

ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows Program *Engaging Asia*

2019 Recipients

Coastal Carolina University

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

Hofstra University

North Central College

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

The University of Findlay

Union College

The year 2019 marks the twenty-first year of the ASIANetwork Freeman Student-Faculty Fellows Program (SFF). Funded by the Freeman Foundation, the SFF program supports undergraduate projects in East and Southeast Asia. A total of \$235,647 will be allocated to thirty-one students and ten faculty mentors in seven teams, four led by a single mentor and six led by two mentors. They will conduct projects in the People's Republic of China (four teams), Japan (two teams), and Malaysia this summer. If one counts the 2019 recipients, the SFF program has awarded a total of 234 grants to 1,137 student and faculty fellows at 112 ASIANetwork member institutions.

ASIANetwork is grateful to the Freeman Foundation for its extraordinary commitment to fostering undergraduate engagement and research projects in Asia, and providing the opportunity for U.S. college students to have a mentored, in-depth experience in Asia. We also express our appreciation to the faculty mentors, supported by their campus administrators, who lead their students to Asia each summer for these transformative experiences.

We wish to congratulate the 2019 SFF recipients on receiving the awards and thank all applicants this year and in the past for their interest and support for the SFF program.

SFF 2019 Recipients and project abstracts

Coastal Carolina University

Faculty mentors: Ronald S. Green, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Susan Bergeron, Associate Professor of Geography

Student fellows: Jacob Brine, Shonte Clement, Luke Rutherford, Silas Varick Clayton, Kasey Charette and Wyatt Beard

Experiencing Virtual Sacred Spaces: designing an immersive virtual exploration platform for the Shikoku Pilgrimage in Japan

The proposed *Virtual Shikoku Pilgrimage* project is focused on the design and development of a prototype immersive virtual landscape exploration platform that seeks to digitally recreate the landscapes and experiences of the Buddhist pilgrimage in Shikoku, Japan. This project is a unique digital heritage project that fits within an important current issue globally, and in Asia: the documentation, preservation, and presentation of cultural heritage through digital technologies. The Shikoku Pilgrimage, its temples and other associated sacred and cultural features are recognized as an important part of the heritage of Buddhism and of Japan. Pilgrims from many parts of the world travel to Shikoku to participate in the pilgrimage, and discussions related to the nomination of the pilgrimage for UNESCO World Heritage status have been underway for some time.

The main focus of the *Virtual Shikoku Pilgrimage* project will be the design and development of an immersive virtual landscape exploration platform that will use state-of-the-art 3D digital technologies to recreate the cultural and natural landscapes of the temples and surroundings that make up the Buddhist Shikoku Pilgrimage on the island of Shikoku, Japan. Embedded within this virtual platform will be digital stories and media elements that will allow users who explore the platform to delve into the experience of the Shikoku Pilgrimage, through images and words of those who take part in the pilgrimage, the local residents who live and work within the landscape of the temples and pilgrimage routes, and the scholars who have studied the pilgrimage and its importance.

Project team members will travel to Japan in May 2019 to research aspects of the pilgrimage through visits to archives, places related to the life of Kūkai, and experience a portion of the Shikoku pilgrimage itself. Faculty mentors and students will meet with scholars of the pilgrimage while in Japan, and interview and share experiences with other pilgrims, local residents and the priests and temple workers. Throughout their time in Japan, students will work closely with faculty mentors as they learn field research skills, interact formally and informally with local Shikoku residents, pilgrims, and Asian scholars, and contribute to design discussions and data collection along portions of the pilgrimage.

The students' individual research projects will be an integral part of the *Virtual Shikoku Pilgrimage* project, and will focus on content development for the virtual platform and development of design elements and technical functionality based on their experiences in the real landscapes of Shikoku. Upon completion of the research trip to Japan, student team members will process and analyze data and media collected for their respective research projects during Summer 2019, and the development of the *Virtual Shikoku Pilgrimage* prototype will begin in Fall 2019. This continued interdisciplinary collaboration with faculty members as we develop the

virtual platform prototype and document and synthesize our work through our final reports will give students a unique opportunity to play an active role throughout the project design and development cycle.

