.

Ms Day also touched on the need for Singapore to develop a “vibrant, progressive, appreciative culture for the medical humanities”.

She said: “Singapore really does have a wonderful art and a thriving medical culture. Bringing the two together in Singapore would be a brilliant fusion.”

People

World-renowned linguist joins NTU

By Neo Ping May

Most NTU linguistics students would probably be familiar with Prof Randy LaPolla's book *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function*.

The textbook, which he co-authored, has been a prescribed reading not only for linguistics courses in NTU, but also in many universities worldwide.

Recently, students here have been able to get up close and personal with the world-renowned scholar. In August this year, Prof LaPolla joined the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies at HSS.

This is great news for the university.

Scholars like himself with expertise in both Sinitic and Tibeto-Burman linguistics are rare. Not to mention his scholarly works have profound influence. To date, he has 126 publications, which have attracted over 2400 citations, with an H-index of 18.

The H-index measures the productivity and impact of a scholar's



published work.

Prof LaPolla is happy about coming to NTU as he is now in Asia and closer to the languages that he works with. He is interested in preserving disappearing languages by documenting them.

He said: "Of the 6000 languages spoken in the world, more than half will die out before the end of the century.

"Each language is valuable as it represents a unique worldview and body of knowledge."

He is currently documenting the Rawang language – the language of a minority group in the Kachin state of Northern Burma. He hopes to preserve it, and by doing so, sustain the group's culture and way of life.

As a linguist, Prof LaPolla has an amazing command of a range of Asian languages.

For students who struggle with learning a language, he suggests having conversations with friends and watching television or films.

He said: "I learnt Mandarin by watching hundreds of Chinese movies and drama series.

"Living the language is the easiest way to learn it; it's not painful at all."

Visit his website at: <http://tibeto-burman.net/rjlapolla/>

The scientific way to making history

By Debby Ling



NTU historian Asst Prof Lisa Onaga is bringing the definition of interdisciplinary research to the next level. She explores in tandem the histories of biology and of modern Japan – through silkworms.

To her, the caterpillars tell the story of how genetic studies developed in the country. She is currently working on a book which examines how and why research in genetics grew alongside the booming silk trade of early 20th century Japan.

"People have been using cocoons spun by silk moth larvae to make textiles since ancient times," she said. "I'm trying to show how scientific knowledge, especially in biology, was created as part of this process, too."

How, then, was biological knowledge created in this process?

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the worldwide demand for Japan's silk soared, prompting stakeholders in Japan's raw silk industry to invent new ways to produce greater quantities of silk that met consumer standards overseas.

Silk cultivators attempted to create new types of silk cocoons by cross breeding silk moths. This in turn sparked an interest in the biological study of heredity. In particular, Japanese scientists used the silkworm to demonstrate and test basic principles of Mendelian genetics.

By studying how scientists used Mendelian principles to create "hybrid" cocoons – valued by the silk industry for their high silk content and quality compared to either parent – she investigates how knowledge is produced and moved across international borders.

Asst Prof Onaga has an interdisciplinary background. She holds a PhD in Science and Technology Studies from Cornell University, and a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Brown University.

Come next semester, she will teach Biopolitics and East Asian History, a seminar developed in response to research questions about the formation and use of biological knowledge in different societies.

She said: "Interdisciplinary learning is a challenge that I hope more students can step up to because the world we live in needs people who are unafraid to think differently, creatively, and go beyond their comfort zones."

Unraveling society

By Neo Ping May



Photo by Ming Lai Alterman

Sociologist Asst Prof Sam Han calls himself an interdisciplinary social scientist. He investigates social reality through different lenses: social and cultural theory, new media, religion, globalisation, and race/ethnicity.

For instance, in his current research on death and mourning in the digital age, he studies how death is conceived in networked societies.

He asks intriguing questions such as: What will happen to your Facebook after you die? Why do people make online suicide pact? How do people mourn online?

“I consider myself a social theorist who expends energy on a variety of substantive areas, including religion, technology and globalisation,” said the faculty member who joined the Division of Sociology this July.

He is always looking for “loose threads in the social fabric and tugging at it, thus unraveling it”.

Other projects he is working on include parochialism in popular representations of “genius” in media depictions of US ethnic minorities.

He also examines, in another project, the unlikely interrelation of contemporary American Christianity and new media, with an aim to contribute to the discussions on modernity and secularism.

During his undergraduate days, Asst Prof Han majored in literature and sociology. His early exposure to two distinct disciplines has clearly influenced his cross-disciplinary research orientation.

Prior to joining NTU, he taught at the City University of New York. Currently teaching a course on contemporary social theory, he hopes his students will also embrace interdisciplinary learning.

He said: “If you look at my undergraduate transcript, you would never believe that I finished a PhD. This is because, I guess, in some ways I wasn’t afraid to do poorly in class. I took music classes!

“It makes you a more well-rounded person, being able to talk even a little bit about a variety of things, I think it is a very helpful thing in the world when you meet different people.”

Asst Prof Han is the author of *Web 2.0; Navigating Technomedia: Caught in the Web*, and co-editor of *The Race of Time: A Charles Lemert Reader*.

