The Update is a bi-weekly roundup of news in the Department of Asian Studies for our Students, Faculty and Staff

Top Stories

Featured Courses:

Due to waitlist demand, a new section of ASIA 250 has now been opened in Term 2 and is available for registration!

ASIA 250: Introduction to Buddhism

Origins, basic teachings, development of Theravada, Mahayana, and Tantric traditions, historical spread first through Asia and later the world, and Buddhism in contemporary societies.

Events

One Asia Forum

Hosted by Dr. Nam-lin Hur, this series will feature different speakers throughout Term 1.
Classical Culture Abroad: Poetry and Politics in the Wider East Asian World

Poetry played an important role in traditional East Asian relations, allowing diplomats to form friendships and show off their learning. The friendship between the Vietnamese envoy Phùng Khắc Khoan and his Korean counterpart, Yi Sugwang, is a case in point.

**Date:** 5 October 2017  
**Time:** 4:00pm - 6:00 pm  
**Venue:** Room 604, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall

Neighbors and Killers: Contacts between Qing China and Chosŏn Korea in the Tumen River

Poetry played an important role in traditional East Asian relations, allowing diplomats to form friendships and show off their learning. The friendship between the Vietnamese envoy Phùng Khắc Khoan and his Korean counterpart, Yi Sugwang, is a case in point.

**Date:** 12 October 2017  
**Time:** 4:00pm - 6:00 pm  
**Venue:** Room 604, Asian Centre, 1871 West Mall

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 Asiacentric 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 Asiacentric 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
Lecture: Understanding the Partition of Punjab in the Context of the Partition of India and Bengal by Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed

Understanding the Partition of Punjab in the Context of the Partition of India and Bengal

October 5, 2017
5 pm - 6:30 pm
Location: Room #120
C.K. Choi Building
1855 West Mall, Vancouver

by Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed
Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Stockholm University
Visiting Professor, Government College University Lahore

The journey of the Indian subcontinent to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh has been long and painful. In this lecture on the partition of Punjab, one of the regions most impacted by Partition, Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed will demonstrate that the partition of the region, although linked to the overall partition of India, was the result of the polarization between Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand and Muslims on the other, in the wake of religious revivalist activities amongst all three communities.

Please visit cisar.iar.ubc.ca for details

Date: 5 October 2017
Time: 5:00pm - 6:30 pm
Venue: Room 120, CK Choi Building, 1855 West Mall

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

---

**Student Opportunities**

**Junior Research Fellowship**  
The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada has opened up applications for Juniors Research Fellows who are interested in Canada-Asia investment relations. **Apply by October 16, 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.**

**Workshops at the UBC Farm**  
35-50 workshops per year are offered at the UBC Farm, ranging from 1.5-3 hours to full-length short courses. Topics range from food production(gardening/farming, foraging, mushroom cultivation, aquaponics), food transformation(cooking, preserving, canning, cheese & beer making, baking), and other sustainable living skills(making fiber, craft-making, creating school gardens).

**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.**

---

**On-Campus Events**

**UBC Day of Learning: Envisioning our future at the 75th Anniversary of Japanese Canadian Internment**

Through a series of panels and workshops, the *Day of Learning* will explore past and present societal themes of xenophobia, racism and discrimination, from the removal of indigenous peoples, to the incarceration of over 21,000 Japanese Canadians in 1942, and the rise of Islamophobia today.

- **Date:** 10 October 2017
- **Time:** 10:00am - 8:00pm
- **Venue:** Robert H Lee Alumni Centre, 6163 University Boulevard

**Night Shift: Body Language**

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 願成就) are being adapted in movements that emerged in the twentieth century.

- **Date:** 26 October 2017
- **Time:** 4:00pm - 5:00pm
- **Venue:** Room 213, Museum of Anthropology, 6393 NW Marine Dr.

**Experimental Ink**

What is the language of movement, light, and sound? Join us for a special evening of live performance, music, and calligraphy by acclaimed artists who are experimenting with various forms of writing in motion.

- **Date:** 6 October 2017
- **Time:** 8:30pm - 10:00pm
- **Venue:** Room 213, Museum of Anthropology, 6393 NW Marine Dr.

