Top Stories

Dr. Joshua Mostow awarded a Foreign Minister's Commendation

The Foreign Minister’s Commendations are awarded to individuals and groups with outstanding achievements in international fields. They acknowledge contributions to the promotion of friendship between Japan and other countries or areas. This year, individual Commendations were awarded to 187 people, including 160 people living outside Japan. Dr. Mostow received his award on October 4 at the residence of Consul-General Okai.

Dr. Christina Laffin invited to join the Royal Society of Canada College of New Scholars, Artists, and Scientists
Founded in 2014, the College is a handpicked selection of top mid-career scholars and artists in Canada. College Members have already received recognition in their fields for excellence and serve as ambassadors of their fields. Christina Laffin holds the Canada Research Chair in Premodern Japanese Literature and Culture. A leading authority on women writers in medieval Japan, she works between the fields of literary study and historiography to excavate works by women and elucidate the conditions enabling them to write. Her contributions include a monograph on medieval Japanese women, a collection on noh theatre, two volumes on gender in Japan, and more than forty articles, translations, and chapters published in English, French, and Japanese.

**Featured Course: ASIA 398: Narrative Literature in Premodern India**

Taught by Dr. Adheesh Sathaye, this course will study the stories of gods, goddesses and religious heroes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, Avadanas and in classical poetry and drama.
New Hire: Yoshimizu, Ayaka - SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow

Throughout Dr. Yoshimizu’s graduate studies, her research was concerned with the intersection of race, ethnicity and gender and how it shaped experiences of transnational migration, especially in the transpacific and inter-Asian contexts. She critically examined political processes through which different cultural forms mediated transnational migrants’ experiences and identities.

![Yoshimizu, Ayaka](image)

2017W Courses:

**ASIA 354: Introduction to Japanese Cinema**
Students will be introduced to the work of the major directors (e.g., Ozu, Mizoguchi, Kurosawa, Itami, Oshima, Shinoda). Ideological uses of literary texts and period pieces (e.g., Ugetsu, Life of Oharu, Double Suicide). Impact of depiction of Japanese in American film.

**ASIA 254: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in Japanese Literature and Film**
The integral role that sex, gender, and sexuality play in literary and cinematic works from Japan. Literary works will be read in translation, movies will be subtitled.

Events

**2017 John Howes Lecture in Japanese Studies:**

**Stolen Secrets: Intercepting Dispatches between Wartime Berlin and Japan**
With guest speaker Dr. Peter Kornicki (Emeritus Professor of Japanese at Cambridge University).

During World War II, British intelligence read the dispatches of Japanese diplomats in Europe, including those of Oshima Hiroshi, long-serving ambassador in Berlin. These acts of espionage would prove invaluable in the struggle with Nazi Germany but would remain a secret for decades. Why? And what impact did this all have on the postwar development of Japanese studies?

**Date:** November 16th, 2017  
**Time:** 6:00pm - 8:00pm  
**Venue:** Auditorium, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall

**RSVP** [here](#).
The Japanese monk Shunjō 俊芿 (1155-1227) traveled to China and studied Tiantai, Pure Land and the precepts for thirteen years. When Shunjō returned to Japan, he brought back one of the largest collections of Chinese texts from the Song Dynasty and practices that radically differed from those used by Japanese Tendai monks. Although he enjoyed great success in many ways, he had limited success in influencing Tendai monastic discipline. In this lecture, Dr. Paul Groner, professor from the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, will look at how an eminent Japanese scholar Ninkō 仁空 (1309-1388) responded to some of Shunjō’s challenges.

Date: October 23rd, 2017  
Time: 5:00pm - 7:00pm  
Venue: Room 604, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall

Everything You Wanted to Know about Grad School (but were afraid to ask)
Have you thought about pursuing graduate study in Asian Studies or a related field? How do you know whether a Master's and/or PhD degree is right for you? How is graduate education different from undergraduate education? How do you choose a program, how do you apply, and what will it cost? What is the grad school experience like, and what is the value of a graduate degree?

This evening event will answer these questions and more, including your own questions in informal discussion over a light dinner. The event is open to all Asian Studies majors and minors interested in graduate education at UBC or elsewhere, and to anyone interested in applying to the UBC MA or PhD programs in Asian Studies. Speakers will include faculty, current graduate students, and recent graduates.