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University

Faculty mentor: Sophia Geng, Associate Professor of China Studies

Student fellows: Ian Bush, Runmin Geng, Cameron Odden, Meghan Reeves

Cultural Identity and Sustainable Future: A Case Study of Two Heritage Towns in China

Our project aims to investigate the role urbanization plays in shaping the cultural identity of Chinese towns and cities rich in cultural heritage. Additionally, we will analyze the local people's resistance to the official cultural representation designed by the national and local authorities as well as dissect the local people's ingenuity in searching for a shared future centered on community and sustainability. Hu Ji Town of North China and Zou Ma Town of Southwest China are our chosen sites of case study, both recognized as "China's Town of Opera and Arts" and "National Intangible Cultural Heritage Site." The major distinction between these two sites is that Hu Ji has gone through urbanization with the villagers relocated to apartment buildings while Zou Ma's town and villages have remained largely intact.

To achieve our research objectives, our inquiry will focus on three aspects. First, we intend to identify the key components that constitute the collective cultural identity of the community derived from a shared past. We will pay close attention to the place and role of cultural heritage in the formation of the community's cultural identity. More importantly, we will scrutinize the contestation between the official cultural representation designed and propagated by the authorities and the communities collectively defined cultural identity. Second, we will investigate how land expropriation and relocation factor in the asymmetry between urbanization and the community's intactness, particularly whether relocation, a culminating step in the urbanization process, induces increasing spatial, social, and cultural fragmentations of a community. Last, we will investigate rivalry, resistance, creativity, and agency demonstrated by the town people in their search for a shared future centered on community and sustainability.

Our project will shed light on the complexities of the collectively defined cultural identity of towns and cities endowed with rich heritage. It emphasizes the ingenuity of the communities in imagining a sustainable future derived from a shared past, where cultural heritage constitutes an essential part. No doubt the communities' search for a collective identity is a process riddled with rivalry, contestations, conflicts, and resistance. Nevertheless, our research group is optimistic because of our belief in the strength of cultural heritage—as it helps us learn who we are and how to make meaning of the world around us. Currently, there are 964 towns and cities recognized as "China's Town of Folklore." It is reasonable to claim that our research project will be instrumental to thousands of heritage towns and cities, within and beyond China, in their efforts to search for a collective identity against the backdrop of urbanization, to improve safeguarding and preservation practices, and to carry out community-centered sustainable planning.

We will work closely with a variety of individuals and organizations who are stakeholders in the sustainable development of these communities. More importantly, we will live and converse with

the town people, gaining a real-world understanding of the struggles and aspirations of Chinese communities by listening and engagement. Our Chinese competency will benefit from these engagements because all interviews will be conducted in Mandarin. We will also practice and strengthen skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, academic presentation and writing, analytic reasoning, and intercultural communication. Working closely in a cross-cultural setting will develop our teamwork and adaptation skills, which are vital for the success of our future careers. All student fellows have China in our future career plans. Our active participation in data collection and analysis, presentation via academic platforms, and dissemination of research findings will contribute to our professional development. This research experience will undoubtedly deepen our understanding of China's urbanization and encourage us to contemplate the significance of safeguarding cultural heritage amidst rapid technological and social changes.