**The Great Pancake Race IX**

Run, Flip, Run, Tag! The Great Pancake Race for United Way promises flip-tastic fun for all. Good sportsmanship…questionable. After all, stakes are high as teams of 4 vie for the coveted Pan Trophy.

- **Date:** 10 October 2017
- **Time:** 12:00pm - 1:00pm
- **Venue:** UBC Student Rec Centre

**From Wenzhou to Vancouver, From Yale to Oxford: Journey of Knowledge Archaeology of a Freelance Writer**

In the old quarter of Wenzhou, a well-known city for its commodity economy in Zhejiang Province stands a Christian church built about one century ago.

- **Date:** 11 October 2017
- **Time:** 12:00pm - 1:30pm
- **Venue:** Asian Centre Auditorium, 1871 West Mall

**Turkey 2K Trot**

Join us on Wed Oct 11 for the 5th annual Turkey 2K Trot! Walk, run or amble along Main Mall from Agronomy Road to Flag Pole Plaza and back. Open to everyone!

- **Date:** 11 October 2017
- **Time:** 12:00pm - 1:00pm
- **Venue:** Kaiser Building, 2332 West Mall

**Arts Food Truck Festival**

Join us at the Arts Food Truck festival for live entertainment and incredible eats! $1 for every meal purchased from trucks or Loafe go towards our campaign!

- **Date:** 12 October 2017
- **Time:** 11:00am - 2:00pm
- **Venue:** Lee Square, 6200 University Boulevard
Contemporary Art in India Today: Bangalore and Beyond by Umesh Shivanna Maddanahalli & Raghavendra Rao K. V.

Join us for a fascinating information session on Contemporary Art in India Today: Bangalore and Beyond by Umesh Shivanna Maddanahalli, Bangalore-based Visual Artist, and Raghavendra Rao K. V., Visual Artist and CISAR Research Associate.

**Date:** 11 October 2017  
**Time:** 12:00pm - 1:30pm  
**Venue:** Room 120, CK Choi Building, 1855 West Mall

Hidden Treasures: The Changing Uses and Meanings of Wish-Fulfilling Jewels in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism, Casey Collins

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.

**Date:** 26 October 2017  
**Time:** 4:00pm - 5:00pm  
**Venue:** Room 213, Museum of Anthropology, 6393 NW Marine Dr.

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

---

**Off-Campus Events**

**Building Bridges: Connecting Entrepreneurship in Asia-Vancouver**  
Oct 5 | 5:30pm - 9:30pm | 149 West Hastings  
At Building Bridges, the goal is to connect young university entrepreneurs with local government bodies, renowned Vancouver entrepreneurs, and VCs.

**Standup Comedy show with Dr. Mahmud Farjami**  
7 Oct | TBA

**Next Music from Tokyo volume 11 - Indie Rock Concert Featuring Bands from Tokyo**  
Oct 11 | 7:00pm - 11:59pm | 111 West Hastings  
If you loved Uchu Conbini’s sublime math-pop then you will love Daijiro Nakagawa’s new band JYOCHO.

**Japanese Language Films at the Vancouver International Film Festival**  
Now - Oct 13 | Various Times | Various Locations  
If you’re a fan of Japanese films then you’re in for a treat. The Vancouver International Film Festival has curated a list Japanese films that you might enjoy.