**Date:** October 25th, 2017  
**Time:** 5:00pm - 7:00pm  
**Venue:** Auditorium, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall  

**RSVP** [here](https://secure.campaigner.com/csb/Public/show/kes5v--dlpgl-5l47ul85).

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**Individuality in Early Modern Japan: A discussion of and launch for Peter Nosco’s recent book**

Two of the most commonly alleged features of Japanese society are its homogeneity and its encouragement of conformity, as represented by the saying that the nail that sticks up gets pounded. The primary goal of Dr.
Nosco’s volume is to challenge these and a number of other long-standing assumptions regarding Tokugawa (1600-1868) society, and thereby to open a dialogue regarding the relationship between the Japan of two centuries ago and the present.

**The Philosophy and Practice of Buddhist Confession in the Song Dynasty**

Dr. Kai Sheng, a visiting professor from Tsinghua University, China, will give a guest lecture with the title "The Philosophy and Practice of Buddhist Confession in the Song Dynasty."

**Date:** October 26th, 2017  
**Time:** 2:15pm - 3:45pm  
**Venue:** Room 604, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall

**Hidden Treasures: The Changing Uses and Meanings of Wish-Fulfilling Jewels in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism**
Speaker: Casey Collins, a PhD student, Department of Asian Studies, UBC.

In new religions derived from Shingon—Japanese esoteric Buddhism—physical objects provide a tangible link with the past, even as they find new uses and become memetic vectors imbued with new meanings. The uses and meanings of “wish-fulfilling jewels” (Jpn. nyoi hōju 如意宝珠) are being adapted in movements that emerged in the twentieth century.

**Date:** October 26th, 2017  
**Time:** 4pm - 5pm  
**Venue:** Room 213, Museum of Anthropology, 6393 N.W. Marine Drive

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**The Foreclosure Follies and Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

Join faculty, students and members of the greater Vancouver arts community for this series of talks exploring theatre and film practices across the disciplines. Most talks feature two speakers, who will address the theme from diverse disciplinary locations. In Spring, a series of readings will follow. Stay tuned for more!

**Date:** October 30th, 2017  
**Time:** 4:00pm - 5:00pm  
**Venue:** 1099, Buchanan Tower, 1873 E Mall
One Asia Forum

Hosted by Dr. Nam-lin Hur, this series will feature different speakers throughout Term 1.

Fragments That Mattered: Korean Buncheong Ceramics from Mount Gyeryong

Korean buncheong ware is a distinctive type of grey-bodied stoneware embellished in various modes with white slip from the early Joseon period (1392-1910).

Date: 26 October 2017
Time: 4:00pm - 6:00 pm
Venue: Room 604, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall

A “Great Divergence” of Ideas? An Asiaticentric World in a Eurocentric Academy

Twenty years ago scholars’ attention gravitated to the idea of a “great divergence” between the socioeconomic circumstances of Europe and Asia, which saw Western economic and military dominance of what had been a polycentric or Asiaticentric world.

Date: 2 November 2017
Time: 4:00pm - 6:00 pm
Venue: Room 604, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall

The Making of Chinese Hegemony in Early Modern East Asia

In this talk, Lee argues that the international order of Asia’s past was not as Sinocentric as conventional wisdom suggests.

Date: 9 November 2017
Time: 4:00pm - 6:00 pm
**The Kangxi Emperor: China's Deng Xiaoping in the 17th Century**

It is clear to almost everyone that Deng Xiaoping’s opening policy in the 1980s and after has radically transformed the historical direction of contemporary China and laid solid foundation for it to rise as the world’s second largest economy in the new century.

**Date:** 16 November 2017  
**Time:** 4:00pm - 6:00 pm  
**Venue:** Lillooet Room, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, 1961 E Mall

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**Taiwan in the Age of Global China: Challenges and Opportunities**

In the face of China’s continued rise and transformation into a global power, how should we think of Taiwan?