Visit his website at <http://sam-han.org>

The write inspiration

By Koh Hui Fang

With grim-sounding works like *Gone Case* and *The Beating and Other Stories* to his name, one would expect award-winning writer Dave Chua’s next work to take on a dark route.

But Mr Chua, who joined the NTU’s English Division in August as a writer-in-residence, does not rule out injecting humour into his upcoming book. The “partially historical, partially contemporary” novel, which is set in Singapore, will be the end product of his six-month long residency.

The residency, a partnership between NTU and the National Arts Council, is designed to provide support for the creation of new literary works.

Mr Chua said: “I really admire people who can write comedy because it is one of the hardest skills of all.”

He counts Terry Pratchett, a writer of humorous fantasy stories, among his favourite authors.

The Malaysian-born, Singapore-based author won the Singapore Literature Prize



Commendation Award in 1996 for his first novel *Gone Case*, a coming-of-age story of a boy living in a Housing Development Board (HDB) estate. The story was

adapted into a two-volume graphic novel in 2010 and 2011.

His latest collection of short stories, *The Beating and Other Stories*, was longlisted for 2012 Frank O’Connor International Short Story prize and nominated for this year’s Singapore Literature Prize.

An admirer of Raymond Carver’s minimalistic writing style, Mr Chua credits Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, a short story about a man who transformed into a bug overnight, for inspiring him to become a writer.

On top of working on his novel, Mr Chua is also teaching a creative writing module in NTU.

“I definitely hope to interact with anyone interested in creative writing,” he said. “If they want to get published, I can advise them on who to approach and how to get started.”

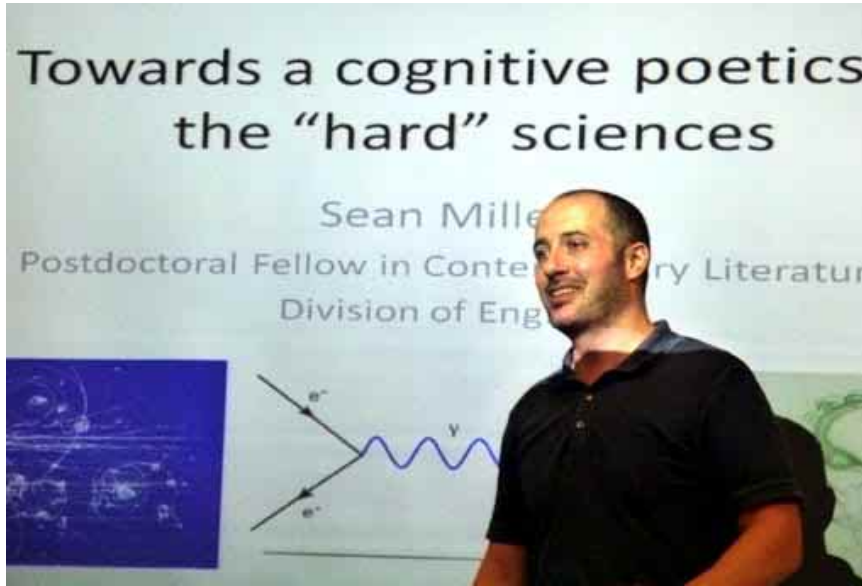
He advises students to read widely and set aside 20 minutes every day to write.

“Writing is really a solitary art but it is an art, as much as a musical instrument, it takes time to improve on,” he said.

What is Interdisciplinarity?

By Dr Sean Miller, Postdoctoral Fellow, Division of English

Early this year, HSS formed five interdisciplinary research clusters to promote cross-disciplinary research. In this issue of *Horizon*, Dr Sean Miller, whose research interest cuts across literature and science, attempts to define interdisciplinarity. We also take a look at the Literary and Cultural Studies cluster, and the New Frontiers in Neuroscience cluster.



Dr Sean Miller is a specialist in Literature and Science Studies.

Interdisciplinary research is in vogue. But do we all agree on what it means?

In order to understand what interdisciplinarity means, we need to have a clear sense of what an academic discipline is. While as specialists, we're able to define our own disciplines, we may not be so adroit at defining unfamiliar disciplines. To complicate matters, any attempt at sorting out the disciplines inevitably provokes tricky questions of categorisation.

In my recent work on theoretical physics as a scientific discourse, I have come to appreciate two relatively distinct forms of interdisciplinarity. The first I'll call "interdisciplinarity with a lower-case 'i'". It generally involves the use of established methods within a discipline to investigate relatively unexplored territory – or the blending of methods from related subfields. An example in English would be using semiotics to interrogate the iconography of professional wrestling. The second form I'll

call "Interdisciplinarity with a capital 'I'". It usually involves the use of methodologies that cross major disciplinary boundaries. It is, by far, the more difficult to achieve – yet potentially more impactful.

Those unfamiliar with English as a discipline might think that it concerns itself exclusively with the study of literature. But over the past few decades, English has opened into culture studies, an approach that employs literary critical methods to interrogate non-literary discourses. Such an approach operates under the assumption that all cultural practices embody a system of

meanings and values represented in a range of cultural artifacts, that may be read as texts. Culture studies, as a subfield of English, overlaps productively with disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, history, and media studies, among others.