---

**Event Recaps**

**Canada at 150+: Trauma, Memory and the story of Canada**
September 29-30 was the opening of the exhibition entitled "Canada at 150+: Trauma, Memory and the story of Canada," curated by Raghavendra Rao K.V., the Artistic Director for the South Asian Canadian Histories Association (SACHA), which sponsored the exhibition as a part of a larger program of activities this Fall that engage with experiences of traumas that are a part, directly or indirectly, of the Canadian experience and the Canada 150+ story. The exhibition is on view until December 3 at multiple sites in the "Punjabi Market" area of Vancouver, SFU Woodward's Atrium, and at UBC's Asian Centre, and features works by five prominent Canadian artists--Vikky Alexander, Sonny Assu, Jason Baerg, Sameer Farooq and Hyung-Min Yoon--from across the country, and one internationally known artist, Umesh M.S., from India. The work of Sameer Farooq is located in the Asian Centre Lobby, and the work of Umesh M.S. is on view in the UBC Asian Library (second floor); Umesh will also perform in an evening performance at SFU Woodward's on October 13, where he will appear with Jason Baerg, who has produced a digital work that is on view in SFU Woodward's Atrium and on UBC digital signage. The work of Alexander, Assu, and Yoon are on view in Punjabi Market, as are a series of historical photographs from UBC Library's Rare Books and Special Collections. Asian Studies Associate Professor Anne Murphy is a Founding Member of SACHA, and played a major role in the organization and implementation of the project.
Audience gathered at the UBC Asian Centre on the afternoon of September 29 to hear Sonny Assu, Umesh M.S., and Hyung-Min Yoon discuss the exhibition with curator Raghavendra Rao K.V. UBC faculty, representatives of the Dean of Arts' office, and Andrew Szeri, UBC's new Provost and VP Academic, attended to lend their observations and support. Students were represented at the event by Taranjit Singh, an M.A. student in the School of Journalism, and Katherine Sloane Geddes, a Master's student in Asian Studies, who was unable to attend due to illness but wrote a letter that was read at the event that reflected on her experience doing community-based research through the UBC class, ASIA 475, "Documenting Punjabi Canada.” On September 30, the opening in Punjabi Market took place and a walking tour of the area was conducted, despite the rain, for an enthusiastic (if damp) audience.

SACHA's Canada 150+ project emerged out of recent commemorative events and reconciliation processes related to residential schools, the Komagata Maru incident, Japanese internment, and the Chinese Head-Tax, all of which emphasize the need to explore how the past shapes our present. Through them, the project calls attention to the traumas inside and outside of Canada that must be recognized and understood as part of the Canadian story at 150+. In addition to these opening events and the performance at SFU Woodward's on October 13, there will be a Walking Tour in Punjabi Market on October 14, and a new theatrical production by Paneet Singh, SACHA's Director of Performance, in November. For details on these events and the exhibition overall, please click here.

---

Interview

**Casey Collins (Ph.D. Student in Modern Japanese & Korean Religion)**
Tell us a little about yourself, your background and how you became interested in Asian Studies?

I’m originally from the San Francisco Bay Area and first moved to Vancouver in 2005 when I started my BA at UBC. I found out about Asian Studies by following an interest in South Asian music, history, languages, and religions.

Why did you choose the Asian Studies program at UBC? Was there an aspect of the program or location that was particularly attractive to you compared to other programs in Canada or internationally?

When I was 16, my grandparents gave me an opportunity to come to a summer camp at UBC. We drove up together from California and they dropped me off at Totem Park to stay with other high school kids from all over the world for a few days. I remember reading Harry Potter in the car and feeling like I was going to Hogwarts. During that short stay I fell in love with the UBC campus and learned about the variety of courses available in Asian Studies. I started considering Asian Studies as a potential major when I took ‘Intro to Asian Studies’ with Dr. Harlow.

Asian Studies is an unusual field. Not every university has it or calls it the same thing, and within the department at UBC a number of academic disciplines are represented. I had a number of interests as an undergraduate student, and the Asian Studies BA program allowed me to explore many of them. Asian Studies gave me a change to study religion, history, art, language, literature, and a bunch of other topics, including a whole year of astronomy. It was exactly what I wanted most out of those four years.

Could you explain to a non-expert what you are researching and why it is important?

I study contemporary Japanese and Korean esoteric Buddhism and new religious movements. Religion, much like language, ethnicity, gender, and status, is also tied to modern identities and is a dynamic and vital...
force all around the world. Societies navigate the relationship between religion and public life in a variety of ways. We may form secular democracies, or have a state religion, for example. Many nations even reserve the right to determine which religions are “real” or “good,” and which are not. Studying this relationship yields insights into power, oppression, and the history of ideas that shape how we think about ourselves and others.

Studying religion is less about learning the names of deities or reading scriptures, and more about analyzing humanity’s many ideas about the world and how we are to live in it. As such, the field of religious studies is germane to a number of current affairs, and religion in contemporary society intersects with matters such as public policy, globalization, and even violence. A close look at nearly any page in a newspaper will almost certainly reveal some connection to religion or a discourse about religion. It is not difficult to see that this topic grabs our attention and is a part of public life, even in a secular society where we might just as soon ignore it. This in itself seems to me a very good reason to seek a greater understanding of religion.

