Laura Brueck, Associate Professor of South Asian Literature and Culture, recently co-edited a special issue of the online literary translation journal *Words Without Borders* with Christi Merrill at the University of Michigan. “Translating Consciousness: Dalit Writing in Hindi” includes translations of several short stories by contemporary Dalit, or low-caste, writers along with an introductory essay that makes it a terrific teaching tool for the world literature classroom. She also recently co-edited, along with Jacob Smith and Neil Verma from the School of Communication, what will be the first book dedicated to the cutting-edge field of sound studies in an Indian context. The book grew out of several years of invited lectures and symposia collaboratively organized at Northwestern. *Indian Sound Cultures, Indian Sound Citizenship* with be published by the University of Michigan Press next spring. Laura is on leave in 2019-2020 to work on her next book project, a study of detective novels in Hindi, Urdu, and English tentatively titled *Vernacular Mysteries: Indian detective fiction in the reflection of world literature.*

Here we are again, reflecting on another great year! This year saw many excellent student and faculty achievements as we continue to grow this new department. See, for example, the profile of Professor Corey Byrnes on pages 4 and 5. Earlier this year, Professor Byrnes celebrated the publication of his new book, *Fixing Landscape.* You can also read about our honors students and award winners on page 10, along with stories of student engagement with the languages and cultures of Asia beyond the classroom. We may still be new, but we’re mature enough now to start developing some departmental traditions, like the annual Phyllis Lyons lecture series detailed on pages 2 and 3. And on pages 7 and 8 we look ahead to some new roles, and new faces among the faculty in the department!

— Laura Brueck, Chair

Congratulations Class of 2019!

We are so excited to congratulate all of our graduated students from 2019, including our majors not pictured above: Sarah Ahmad, Philip Hahn, and Samson Wang! We can’t wait to see where your next adventures take you.
A Historical Glimpse: The Phyllis Lyons Lecture and Asian Languages and Cultures at Northwestern

By Phyllis Lyons

At most major universities, Asian languages are found in departments of Asian Studies. Students at Northwestern now can find such a department, Asian Languages and Cultures, but it was a long time coming, and Japanese was a major player in the process.

In 1978, a grant from the Japan Foundation made possible the beginning of a Japanese language program. At the time, there were only small Arabic, Chinese and Hebrew programs in what was called, the Program of Asian and African Languages (PAAL). There was no Japanese language, but an historian of Japan, Conrad Totman, and a library administrator, Ted Welch, brought me to NU to start Japanese language and offer courses on Japanese literature.

Fast forward several decades. The Japanese “bubble economy” caused an explosion in students’ interest in Japanese. Chinese also experienced some growth, Hindi and Korean joined our family of languages, and minors were developed. But PAAL remained a program, although students and faculty continued to seek to develop a department that could offer majors as well as culture-focused courses in language areas beyond Japanese.

Thanks to the leadership of then WCAS Dean Sarah Mangelsdorf (now president of the University of Rochester), at last long a committee was formed to create what is now the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures (ALC). The committee, chaired by another historian of Japan, Laura Hein, in 2013 formed a department offering language and literary and cultural studies of four geographical sites in Asia—South Asia, China, Korea and Japan. NU now offers robust and vigorous majors, minors, certificates of language competency, literary and cultural studies, and opportunities for study abroad and internships.
I have been fortunate to participate in the process from the very beginning. The study of ALC’s languages and cultures is now guided by a couple dozen faculty, and our students take what they learn into globally situated careers in many different areas of expertise.

I am now retired, but the department made possible my continued participation in its work by establishing the Phyllis Lyons Lecture in Japanese Studies. This past spring saw the third annual talk in the series. Translation has been central in my work, and several speakers in the series have discussed such topics as the difficulties and rewards of translation. We have seen several works in progress, an experience enjoyed by students and faculty translating even in European languages.

ALC has expanded NU’s course offerings well into Asia, and I look forward with excitement to seeing continued contributions of Japanese scholarship to the intellectual life of our campus.

Right: In 2018, Indra Levy, Associate Professor of Japanese Literature at Stanford University, was our guest speaker for the Phyllis Lyons Lecture in Japanese Studies. She is the author of Sirens of the Western Shore: The Westernesque Femme Fatale, Translation, and Vernacular Style in Modern Japanese Literature. She is also Editor of Translation in Modern Japan, the first collection of its kind, which brings together seminal works of Japanese scholarship and criticism on the culture of translation (made available in English for the first time) with works of English-language scholarship that stand on the cutting edge of this new field of inquiry.