As we all know, disciplinary methods imply methodological assumptions, some of which go relatively unexamined. A basic contention of culture studies is that what one might call a *discourse world* undergirds the fundamental assumptions of a given discipline. To some, it may be vaguely threatening in that it suggests that we in one discipline can recognise the blind spots in another.

A knee-jerk reaction to perceived incursions across disciplinary boundaries is to do boundary work, to borrow a term from the sociologist Thomas Gieryn, where guardians of the discipline under uninvited scrutiny dismiss such scrutiny as illegitimate. At times, the urge within a discipline is to claim for itself the full authority to define itself. A more measured response is to welcome this kind of scrutiny inasmuch as it offers a reinvigoration of methods through its defamiliarisation, along with a revisioning of unexamined assumptions. I believe this kind of Interdisciplinarity holds great promise for academic work in the twenty-first century.

Imagining String Theory

Dr Sean Miller's book, *Strung Together: The Cultural Currency of String Theory as a Scientific Imaginary*, will be published by the University of Michigan Press in January, 2013. *Strung Together* is the first sustained study of string theory as a cultural phenomenon, synthesising recent developments in continental philosophy of science, cognitive linguistics, and literary criticism to examine the role the imagination plays in the production and dissemination of string theory as scientific knowledge.

Literary and Cultural Studies cluster

Novels, poetries, films, arts, music, dramas, advertisements, newspapers, photographs, painting, fashion, and new media are cultural products or phenomena that reflect the conditions and contexts in which they are formed. Literary and Cultural Studies researchers aim to “read” them to arrive at a deeper understanding of the phenomenon happening in our society – now and in the past.

What are the historical and generic outlines of mass culture? How do those outlines suggest new ways of thinking about individual subjectivity and collective experience? How have recent changes in intellectual, cultural and social history altered our treatment of ‘social context’ in relationship to individual literary works or cultural artefacts?

These are some of the questions that researchers seek to answer. To do so holistically, researchers often use a variety of approaches which include feminist theory, social theory, political theory, philosophy, literary theory, media theory, film studies, communication theories, and others. In this consideration, the cluster, operating from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), aims to be a platform for scholars, primarily from HSS, Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information (WKWSCl), and School of Art, Design and Media (ADM), to undertake interdisciplinary research.

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Division of Chinese, as well as the Centre for Chinese Language and Culture (CCLC), have strong and active interests in classical Chinese literary studies; Chinese history and philosophy; contemporary Chinese literature, history and culture; and the studies of ethnic Chinese. Over at the Division of English, significant elements of research includes Singaporean literature and culture; international Asian literature; contemporary literature; postcolonial studies; critical and literary theory; cultural studies; postmodernism; and film and theatre studies. HSS’s Division of Sociology will also play a big part in the cluster’s research. Sociology research at HSS runs the gamut from science and technology studies to urbanisation, environment, politics and religion.

Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information Studies

WKWSCl is a premier research institution that generates empirical and humanistic analyses of communication topics and policy issues important to Singapore and the region. These topics and issues overlap widely with the research interests in the Literary and Cultural Studies cluster. They



include journalism; political communication; intercultural communication; communication technology and social psychology including gaming, mobile devices and new media; and media arts and cultural studies.

School of Art, Design and Media

ADM is home to scholars who specialise in interactive media, animation, filmmaking, photography, product design, and visual communication, all of which are critical areas of research in the cluster. ADM also

houses the Centre for Asian Art and Design (CAAD), an interdisciplinary research centre where scholars study the historical and related contemporary issues in Asian Art and Design. There will also be opportunities for dialogues with international artists through the upcoming Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) at Gillman Barracks. NTU is spearheading the development of the centre with support from the Economic Development Board. Expected to be fully operational in 2013, it will run international artist residency, research, and exhibition programmes. CCA will also work closely with ADM to establish graduate programmes, as well as hold fellowships, curatorial residencies, conferences and public talks.

Cluster activities

The cluster will conduct seminars and workshops for colleagues who are broadly interested in the humanities, the arts and broader cultural phenomena. Researchers can contact the co-coordinators Assoc Prof Quah Sy Ren (Division of Chinese) and Assoc Prof C.J. Wee Wan-ling (Division of English).

| | |
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| <p>Existing strength and scope for research:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The links between literary study and the humanities in general, and the visual and performing arts • The links between the literary and artistic realm and broader socio-political and cultural contexts • The links between contemporary cultural activities in Southeast Asia and the broader East Asia region |
| <p>Faculty members and researchers from the following disciplines, schools, and research centres could participate in this research thrust:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese • English • History • Sociology • Linguistics and Multilingual Studies • Philosophy • Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information • School of Art, Design and Media • Centre for Asian Art and Design • Centre for Contemporary Art • Centre for Chinese Language and Culture • Chinese Heritage Centre • And others |

New Frontiers in Neuroscience

Comprehensive treatment for neurological disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease, alcoholism, and dementia often involves solving problems which are beyond the scope of expertise of any one discipline. To overcome this challenge, the New Frontiers in Neuroscience cluster will bring researchers in NTU and beyond – who are broadly interested in brain function, cognition and behavior – together to work across disciplines.