I mainly study Japanese and Korean religions that emerged within the last one-hundred years or so, including modern Buddhist institutions. We might not often hear about most of these religions in Vancouver, although many do have a small presence here. Some of them play an important role in East Asian public life, even though many are marginalized or popularly regarded as bizarre. Sometimes these religions become mainstream traditions, and sometimes they are polemically referred to as “cults” or even terrorist organizations.

Members often retain their “modern” identities as partners, parents, or professionals, while also being part of their religious community, perhaps even taking on leadership roles not accorded to them in mainstream society. These movements are “different worlds to live in,” to quote George Santayana. They permeate and overlap with secular society in East Asia and around the world, even as they offer alternate identities, different ways to live in modernity, and membership in transnational organizations.

Within a few months of graduating from UBC I moved to Japan to work for a Buddhist-derived new religious movement called Shinnyo-en, which was founded in the 1930s, became independent from the Shingon denomination in the 1950s, and has since grown into a wealthy transnational lay-oriented Buddhist organization. I lived in Tokyo for three years while working at Shinnyo-en’s head temple. It was a valuable and challenging experience, one that forced me to seriously consider how people live as members of a new and marginalized religious tradition. While there, I saw how beliefs and practices inherited from the thousand-year-old Shingon tradition are given completely new meanings, and I began asking questions about contemporary religious institutions, hierarchy, gender, race, and the discourse of religious legitimacy.

As I became more fascinated by these questions, I decided to consider postgraduate studies. So I contacted my mentors at UBC, traveled and studied as much as I could in Japan, and then quit my job. I did not think of postgraduate studies as a way to “find myself,” but it has offered me the opportunity to consider difficult questions, test my ideas, and strive for new knowledge.

As a graduate student, what are your main activities?

For the last two years, I’ve been mainly reading, studying Korean, and taking courses. I just began comprehensive exams and am also getting some practice with teaching. I have also had the pleasure of working with my supervisor, Dr. Jessica Main, The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chair in Buddhism and Contemporary Society, to host visiting Buddhist studies scholars for speaking events and an annual conference at UBC.

What has been the most memorable or impactful moment of your graduate experience?

So far, I think it was writing my MA thesis a couple years ago. It took months of focused study, composition, and rethinking on my part, but as a process, it really involved the input of many people, including my professors, my family, and my friends. It made an impact on me because I saw that research and writing have a collaborative component that is essential and rewarding. My supervisors, Jessica Main and Edward Slingerland, and other professors were very generous and supportive in helping me navigate existing scholarship, experiment with different ideas, and then think through things on my own. My mom spent hours listening to me talk through ideas on the phone. The experience showed me how my own contributions to my field are built upon those of other people, and will, in turn, be built upon by others. The whole process was challenging, but it also helped me relax, gain some perspective on my studies, and feel connected to the scholarly community.

What are your goals (career or academic) once you’ve completed the program? And how is our program helping you achieve them?

Although I try not to worry too much about this question quite yet, I do hope to get an academic job. I find religion and contemporary society endlessly fascinating, and I want to explore that passion through research and teaching.
Asian Studies has given me many opportunities to prepare for a job in the academic community through work opportunities, participation in conferences, and professional development courses. Just last year, the department very generously helped interested graduate students attend the Association of Asian Studies conference in Seattle. On the whole, the Asian Studies Department at UBC has been tremendously supportive in helping us prepare for the future and meet our goals. I am most grateful for the professors’ generosity with their time, ideas, and support.

Can you give any advice to new students in our program or for students considering applying to it?

If at all possible, travel! No matter what you are doing during that time or how challenging it may be, none of that time will be wasted, and the personal and intellectual fruits of your adventures will continue to emerge throughout your time at UBC and beyond.

And read novels. Stories help open and refresh our minds, especially those that are completely unrelated to whatever you are studying. I find that books help me to reconsider “big picture” ideas and keep me somewhat sane. For some people live music, a trip to an art gallery, or a hike in the North Shore Mountains will do the same thing. Whatever it is for you, find it and feed it and flourish in your studies.