Left: In May, Yuriko Furuhata, Associate Professor and William Dawson Scholar of Cinema and Media History at McGill University presented “Air-conditioned Futures: A Transpacific Genealogy of Numerical Weather Predication and Futurology” which asked the question “What role do technologies of climate control such as modern air conditioning play in future forecasting?” Marc Steinberg’s talk “LINE and the Platformization of Visual Culture” investigated LINE’s entrepreneurial pitch to sticker makers, in relation to wider debates around the global economic and political power of Silicon Valley platforms in Japan and East Asia. Marc is an Associate Professor of Film Studies at Concordia University.
Tell us a little about your path to becoming a professor.
I think my path to becoming a professor started as soon as I entered college, though I didn’t know it then. I’d always loved school, but I’d never been surrounded by people with the same passion for learning new things. As an undergraduate I was so lucky to have mentors and friends who pushed me to think broadly but with rigor and to express myself with precision. To find a community built around open-ended intellectual inquiry felt like coming home, and I guess that’s why I’ve never left the academy. Whenever I enter the classroom or start a new research project—that is, when I do the things that make me a professor—I’m continuing the process that I started as an 18 year old college student.

What are the big questions that animate your research?
I’ll start with a non-answer: The questions that animate my work are constantly shifting depending on the project. I always try to keep an open mind in my research, to see what kinds of questions my sources are asking me, rather than the other way around. What does my object of study ask of me and how can I organize my scholarly inquiry around that? I usually have provisional questions in mind, of course, but I tend to pursue topics that require me to retool intellectually and methodologically, so it can sometimes take a while to figure out what the most important questions are. Over the last five years or so, much of my work has centered on environmental issues such as climate change, animal endangerment, and pollution. Lately, I find myself returning to the same set of questions: How do artists and writers make sense of our current environmental crises? What cultural or social role do art forms that developed under vastly different historical conditions have today? What new forms or techniques are being created to better reflect a world that is changing rapidly and in entirely unpredictable ways? How might cultural forms draw attention to the new kinds of inequality and exploitation generated by ecological breakdown?

What projects are you working on now, or want to work on in the future?
I’m currently working on a project on China and threat. This project extends my interest in Chinese culture and the environment, but it also reflects elements of my personal experience studying China. When I—a white, American man—began studying China and Chinese around the turn of the millennium, people would often compliment me on my business savvy, the assumption being that I was going to
cash in on my special ability to mediate between a “rising China” and the West. More recently, when I tell non-Chinese people that I am a scholar of contemporary China, they often respond by expressing a fear of China, which they see as not only a direct threat to decades of Euro-American economic and political power but also as a source of global environmental ruin. Probably more than any other nation, China has become a focal point for ambient eco-anxieties. It’s important to fight the demonization of China, but the bigger challenge—and the object of my newest work—is figuring out how to disentangle the imagined from the very real and present dangers that its environmental problems pose at home and abroad.

**What is your favorite course to teach, and why?**

I’m generally not good at picking favorites, though I do really enjoy teaching my Modern Chinese Popular Culture, Part I course. This course is designed around the history of four different media technologies—photography, lithography, film, and sound recording—in China from the mid-19th century, when the Qing Dynasty was violently “opened” by Western imperial powers, to 1949, when Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party founded the People’s Republic of China. Structuring the class around specific technologies, rather than around cultural themes or specific historical events, allows me to ask big questions about influence and adaptation. How do technologies or cultural forms that arrive from outside China, often as tools of imperial expansion, get appropriated and repurposed by Chinese cultural producers? What does it mean to talk about a cultural form like “modern Chinese film” or “Chinese photography” in national terms? Apart from these kinds of questions, I love this course because I get to teach amazing silent films, slightly racy works of popular fiction, and early Chinese jazz, among other things. It’s a lot of fun.

**How do you see the role ALC has to play at Northwestern?**

One of the exciting things about ALC is that it’s a relatively new department, so its role at Northwestern is still evolving. We currently teach a lot of students in our language programs, but I’d really like to see these programs expand. Northwestern has committed itself to a global vision, and foreign language study needs to be at the center of this. **ALC and other foreign language departments are especially well qualified to help shape how Northwestern reaches beyond Evanston and the United States.** Closer to home, I think ALC and its faculty are in an excellent position to build connections between different departments and units at the University. Not only does the department have the potential to be an important hub for the study of Asia at Northwestern, but our faculty also do the kind of interdisciplinary work that creates productive ties beyond Asian studies. A number of ALC faculty, myself included, are core faculty members in the Program in Comparative Literary Studies, I’ve worked closely with the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities in promoting the environmental humanities at Northwestern, and we are also strengthening our connections to the Department of Radio/Television/Film in the School of Communication and the Block Museum. I’m excited to see how these relationships will shape the department and vice versa.
Arts and Culture Events Enthrall Students and Faculty

Scholarly and cultural events beyond the classroom are an integral part of the rich set of experiences in ALC for students, faculty, and the general public. In the Fall quarter, Professor Tom Gaubatz taught a first-year seminar on “Images of the Samurai” and invited Miro Ito, a Tokyo-based lecturer, photographer, and independent film producer. She gave a multi-faceted presentation on the history of Japan’s traditions of masked dance-drama, and their links to later Japanese performance arts and other global spiritual and performance traditions. She also shared her remarkable collection of Japanese masks, which her collaborator Shunso (below) used in an experimental dance performance accompanied by traditional Japanese court music.