In NTU, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Biological Sciences, and the new Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine provide great synergy for such collaborations. Neuropsychologist, neurolinguists, biologists, clinician-researchers can work together on basic, translational and clinical research, integrating investigation at the molecular, cellular, systems, behavioral, and cognitive levels.

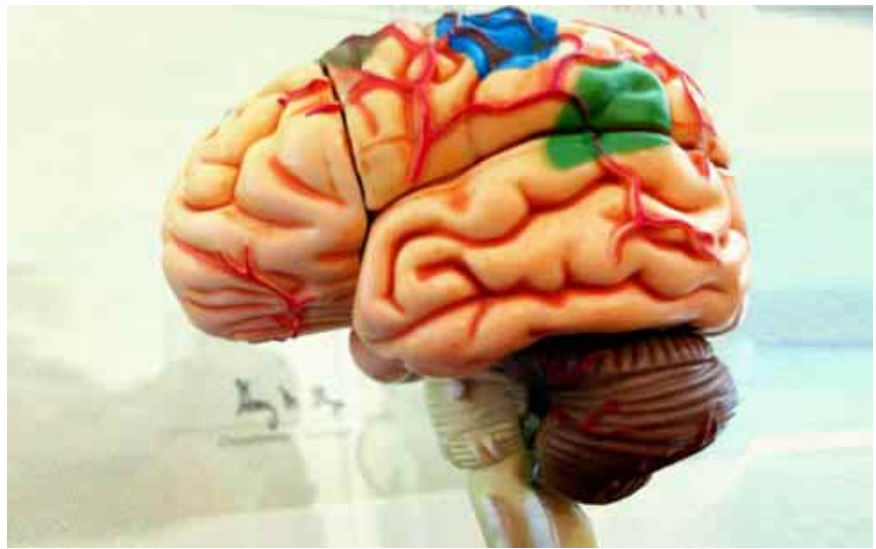
The result will be a seamless pipeline from the “bench to bedside” where laboratories discoveries can be translated into drugs and medical devices for treatment purposes. Researchers from the College of Engineering can provide expertise in building medical devices, while social scientists from HSS can study the happiness and aging issues from linguistic, economics, sociological and psychological perspectives.

Within HSS, the Division of Psychology and the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies have shown great strength in the field of neuroscience, psycholinguistic and neurocognitive investigations of language production and processing.

In 2010, Assoc Prof Douglas Matthews, Division of Psychology, led a team of neuropsychologists at Baylor University (where he also holds an appointment as a research scientist) to identify a molecular mechanism that explain why young people are less sensitive to alcohol than adults. The pioneering discovery has the potential to pave the way for development of new treatment for alcoholism in youth.

In 2011, Asst Prof Alice Chan, Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies, together with a team of researchers from Northwestern University, was awarded a National Science Foundation Grant of US\$430,000 to investigate the organisation of music and speech processing by the human nervous system. Findings from the research can lead to clinical applications for treatment for tone deafness.

In the same year, Assoc Prof Annabel Chen, Division of Psychology, was awarded the Ministry of Education Academic



Research Fund (AcRF) Tier 2 grant of S\$760,000, to investigate the role of the cerebellum in higher cognition. Findings from the research have the potential to uncover more focused explanations for complex psychiatric disorders.

In 2012, Asst Prof Xu Hong, Division of Psychology, together with Assoc Prof Wong Yiik Diew from the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE), is working on a project to investigate drivers’ behavior, vigilance, and attention in underground road conditions. Funded by Sustainable Earth Office (SEO) and Center

for Infrastructure System at CEE, findings from the research will bridge the transition from open road network to underground road systems.

The cluster will conduct research workshops and conferences for NTU researchers to link up with external researchers, both international and local. For a start, researchers who are interested in collaboration for projects or joint grant application can contact the cluster co-coordinators, Asst Prof Alice Chan, Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies, or Asst Prof Xu Hong, Division of Psychology.

Existing strength and scope for research:

- Link between bilingualism and multilingualism and human cognitive functions
- Link between animal models and psychological states in humans
- Link between biology and behavior in human and non-human primates
- This theme could also include the study of health, happiness, well-being and aging issues from linguistic, economic, sociological and psychological perspectives.
- This theme could also include psycholinguistic and neurocognitive investigations of language production and processing in specific populations

Faculty members and researchers from the following disciplines, schools, and research centres could participate in this research thrust:

- Psychology
- Economics
- Sociology
- Linguistics and Multilingual Studies
- Philosophy
- Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information
- School of Biological Sciences
- Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine
- School of Art, Design and Media
- College of Engineering
- And others

Food for thought

By Kenneth Goh



Environmental sociologist Asst Prof Saidul Islam (right) practices what he preaches. The conscientious diner avoids “exotic foods” such as lobsters, salmons and shark’s fins.

Instead he zeros in on “feel good” foods such as locally produced items (with a low carbon footprint) and fair-trade products including coffee. Asst Prof Saidul looks out for products which are “environmentally sound, socially responsible, and culturally friendly”.