Hofstra University

Faculty mentor: Timothy P. Daniels, Professor of Anthropology

Student fellows: Tiyanna Forrest, Katherine Dickerson, Adeline Davis, Fatima Sunday

***Wayang Kulit* in Northern Kedah: Social History and Deliberating Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Over the last few decades, there has been a growing global interest in recognizing and preserving intangible cultural heritage. This project will explore this global issue in Malaysia, where globalization, urbanization, socio-economic change, and politico-religious perspectives have often affected the transmission and continued practice of traditional arts. The Kelantan state government under the leadership of the Islamic Party of Malaysia (*Parti Islam Se-Malaysia*, PAS) banned *mak yong*, a Malay dance drama/theatrical exorcism, along with *wayang kulit* and some other traditional art forms in 1991 claiming that they violated proper Islamic belief and practice. Over a decade later, in 2005, *mak yong* became the only Malaysian traditional art form recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which later inscribed it as a Masterpiece of Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2008. *Wayang kulit* (shadow puppet theater), while not banned in the state of Kedah has virtually disappeared from the northern villages where they used to be a vibrant part of the cultural landscape in the 1960s and 1970s.

This project will be a qualitative, dialogical, and collaborative exploration of the social history of shadow puppetry in the state of Kedah as well as its place in contemporary cultural geographies. Our research problem addresses why the performance of shadow puppet theater has declined in Kedah over the last four decades. The two main questions we will seek to answer are: what is the social history of this art form and what are people's ideas about extinction or continuation of this form of intangible cultural heritage?

This research team will strive to understand what has happened to performers and performances of *wayang kulit* puppet theater in these regions of northern Kedah where they were once a prominent part of the social landscape. Interacting and collaborating with locals, we will aim to understand the ideas of a wide range of stakeholders and interest groups about the preservation or extinction of this performing art form in Kedah. The team members will interview the family members of the last known puppeteer in the state, residents of northwest and northeast villages,

the teachers of Islamic schools, representatives of the Muslim political parties in the state (UMNO and PAS), museum curators in the state capital, Alor Setar, government officials in arts agencies, and cultural activists in a national arts organization.

Under strong faculty mentorship, the team members will hone their skills at conducting ethnographic interviews and eliciting oral histories from local people. We will strive to develop spaces for interaction and dialogue with local people. In the field and after returning, team members will develop their ability to interpret their observations, recorded discourses, and other data collected. Team members will also work on the second phase of developing an interactive database in which they will enter audio and visual documentation and oral histories. These experiences and skills will prepare them for careers in social sciences, education, international relations, public policy, and art history.

North Central College

Faculty mentors: Jinai Sun, Assistant Professor of Chinese and Stuart Patterson, Visiting Associate Professor and Chair of the Shimer Great Books School

Student fellows: Joy Herzog, Sophie Juhlin, Andrea Du, Cameron Teel, Madeline Derango, and Juliet Mathey

Understanding China through the Classic Novel *Hóng lóu mèng*

As China continues to develop as a global power, its leaders are turning increasingly to the past as a means for promoting a unified national identity as well as for improving relationships with other powers, including the U.S. Our project aims to understand such uses of the past by engaging with the contemporary reception of one of China's four canonical "great novels": *Hóng lóu mèng*, or *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Since its publication in the late 18th century, this work has become one of the most important touchstones for Chinese self-understanding, individually and collectively. It is often referred to as an "encyclopedia of Chinese life," both for its expansive scope and the intimate realism of its depictions of individual and collective identities.

Before traveling to China in July, Student Fellows will begin their encounter with *Hóng lóu mèng* and its contemporary readers through collaborative study online with university students in Beijing. These Chinese peers will join Student Fellows in annotating the novel and pursuing research into specific themes related to shared academic and professional interests. Their three-week stay in China will begin with seminars on the novel with these same Chinese university peers and visits to sites promoting the study and celebration of *Hóng lóu mèng*. Student Fellows will also engage with other readers, including high school and elementary school groups, and with scholars of the novel and its history. Finally, each Student Fellow will also engage in individual conversations with professionals in fields related to their career interests and who can help illuminate the contemporary relevance of *Hóng lóu mèng* to specific areas of Chinese life and work.