**Date:** 23 November 2017  
**Time:** 4:00pm - 6:00 pm  
**Venue:** Lillooet Room, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, 1961 E Mall

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**The New Annual Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture with Professor Vivek Kumar**

Join us for the new Annual Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture on November 2nd with Dr. Vivek Kumar, Professor of Sociology & Professor Dr. Ambedkar Chair (I/C) at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

**Date:** 2 November 2017  
**Time:** 5:00pm - 6:30pm  
**Venue:** Room 120, C.K. Choi Building, 1855 West Mall

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**Reflections on Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhist and Daoist Traditions**
Dr. Jimmy Yu, a Sheng Yen Associate Professor of Chinese Buddhism at the Florida State University, will come to UBC and give a guest lecture with the title “Reflections on Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhist and Daoist Traditions.”

**Date:** November 22nd, 2017  
**Time:** 4:00pm  
**Venue:** Room 604, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall

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**Student Opportunities**

**UBC's New Minor in Urban Studies**

The Department of Geography has launched a new minor in Urban Studies. It is a vibrant and growing area of study that examines the social, political, and environmental complexities of cities and human affairs. **Info session on October 20, 2017.**

**Arts Tri-Mentoring Program**

The Arts Tri-Mentoring Program connects Arts students with industry mentors and with one another. The program involves matching a UBC Alumni with a junior (2nd year) and a senior (3rd/4th year) student. Matches are based on academic and career goals. **Apply by October 25, 2017.**

**Rice Paper Magazine - Reflection**

Asian writers of all cultural backgrounds are encouraged to submit non-fiction articles, stories, poems, and profiles relatable to Asian Canadians, many of whom are global citizens with ties to other parts of the world. **Apply by October 31, 2017.**

**Yenching Academy of Peking University**

The Yenching Academy of Peking University builds bridges between China and the rest of the world through an interdisciplinary master’s program in China Studies for outstanding graduates from all over the globe. This initiative brings young people who show promise to lead and innovate in their fields together in an intensive learning environment where they can explore China and its role in the world - past, present, and future. The Academy aims to thereby shape a new generation of global citizens with a nuanced understanding of China. **Apply by November 3, 2017.**

**Backpacking with a Purpose**
If you're into the idea of traveling to a foreign country in order to volunteer and play a part in hopefully making a social impact, then this could be the opportunity for you. Experience how it's like to live like the locals do with this immersive program that's meant to put you directly in the shoes of the locals who live in the foreign countries as you complete your volunteer journey. **Apply by November 22.**

**China’s Rise and Transformation: the View from its Fastest Growing City (UBC - SWUPL 2018 Summer Program) - Chongqing, China**

The program will provide unique field visits on a daily basis with access to government, courts, companies, and research centers, allowing for interactions with many key players. Additionally, the program will offer unique opportunities to visit historical cities (Chengdu, Xian), including the Panda reserve, and to taste the cuisine of Sichuan and Chongqing, possibly the most colorful and endearing in China. **Apply by January 5th, 2018.**

**Job: Tenured Associate Professor or Professor and Chair of Department**

The Department of Pacific & Asian Studies at the University of Victoria is hiring for the position of tenured Associate Professor or Professor and Chair of Department, to begin 1 July 2018. **Apply by November 24, 2017.**

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**On-Campus Events**

**Asian Calligraphy Workshop: Double Ninth Festival**

The UBC Asian Calligraphy Club will be holding their first Asian calligraphy workshop next week! The theme will be the Double Ninth Festival which is held on the ninth day of the ninth month in the Chinese calendar. It is also known as the Chong Yang or the Chrysanthemum Festival.

- **Date:** 23 October 2017
- **Time:** 5:00pm - 6:30pm
- **Venue:** IBLC Room 156, 1961 E Mall

**The Hard Work of Feeding the Baby: Breastfeeding and Intensive Mothering in Contemporary Urban China**

In this talk, Dr. Amy Hanser describes an emerging culture of intensive mothering among middle-class, urban Chinese women that focuses on infant feeding.

- **Date:** 24 October 2017
- **Time:** 12:30pm - 2:00pm
- **Venue:** Liu Institute for Global Issues, 6476 NW Marine Dr

**The Bleeding Edge Screening**

From the Peabody Award-winning director of Human Harvest (2014), comes a riveting thriller based on real-life events. It's the early 2000s when increasing spread of information technology has quickly become a perceived threat to the Chinese communist regime. The screening will be followed by a Q&A discussion with Leon Lee, a UBC alumna and award-winning director.