It is no surprise, given that his area of interest lies in the effects of development and power on the environment. His four years of research will culminate in his maiden book, *Development, Power and the Environment: Concepts, Theories and Case Studies*, which will be published by Routledge. It is due out in February next year.

He also has another book due early next year titled *Confronting the Blue Revolution: Industrial Aquaculture and Sustainability in the Global South*, to be published by the University of Toronto Press. It delves into environmental regulation, commodity networks, agrarian changes, and gender and labour patterns in industrial aquaculture across countries.

Asst Prof Saidul Islam shares more about his research with *Horizon*.





Asst Prof Saidul Islam (centre) feels that marginalised communities in the developing countries suffer the most from climate change.

What made you interested to explore the interplay of relationships between development, power and the environment?

Though power is one of most pervasive phenomena of human society, it is probably one of the least understood concepts. The growth of transnational corporations, the dominance of worldwide financial and political institutions, and the extensive influence of media that are nearly monopolised by corporate interests are key factors shaping our global society today. In the growing concentration of power in few hands, what is apparent is a non-apparent nature of power.

How has power become more important in shaping up everyday issues, especially those related to the environment?

Power has always played a big role in shaping environment and social landscapes, but not in a magnitude that we see today. In the past, human activity and economic choices did not have much impact on the environment. Current emerging superpowers, such as China and India have an enormous appetite to grow on, exploiting and polluting the environment. They are attempting to do in five years what America, for instance, did in the past 100 years. If the same level of aggressive

deployment of development continues, the whole planet will probably be unfit for living, within our lifetime.

What do you think is the most pressing environmental issue that is affecting the world currently?

Climate change, as it brings obvious consequences, such as rising sea levels, and natural calamities, such as typhoons and tsunamis. They occur more frequently, with more severe magnitude. With these, it is marginalised communities from the developing countries that are suffering the most, as they have little technology and infrastructure to deal with problems caused by natural disasters. Ironically, developed countries are the main cause.

How this issue is being relevant to Singapore context?

Due to the geographic location of Singapore, we are spared from tsunamis, but it does not mean that we will not be hit in the future. Being a developed country, Singapore has bigger role to play – having the power in terms of technological knowhow, and academic climate in this region – to address environmental issues such as climate change, disaster vulnerabilities, issues of food security and so forth.



If emerging superpowers such as China and India continue their aggressive exploitation of the environment, the planet will probably be unfit for living within our lifetime. – Photo by ©Ragne Kabanova/Dreamstime.com



“Despite massive productive forces and sometimes ‘epidemics of over production’, about 50,000 people are dying every day because of hunger and hunger-related diseases. Power has a great role to play in this global trajectory.”

– Asst Prof Saidul Islam, environmental sociologist

What is the biggest challenge working on your books?

The biggest challenge for my first book is to make a robust conceptual and theoretical synthesis between development, power, and the environment by bringing in case studies from around the world. These touch on pressing global issues such as dam building, climate change, identity politics, food security, risk and vulnerabilities, and neoliberal paradox.

What is your one take home message for readers of your books?

There is still room to make the world a better place. It is challenging, but not impossible.

Share with us more about your current research project on Privatizing environmental governance: A global analysis of the effects and effectiveness of environmental certification for farmed salmon and shrimp.

This research assesses the effects and effectiveness of environmental certification and related approaches through a detailed multi-site study of how certification is being implemented for farmed salmon and shrimp. The study covers Bangladesh and Thailand as two significant shrimp production sites; Chile and Canada as two major production sites of farmed salmon; and Japan, Canada, the United States and the European Union as the major sites of consumption. This joint research is supported by a standard grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), with four colleagues in Canada, United States and Chile.

Share one most pressing issue affecting the global agro-food sector.

Due to neo-liberal policies, which encourage massive privatisation, it is anticipated that only a handful of

corporations will control the entire food sector. The corporatisation of agriculture is increasingly putting around a billion small producers out of business. Moreover, the use of toxic pesticides and herbicides, patenting of seeds and plants, genetic invasion, coupled with population growth, climate change, and transforming food to fuel have generated unprecedented social and environmental consequences.

Concerning food, what the people are facing today is not the problem of scarcity, but the problem of access. Despite massive productive forces and sometimes ‘epidemics of over production’, about 50,000 people are dying every day because of hunger and hunger-related diseases. Power has a great role to play in this global trajectory.

Selected Recent Publications

Books



The Technological State in Indonesia: The Co-constitution of High Technology and Authoritarian Politics

By Asst Prof Sulfikar Amir (Division of Sociology)

Routledge, 2012

Using a historical sociology approach, this book illustrates the formation of the technological state in Indonesia during the New Order period (1966 – 1998). It explores the nexus between power, high technology, development, and

authoritarianism situated in the Southeast Asian context. The book discusses how the New Order regime shifted from the developmental state to the technological state, which was characterized by desire for technological supremacy. The process resulted in the establishment of a host of technological institutions and the undertaking of large-scale high-tech programs. Shedding light on the political dimension of socio-technological transformation, this book looks at the relationship between authoritarian politics and high technology development, and examines how effectively technology serves to sustain legitimacy of an authoritarian power. It explores into multiple features of the Indonesian technological state, covering the ideology of development, the politics of technocracy, the institutional structure, and the material and symbolic embodiments of high technology, and goes on to discuss the impact of globalization on the technological state. The book is an important contribution to studies on Southeast Asian Politics, Development, and Science, Technology, and Society (STS).