In the Spring quarter, Professor Daniel Majchrowicz invited C. M. Naim, (left) Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago, and the most eminent living scholar of Urdu literature in the United States. He gave a fascinating and fun lecture on “Urdu Crime Fiction, 1890-1950” which drew a wide audience and was of special interest to students in Professor Majchrowicz’s class on “Kings, Courtesans, and Khan Artists: Picturizing Islam and Muslims in Bombay Cinema” for the connections he drew between popular storytelling and film-making cultures in South Asia in the mid-twentieth century. As he explained, crime fiction, generally known in Urdu as jäsūṣī adab, began to appear in Urdu near the end of the 19th century, chiefly in the form of translations and adaptions. But by the 1920s many Urdu writers were also attempting original stories. Two names from that time of heyday gained permanent fame: Zafar Omar, for his highly successful and influential adaptions, and Tirath Ram Firozpur, for his more than 150 translations. The talk highlighted the work of the two, and also discussed some of the original writings by two authors, Fida Ali Khanjar and Nadeem Sahba’i, who were quite popular once but are now equally forgotten.
video-chat projects in the classroom that engage her students at different levels with native speakers via various technological tools. She also presented a research paper entitled *Enhance Students’ Interpersonal Communication with Native Speakers through Videoconferencing* at the 5th Int'l Conference on Teaching Chinese as a Second Language at the Educational University of Hong Kong. She is a certified rater at the Writing Proficiency Test by ACTFL.

Thomas Gaubatz, Assistant Professor of Japanese Literature and Culture, is currently preparing a book manuscript on urban space and identity in early modern Japanese literature. This year, he wrote an essay on early modern Japanese urban spaces for the forthcoming *Cambridge History of Japan* and co-organized an interdisciplinary conference at the University of Southern California on cities in early modern Japan. He also completed a term as a Fellow of the Searle Center for Teaching and Learning, where he developed a new course on video games in contemporary Japanese popular culture.

**New Roles**

We are thrilled to have Sarah Jacoby, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, join us as Interim Chair for 2019-2020! Professor Jacoby is a specialist in Tibetan Buddhism with particular interests in literature and autobiography studies, and gender and sexuality. We regularly cross-list many of her Religious Studies courses, and also have Professor Jacoby to thank for helping to start our nascent Tibetan language program. We’re looking forward to a great year ahead under her leadership.

In addition to teaching students in ALC’s Chinese language program and taking students to Beijing every summer on “NU in China” study abroad programs, Professor of Instruction Licheng Gu has taken on yet another job: in January he joined the Office of the Vice President of International Relations as “China Liaison.” In this new position, Professor Gu will advise University leadership on strategic initiatives in China, assist with raising Northwestern’s visibility abroad and provide support for delegation visits to and from the country. In addition to accompanying university officials on trips to China and helping to host the many guests who visit Northwestern from China every year, Professor Gu will also help manage Northwestern’s WeChat account, which will allow the University to share its announcements and accomplishments with a broad Chinese audience.
Daniel Majchrowicz, Assistant Professor of South Asian Literature, is in the final stages of preparation for his book on the development of Urdu-language travel writing in colonial India. This year he completed a study and translation of travel accounts by Muslim women from around the world, which will be published in early 2020 by Indiana University Press. He also served as editor for the “Travel and Science” section of a new edition of The Sources of Indian Tradition from Columbia University Press. He received a Faculty Fellowship from the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities, and will thus be on sabbatical for the 2019-20 academic year.

So Hye Kim, Postdoctoral Weinberg Fellow, teaches courses in Korean cinema, culture, and literature. She received her Ph.D. in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago in 2019. Her research interests center on Korean and East Asian films of diaspora, as well as transnational East Asian cinema and independent film movements. Her dissertation entitled Impossible Homecoming: Cinematic Returns of Korean Diaspora in Post-Cold War East Asia locates Korean diaspora films within the history of East Asian cultural production during the long twentieth century and contextualizes the cinematic mobility of Korean diaspora in the post-Cold War era. By doing so, it interrogates the ways in which Korean diaspora films affect, subvert, and transform both the national and transnational imagination of Korean cinema.

Eun Jung Lee, Lecturer, is a PhD candidate in Korean linguistics and pedagogy from University of Hawaii at Manoa. She received her Master’s degree in TESOL from University of Pennsylvania in 2007. Before joining Northwestern University, she taught Korean language and culture in Sogang University, UCLA, University of Hawaii, and Arizona State University.