- **Date:** 26 October 2017
- **Time:** 4:00pm
- **Venue:** Michael Kingsmill Forum, AMS Student Nest

**Dr. Keith Howard, SOAS University of London, “Sea of Blood: A Night at the North Korean Opera”**

In the early 1970s, as the North Korean ideology of self-reliance (juche sasang) bedded in and given that artistic integrity was to remain subservient to ideology, a new operatic genre emerged.

- **Date:** 27 October 2017
- **Time:** 3:30pm - 5:00pm
- **Venue:** Room 120, CK Choi Building, 1855 West Mall

**War and States: China’s Long March Towards Unity (750 BC – 1911 AD)**
Long and deep history is critical for understanding China’s past, present and future. This talk will focus on one of the most important and unique features in China political history: the precocious rise of a single unitary empire with perhaps the world’s first centralized bureaucracy.

**Date:** 31 October 2017  
**Time:** 12:30pm - 2:00pm  
**Venue:** Allard Hall Room 121, 1822 East Mall

**Rule of Law Reform and the Rise of Rule by Fear in China**

For a long time, the revival of law and legal institutions in China was expected to enable transition to a more open, fair and rights-respecting system; but recent years have called the paradigmatic belief in China’s liberal transition into question.

**Date:** 1 November 2017  
**Time:** 12:30pm - 2:00pm  
**Venue:** Allard Hall Room 122, 1822 East Mall

**Decoding Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar: Ideas and Praxis by Dr. Vivek Kumar**

Dr. Vivek Kumar is a Professor of Sociology & Professor Dr. Ambedkar Chair (I/C), Member Committee on Global Studies Programme in the Center for the Study of Social Systems

**Date:** 2 November 2017  
**Time:** 4:00pm - 5:30pm  
**Venue:** Room 120, CK Choi Building, 1855 West Mall

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**Off-Campus Events**

**World Premiere Performance: Kayoi Komachi / Komachi Visited, a Noh Chamber Opera**  
Oct 26 - 28 | 8pm | The Cultch Historic Theatre, 1895 Venables Street Vancouver

**Telling Tales: Tradition and Historiography in Taiwanese Comics**  
Oct 27 | 11am | SFU Harbour Centre, 515 W. Hastings, Vancouver

**Noh Theatre Workshop with Yamai Tsunao**  
Oct 29 | 1pm - 5pm | The Scotiabank Dance Centre - 677 Davie Street

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**Interview**

**Dr. Christina Laffin, Associate Professor in Classical Japanese Studies.**
Can you explain to a non-expert what you research?

I work between the fields of literary study and historiography to consider the status of women in Japan, from the tenth century onwards, focusing on women’s writing, female education and literacy, and women’s professional work. I am interested in how, why, and what women wrote.

How and why did you start your journey in Asian Studies?

In my final year of high school on Vancouver Island, I was selected to take part in the Pacific Rim Program, which sent recent BC graduates to Northeast and Southeast Asia to study language and culture and volunteer in elementary schools. I had taken one term of Chinese and was interested in studying in China but instead I was sent to Japan. I asked to be posted to Kyoto because I had read *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shōnagon and wanted to visit the old capital. After a year of studying Japanese intensively there, I abandoned my original plan to become a journalist and a scholarship at McGill because I heard that UBC had a great Japanese Studies program.

What was the experience for you learning a second language?

When I was told I was going to Kyoto, I knew only two Japanese words: *arigato* and *genmaicha*. The only resources available for study in my small island community were a few books and some antiquated cassette tapes which encouraged practice of katakana words like “haihiru, erebeeta, esukareeta” (high heel, elevator, escalator). These didn’t help much, but being thrown into a family with a strong Kyoto dialect and no English forced me to learn quickly to survive. After returning, the Japanese language program at UBC gave me a strong foundation in grammar, which continues to serve me well in research and teaching. Being able to function in Japanese has opened up many doors for me throughout my career.

For more photos & the full interview >>