游目骋怀：文学与美术的互文与再生

Intertextuality and Citationality in Chinese Literature and Art

By Assoc Prof Li Lo-Fen (Division of Chinese)
Li Ren Publishing Co, 2011

本书是作者从事跨学科研究的成果，共收录10篇论文，探讨〈九歌〉、〈兰亭序〉、〈赤壁赋〉等经典文学作品为题材的「诗意图」，以及观赏「诗意图」而写作的题画诗。诗/诗意图/题画诗，彼此「互为文本」，又「依凭再生」。「互文」与「再生」，是中国文学与美术不断创新的重要文化特色。

This book, comprising 10 articles, is the result of the author's engagement in interdisciplinary research work. These articles examine paintings with poetic flavour which were inspired by Chinese classical literary works, such as "Jiu Ge" (the Chu Ci Nine-Songs), "Lanting Xu" (Prose of Purification at the Lanting Pavilion) and "Chi Bi Fu" (Ode to the Red Cliff), as well as poems inspired by writers appreciating these paintings. Poems and paintings often play dual roles; they are themselves both the sources of inspiration for new literary or painting works and the fruit of this innovation. The phenomena of "intertextuality" and "citationality" in Chinese literature and arts scenes are important characteristics of the Chinese culture.

Journal

The International Journal of Diasporic Chinese Studies, Volume 4, Issue 1

Edited by Assoc Prof Lee Guan Kin (Centre for Chinese Language and Culture), Prof Liu Hong (History Programme), with Zheng Shaocong
Global Publishing, World Scientific, 2012

This bi-annual journal aims to foster originality, multiplicity, and novelty in the studies of Chinese Diaspora. This issue touches on, among other topics, the secularization of religious life of Chinese Filipinos, and the construction of multiple identities among the Chinese in Paris.

本期的最大特色是，文化构成学术专论的主调。第一篇学术专论〈中国海外移民的根文化建构研究：以巴黎的温州人为例〉，王春光提出了“根文化”的概念，视为族群生存和发展的深层文化基础。第二篇—陈衍德的〈菲律宾华人宗教生活的世俗化：以马尼拉、宿务、纳卯华人访谈录为研究材料〉，和第三篇—黄文车的〈闽南语歌谣的传播与在地化发展：以新加坡1970至1980年代为观察对象〉，即通过个案研究，分别考察菲律宾华人宗教生活的世俗化和新加坡闽南歌谣的在地化。第四篇是李培德的〈华商跨国网络的形成、延伸和冲突：以胡文虎与陈嘉庚竞争为个案〉。与前三篇不同，李文讨论的课题基本上属于经济范畴，聚焦于华商及华商网络。

Journal Articles

Monte Carlo Simulation for Econometricians

By Prof Jan F. Kiviet (Division of Economics)

Foundations and Trends® in Econometrics, 2012,
Vol 5, Issue 1 – 2, Pages 1 – 181

Many studies in econometric theory are supplemented by Monte Carlo simulation investigations. These illustrate the properties of alternative inference techniques when applied to samples drawn from mostly entirely synthetic data generating processes. They should provide information on how techniques, which may be sound asymptotically, perform in finite samples and then unveil the effects of model characteristics too complex to analyze analytically. Also the interpretation of applied studies should often benefit when supplemented by a dedicated simulation study, based on a design inspired by the postulated actual empirical data generating process, which would come close to bootstrapping. This review presents and illustrates the fundamentals of conceiving and executing such simulation studies, especially synthetic but also more dedicated, focussing on controlling their accuracy, increasing their efficiency, recognizing their limitations, presenting their results in a coherent and palatable way, and on the appropriate interpretation of their actual findings, especially when the simulation study is used to rank the qualities of alternative inference techniques.

Bringing Class Back In: Class Consciousness and Solidarity among Chinese Migrant workers in Italy and the UK

By Prof Liu Hong (History Programme), with Bin Wu

Ethnic and Racial Studies, forthcoming, 2012

The growing literature on international migration has a tendency to emphasize homogenous elements such as shared ethnic background, social network and cultural similarities in shaping immigrants' identity. We argue that this underestimates the differences (and sometimes conflicts) of interests between ethnic employers and migrant workers and that class needs to be brought back into the studies of ethnic relationship. Based upon findings

from a series of fieldwork in Veneto, Italy and East Midlands, UK, this article contends that class consciousness has co-existed, sometimes uneasily, alongside co-ethnic and cultural relationships among Chinese migrant workers and has played an important part in the making of new Chinese communities. By analyzing the perspectives of Chinese migrant workers and their relationship with co-ethnic entrepreneurs, this article illustrates complex factors behind the formation, diffusion and development of class consciousness among Chinese migrant workers.