Luciana Sanga, Visiting Assistant Professor, holds a Ph.D. in Japanese from Stanford University, as well as an M.A. and a B.A. from the University of Tokyo. She is currently completing her book manuscript titled: The New Japanese Love Novel: Genre, Gender and Book Format. Her work has appeared in the Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies. Two of her translations are forthcoming in Review of Japanese Culture and Society. In her teaching and research, she brings a feminist perspective to critically neglected works of popular literature.

Ihnhee Kim was promoted to Associate Professor of Instruction of Korean Language. She was invited to speak at the 4th World Language Korean Teacher Conference, Korean Language Teachers in America (KLTA), Korean Education Center, Chicago, IL where she presented her paper Target Language Interactions in Effective Language Teaching.
Rami Nair, Associate Professor of Instruction of Hindi-Urdu Language, is working on creating an intermediate Hindi-Urdu language course for future medical professionals. She spent her academic leave last winter researching and collecting materials for this course.

Patrick Noonan, Assistant Professor of Japanese Literature and Culture, was on leave in 2018-2019 as a Faculty Fellow at the Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities at Northwestern. As a fellow, he worked on completing his book manuscript, *The Aesthetics of Disaffection in 1960s Japan*, which examines the relationship between aesthetics and politics in the Japanese sixties. He also began a second project on Japanese popular cultural responses to economic crises after the bursting of the asset price bubble in the early 1990s. He finished a translation of the writer Nosaka Akiyuki’s short story “Raising the Dead,” which he will submit for publication this coming year.

Yumi Shiojima was promoted to Professor of Instruction of Japanese Language.

At the 2019 Midwest Chinese Speech Contest, among the six students from Northwestern, Julia Borland won the silver medal in the 2nd Year Chinese group, Afrasiab Mian won the gold medal in the 4th Year Chinese group (he will go to China to compete in the World Chinese Speech Contest on behalf of American students), Ethan Chow won the bronze medal, Deven Shen and Maggie Luo won the silver medals, and Na Na Sheehan won the gold medal in the Heritage group. Besides making speeches, students also demonstrated their command of Chinese cultural talents, such as paper-cutting, calligraphy and Chinese dance, poem recitation and singing. One student even rapped in Chinese!

The 1st Annual Midwest Korean Speech Contest hosted by the Korean Language Program at Northwestern was a huge success! The contest was made possible through the collaboration and efforts of students and faculty, the administrators of the Korean education center, and members of the Korean community in Chicago. In total, 41 contestants from 17 colleges and universities participated. Congratulations to all of them!
Student News

Sarah Ahmad was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award in Hindi-Urdu Language and South Asian Culture.

Maria Figueroa was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award in Korean Language and Culture.

Isabelle Zinghini was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award in Chinese Language and Culture.

A big thank you to our student workers who assisted us throughout the year. Kathy Tian, Asuka Kosugi, and Ruogu Xu.

CONGRATS, KATHY! Thanks for your 4 years of work with ALC! We will miss you!

Senior Theses Break New Ground, Win Awards

ALC awarded Departmental Honors to two graduating seniors in 2019. In their senior year, students with a sufficiently high GPA and the support of a faculty member can opt to write a senior thesis in pursuit of departmental honors. Senior honors theses represent the culmination of an outstanding amount of work in language and cultural studies, as well as a year-long process of researching and theorizing, and writing and revising while working one-on-one with a faculty advisor.

In her thesis, “Missing the Point: China, Chineseness, and Rhinoceros Endangerment,” directed by Professor Corey Byrnes, Isabelle Zinghini examines the cultural politics of conservation discourse by asking “how China’s role in the illegal trade in rhino horn is imagined as a problem of culture.” Her sources range from speeches given by American government officials to videos produced by conservation organizations, as well as stock photographs, and cartoons. A member of her committee remarked that if her thesis to be published, “it could have a real impact on how China is represented in the literature and visual culture of rhino endangerment.” The Program in Asian Studies awarded Isabelle with the Hsu-Wigmore Prize for best thesis on a subject related to Asia.

Also directed by Professor Byrnes, Kelsey Allen-Niesen’s (left) thesis, “First the World, then China: the Biennale’s Role in the Emergence of Chinese Contemporary Art” traces the recent history of contemporary Chinese art’s commercial and critical ascendance – both in the “east” and the “west” – through the institution of international biennials in China around the turn of the 21st century. Kelsey’s extensive research for this project extended from Northwestern’s own Block Museum to Harvard University’s Fine Arts Library, for which she was awarded an undergraduate research grant to travel to Boston. According to one honors committee member, “Kelsey has done an outstanding job deploying her expertise in China studies to skillfully critique the ideological machinery of the international contemporary art world including the social, political, and economic forces that shape how culture gets made.”