Student Fellows will produce an ongoing multi-media blog in preparation for three distinct end-products: digital profiles highlighting each Fellows' work on the team; e-portfolios showcasing individual research projects; and audio and visual materials designed to support the ongoing teaching of *Hóng lóu mèng* in high school and college classrooms. Their collaborations with

Chinese peers will endure on a dedicated website to be maintained by the Mentors. One major outcome of the project will thus be a detailed examination of how classical literature and traditional culture generally is conceived and presented in China and the U.S., laying the groundwork for more refined, mutual understanding and a truly global awareness of the importance of works of the stature of Hóng lóu mèng.

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

Faculty mentors: Jialing Wang and Stentor Danielson, Associate Professors of Geography, Geology, and the Environment

Student fellows: Phil Abegg, Anna Burtch, Haley Hartenstine, Corinne Rockefeller, Corrina Yobp

Forest Fire Management in Rural Yunnan, China

Forest fire management is a complex social, economic, and ecological challenge worldwide. China is not a forest-rich country. Although the total forest area in China ranks the fifth in the world, the forest area per capita is only about one-fourth of the world average. Chinese government at all administrative levels has treated forest fire as a serious threat to forest resources. Forest fire prevention and control have been key factors in forest resource protection in China. Yunnan, located in southwestern China, has the second largest forest area and is one of the five provinces in China that have the highest number and largest sizes of forest fires.

This SFF project will use a small Naxi ethnic town of Yunnan as the case study area to explore the issues of forest fire management in the rural areas of China with a diverse natural and human environment and an underdeveloped economy. Specifically, the research aims to map the forest risk zones in this town, to find out the public perception of forest fires and the role of local community in forest fire management, and to explore the approaches to sustainable forest management in this region. Our research team will collaborate closely with professors and students at Yunnan University in China. Students from both institutions will conduct joint fieldwork, including collecting sample points in different land use/cover types, interviewing local residents, and visiting local governmental agencies and relative organizations. Besides the formal interviews, our students will have many opportunities to informally interact with local people and experience local culture through intentionally designed activities such as tasting food from different ethnic groups, attending local performances, and visiting local flower and fish markets.

Throughout this project, students will practice a broad range of academic and professional skills. They will learn to conduct literature review and plan a research project, to collect and analyze spatial data and create final maps using geospatial technologies, to design and conduct interviews with Q-method, and to analyze and chart the interview results using qualitative and quantitative techniques. This project will allow students to practice their written and oral communication skills in different ways, for example, documenting fieldwork, maintaining daily trip blogs, interviewing local people, developing project reports and paper manuscripts, and giving oral presentations at departmental seminar series, university undergraduate student research symposium, and national conferences.

By participating in this project, students will gain hands-on experiences in using geospatial technologies and interview methods to effectively study forest management issues, which will help prepare students for their future job applications. Students who are interested in pursuing graduate education in the future will be encouraged and guided to develop their capstone experiences based on this research project. This cross-cultural immersion experience will also help students develop a global mindset and skills necessary in the globalized world.

The University of Findlay

Faculty mentor: Hiroaki Kawamura, Associate Professor of Japanese

Student fellows: Valerie Jacksack, Garrett Brown, Amy Evaniuk

Rural Communities in Japan: Challenges, Revitalization Strategies, and Future

Our team will research on issues facing rural communities and their revitalization strategies in Japan. All three students are majoring in Japanese. They also study computer science, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), and creative writing. The faculty mentor is a cultural anthropologist teaching Japanese language and culture.

The issue of rural community revitalization is one of the pressing issues in contemporary Japan. An alarming number of communities have become “marginal communities [限界集落, *genkai shuraku*])” where more than half of the residents are over the age of 65. According to the Japanese government (2015), about 190 communities disappeared between 2010 and 2015 and more than 14,000 communities are “marginal communities.” These communities find it difficult to carry out cultural activities as well as economic activities. This arises from a combination of urbanization, aging and declining birthrate. The Japanese government has been trying to address this issue, and the current Abe administration makes it one of their top policy priorities. Review of the previous studies suggest three possible strategies to address this issue: tourism, immigrant workers and international marriage. The current project will examine how these strategies are working in rural Japan and also aim to identify other strategies adopted by rural communities.