How Does Voice Matter? Evidence from the Ultimate Game

By Dr Ong Qiyao, and Assoc Prof Yohanes E. Riyanto (Division of Economics), with Steve Sheffrin

Experimental Economics, forthcoming, 2012

Prior research has demonstrated that the ability to express one's views or "voice" matters in social and economic interactions, but little is known of the mechanisms through which voice operates. Using an experimental approach based on the ultimatum game with the strategy method, we explore four potential channels for voice that encompass and expand on prior work: the knowledge effect of voice, the value expressive (or inherent value) of voice, the expectation effect of voice, and the procedural fairness effects of voice. Our results show strong effects through the value expressive and expectation channel, but not through either the knowledge channel or procedural fairness. In our view, voice is powerful because people like to express their views and they are disappointed when their views did not make a difference in their outcomes.

A Lagrange Multiplier test for Cross-sectional Dependence in a Fixed Effects Panel Data Model

By Asst Prof Qu Feng (Division of Economics), with Badi H. Baltagi and Chihua Kao

Journal of Econometrics, 2012

Vol 170, Issue 1, Pages 164 – 177

It is well known that the standard Breusch and Pagan (1980) LM test for cross-equation correlation in a SUR model is not appropriate for testing cross-sectional dependence in panel data models when the number of cross-sectional units (n) is large and the number of time periods (T) is small. In fact, a scaled version of this LM test was proposed by Pesaran (2004) and its finite sample bias was corrected by Pesaran et al. (2008). This was done in the context of a heterogeneous panel data model. This paper derives the asymptotic bias of this scaled version of the LM test in the context of a fixed effects homogeneous panel data model. This asymptotic bias is found to be a constant related to n and T , which suggests a simple bias corrected LM test for the null hypothesis. Additionally, the paper carries out some Monte Carlo experiments to compare the finite sample properties of this proposed test with existing tests for cross-sectional dependence.

Affective Decision-Making among Preschool Children in Diverse Cultural Contexts

By Asst Prof Qu Li (Division of Psychology), et al.

Child Studies in Diverse Contexts, 2012,

Vol 2, Issue 2, Pages 123 – 132

The current study examined 3- and 4-year-olds' affective decision-making in a variety of cultural contexts by comparing European Canadian children to Chinese Canadian, Hong Kong Chinese, and mainland Chinese children ($N = 245$). All children were tested with a delay of gratification task in which children chose between an immediate reward of lower value and a delayed reward of higher value.

Results showed that Chinese Canadian and Hong Kong Chinese children chose more delayed rewards than European Canadian children, with mainland Chinese children showing a trend toward more delayed rewards. Across cultures, 4-year-olds chose more delayed rewards than 3-year-olds; and among 4-year-olds, girls made more such choices than boys. The findings are consistent with previous findings that exposure to Chinese culture is associated with better cool executive function, but they also highlight the importance of examining development across diverse cultural contexts.

Central Government versus Private Sector Wages and Cognitive Skills: Evidence Using Endogenous Switching Regression

By Assoc Prof Christos Sakellariou (Division of Economics)

Applied Economics, 2012,

Vol 44, Issue 25 – 27, Pages 3275 – 86

The importance of estimation techniques that allow for nonrandom selection of workers into the public and private sectors has been established in the theoretical and empirical literature. A separate body of work has explored the contribution of cognitive and other basic skills to earnings. This article brings together these two strands of empirical literature using Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) survey data for Norway and Bermuda. In the case of Norway, results from both Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and a switching regression model agree that cognitive skills are rewarded more in the public sector and that, in both sectors, the main effect is the direct effect of skills on earnings. In the case of Bermuda, however, switching regression estimates are substantially different with respect to the how skills affect earnings; furthermore, controlling for cognitive skills changes the nature of selection and, hence, the estimates of sector wage differentials.

Unconditional Quantile Regressions, Wage Growth and Inequality in the Philippines, 2001–2006: The Contribution of Covariates

By Assoc Prof Christos Sakellariou (Division of Economics)

Applied Economics, 2012,

Vol 44, Issue 29, Pages 3815 – 30

I implement a two-stage procedure to estimate the components of real wage change in the Philippines along the wage distribution from 2001 to 2006, as well as the contribution of individual covariates to each component. The methodology is based on Re-centred Influence Functions (RIF), as suggested by Firpo et al. (2009). The advantage of this methodology is that it not only decomposes the unconditional wage change at any quantile of the wage distribution, but also allows the characterization of the contribution of any single covariate on each component. I find that real earnings of males in the Philippines declined and the decline along the earnings distribution is generally higher at higher deciles for all males and higher at lower deciles in Manila. Decomposition results are driven by the wage structure component, while the composition effect is small and generally positive with education as the main contributor. Within the wage structure effect, the main determinants are associated with changes in the rewards of experience and occupation, along with residual change (change in intercepts).

Age as a Factor in Ethnic Accent Identification in Singapore

By Asst Prof Tan Ying Ying (Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies)

Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 2012,

Vol 33, Issue 6, Pages 569 – 587

Selected Recent Publications

This study seeks to answer two research questions. First, can listeners distinguish the ethnicity of the speakers on the basis of voice quality alone? Second, do demographic differences among the listeners affect discriminability? A simple but carefully designed and controlled ethnic identification test was carried out on 325 Singaporean informants of the three major ethnic groups across three age groups in Singapore. The results show interesting age-related patterns in the identification of ethnicity in speakers of Singapore English. The results suggest that young Singaporeans may perhaps be deaf to ethnic variations. National policies and one's own ethnic consciousness (or lack thereof) may perhaps be responsible for creating this 'deafness'.

To r or not to r: social correlates of /r/ in Singapore English

By Asst Prof Tan Ying Ying (Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies)
International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 2012,
Vol 2012, Issue 218, Pages 1 – 24

This paper investigates the occurrences of postvocalic-r, intrusive-r and linking-r in Singapore English (SgE) from a sociophonetic perspective. This paper seeks to determine the correlation between the use of the different /r/ and the users' education levels. This paper will also investigate the attitudes of SgE speakers to the use of postvocalic-r and intrusive-r in SgE. The results show a direct correlation between the speaker's education level and the production of postvocalic-r and intrusive-r, which is matched by the perception and attitudes towards /r/ in SgE.

Yeats, Spenser, and the Poetics of Wandering

By Asst Prof John Richard Tangney (Division of English)
Literary Imagination, 2012,
Vol 14, Issue 2, Pages 151 – 158

This essay traces the origins of the wandering figures in Yeats' early poems through the writing of Edmund Spenser, St Augustine and Plato. It argues that there are two kinds of intellectual wandering being represented through the metaphor of geographical wandering: the wandering of the Platonic philosopher and the wandering of the sophist. They look identical to those without the requisite discernment i.e. those who are confined in a materialist perspective, and who therefore confuse the sophist's ability to win arguments with the philosopher's skill in finding the truth. Yeats' and Spenser's Platonism exists in tension with the Epicurean and nominalist philosophies that were becoming normative in their societies, and that are the signature modern and postmodern forms of sophism. The essay shows how Yeats and Spenser transcend and include these anti-Platonist philosophies in their visionary poems, while taking opposite positions from each other on the question of whether the aesthetic pleasure they provide is a good thing. For Spenser aesthetics are implicated in sin, but the Irish Yeats made a virtue out of the part of Spenser's poetry that Spenser thought sinful, and thus asserted his Irish identity against his British imperialist precursor.

An Executive MPA Program for China: Lessons from the Field

By Asst Prof Yu Wenxuan and Assoc Prof Wu Wei (Politics & Public Administration Group), with Marilyn Rubin
Journal of Public Affairs Education, 2012,
Vol 18, Issue 3, Pages 545 – 564

Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs are offered in more than 100 universities in China. All require applicants to pass a competitive national entrance exam in five subject areas. This requirement significantly discourages senior-level public administrators, many of whom graduated from college several years ago and have work schedules that do not allow time to prepare for an academically focused examination. These senior-level administrators need an Executive MPA (EMPA) or similar program with more realistic entrance requirements and a curriculum designed for people with significant professional experience. Drawing on the data collected from surveys of MPA students enrolled in six MPA programs in China and students enrolled in an EMPA program in Singapore specifically designed for Chinese public servants, this article reports how the demographic differences between MPA students and EMPA students affect their preference for professional public administration education in terms of knowledge components, managerial competencies, teaching modalities, and examination methods. The findings of the study significantly challenge not only Chinese universities that would like to adopt the existing MPA education model for EMPA education but also universities outside of China that are establishing EMPA or joint EMPA programs with Chinese governments or universities.

The Effectiveness of Private Benefits in Fundraising of Local Charities

By Asst Prof Zhang Jipeng (Division of Economics), with Holger Sieg
International Economic Review, 2012,
Vol 53, Issue 2, Pages 349 – 374

This article provides an empirical analysis of the role that private benefits play in explaining charitable donations to large cultural and environmental organizations. We develop a multiple discrete choice model with differentiated products. We estimate the model using a unique data set of donor lists for the 10 largest cultural and environmental charitable organizations in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. We find that some private benefits such as invitations to private dinner parties and special events are effective tools for fundraising. Our policy simulations suggests that the composition of private benefits has a potentially large impact on donor behavior.

Political Connections and Entrepreneurial Finance: Evidence from China's Transition Economy

By Asst Prof Zhou Wubiao (Division of Sociology)
Journal of Business Venturing, forthcoming, 2012

Recent literature in entrepreneurship suggests that market and legal institutions matter for entrepreneurial investment. Yet, prior studies have focused on the role of formal institutions. Building on new institutional theory and political connections literature, this study aims to evaluate the role of political connections in entrepreneurial reinvestment in less developed and transition economies. The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, it aims to demonstrate systematically how political connections affect entrepreneurial reinvestment. Second, it applies this relationship to a subsample group, i.e., Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), in order to empirically test whether political connections are more beneficial for large firms or SMEs. Third, it demonstrates that political connections substitute for, rather than complement, formal market and legal institutions. The empirical test uses a nationally representative sample of entrepreneurial firms from China's transition economy.