Most data collection will take place in two prefectures, Fukui and Hokkaido. These prefectures were chosen for their rural characteristics and institutional affiliation. In Fukui, our team will conduct a short joint fieldwork with students from University of Fukui. The team will also collect information on tourism, immigrant workers and international marriage with support from Fukui International Association and Fukui Prefectural University. In Hokkaido, we will work with Rakuno Gakuen University that has a wide network among dairy farmers and farming communities for rural community visits and interviews. The final phase of our fieldwork will be spent in Saitama, a suburb of Tokyo, in order to learn urbanites’ perception of rural community issues.

Japanese language skills development will be one of the main goals of the project. Language training will take place during the preparation phase (e.g., interview practice, literature review, document preparation), during the fieldwork in Japan, and after the fieldwork (e.g., transcription of interviews). The team will produce several artifacts that are tied to the students’ future career. The students will develop a digital portfolio, write and submit a short story to a student literary

magazine, develop a TESOL lesson plan about rural community issues, and develop a data storage system.

The students will also engage in various outreach activities on and off campus. In fall 2019 and spring 2020, the students will do a presentation in high school and on campus (e.g., campus-wide symposium). They will also share their experiences through university publications. We hope that this project will prepare the students for their future career as well as promote Japan and Asian studies on campus and in the community.

Union College

Faculty mentor: Megan M. Ferry, Professor of Chinese and Chair of Modern Languages and Literatures Department

Student fellows: Trevor Atkins, Jeremy Rausch, Meghan Reilly

Between State and Populace, Chasing the China Dream

The Project Team considers the important role media plays as a communicative apparatus between the state and its people, and we want to measure the effectiveness of the China Dream message, the topics it covers and the ones it ignores. Is the China Dream a commercialized nationalism, as one Chinese scholar would put it; a nation-branding initiative driven by profit-driven industries? The students will meet with academic scholars in Shanghai for a more nuanced analysis. The Team wants to know what Chinese individuals make of the Dream, and if it is in accordance with their local situation and individual goals for their future. In addition to analyzing a variety of media, the Project Team will engage with citizens across a broad spectrum of class and educational differences to learn their understanding of the China Dream's message and to what extent it measures with their individual aspirations. This project joins in the discussion on the China Dream and popular interpretations of it with Chinese and Western scholars and policy institutes.

The project focus arose from discussion with the Project Team members about current global issues of public opinion and popular nationalism. A series of global events in the last few years indicate a remarkable stake in a nation's identity and political authority. From Brexit to Catalan, Blue States vs. Red States, anti-immigrant marches and laws in the European Union and mass deportations of undocumented workers in the US, these fissures represent a rift in the nation-state narrative. Project Team students are witnessing nations' cultural and social conflicts on a global scale and cannot help but ask whether or not a government's actions are actually tearing local communities apart and undermining citizens' welfare. The internal conflicts within the nation-state affect both domestic and international cooperation and advancement.

Student Team members are bringing their own personal and professional interests in data analysis, US foreign policy, and education to meet with and listen to a variety of perspectives on the China Dream. Student Team members identified personal interest in sticking to long-term objectives despite uncertain, short-term obstacles, curiosity about multiple perspectives to view an issue, and the role of knowledge in being able to negotiate the complicated mediasphere.

The Project addresses skill and professional development in key moments of the project. Pre-planning includes a focus on procedural thinking, project planning and implementation, financial budget and travel planning, data collection and analysis, media literacy, as well as teamwork. The in-country time will develop verbal and written communication, teamwork in diverse settings, cross-cultural communication, flexibility, problem solving, leadership, and risk management. The post-trip portion will emphasize critical thinking, analysis, collaboration across the disciplines, and ways to outreach to a variety of audiences, including college students, Asianists, the public, and high school students. The entire project will deepen students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills through self-reflection, constant human interaction, and personal and professional goal setting. Moreover, the project will strengthen their intercultural competency. These critical skills will prepare them for their future career and professions.