The Covid Crisis Is also an Opportunity for Universities

School of Modern Languages and Cultures; by Dr. Roland VOGT

Dear students, dear colleagues-

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed university life much more profoundly than we could have ever anticipated. Many of the changes are temporary and will be rolled back once the pandemic-related restrictions are lifted, vaccines are rolled out, and normal travel resumes. But some changes will stick and alter the way we teach, learn, and research.

The changes affecting our world do not halt at the campus gates. Its consequences will be felt in the economy and the job market, in the way we produce and consume, and in the way we socialise. It is only normal that universities will be affected too. Some changes - like online classes, the proliferation of webinars, virtual conferences and even virtual field trips - are rapidly becoming a new normal. Others, like working and studying from home, will probably ebb away again.

(cont’d)
The response of our teaching staff and students in the SMLC to these new challenges has been resoundingly positive. Our learning community is showing a great capacity to adapt, to experiment and to be resilient and resourceful in testing times.

The SMLC stands at a crossroad. Knowledge of foreign languages and other cultures is central to prepare new generations for a tightly integrated and interdependent but also highly competitive world. Through our area studies, language, and global creative industry programmes, we address the demand of our students to learn more about other cultures with their distinct languages, literatures, histories, philosophical traditions, religions, social practices, and institutions. Yet the form of how we impart this knowledge may need to adapt and change much further than we currently envision.

The SMLC is well-positioned to succeed with the challenges that lie ahead. We are used to interdisciplinary research and to working across different countries and cross-cultural settings. But we must also ensure that our students benefit from an attractive, rich, inclusive, and intellectually stimulating curriculum that enables them to pursue their curiosity and talents, as well as to address the demands of an ever more demanding job market.

Changes bring disruptions but also new opportunities. It is incumbent on us to make the best use of these opportunities. The challenge for universities around the world is to simultaneously equip students for the future but also to serve as a ‘brains trust’ of ideas, knowledge, compassion, and critical reflection that are central to the human condition. Universities need to simultaneously embrace change and caution against it. We must not close ourselves off to new realities but also not jump on the bandwagon of every latest trend. Exercising careful judgement, weighing options, analysing situations, learning to distinguish fact from fiction is central to our endeavour - and doing this is not getting any easier.

Moments of crisis and turmoil are also moments of new beginnings. Maybe now the time is ripe to take stock of what we do, what we have achieved, and where we are lacking and should do more. The point is not to be driven by the flow of change but to steer it to a direction that is beneficial to us - as individuals and as members of a great university in one of the world’s leading financial centres.
The American Studies programme widens its current strengths with the addition of a Latin American Studies academic track in 2019. So far, Latin American Studies at HKU has had a local presence through innovative courses delving into culture, history, literature and film. Further afield, we have participated in international symposia, knowledge exchange initiatives and through the publication of articles at prestigious academic journals.

Two of the events developed during the 2020/21 academic year should be highlighted. The first one was the open talk on "Cultural Sino-Latin American Relations: Between Poetry and Diplomacy" where Dr Bárbara FERNÁNDEZ MELLEDA introduced the Chilean-Chinese diplomatic relationship, which started with a sincere friendship between two poets, Chilean Nobel Prize winner Pablo NERUDA (1904-1973) and the renowned Chinese poet Ai Qing (1910-1996). This friendship is the foundation of Dr FERNÁNDEZ MELLEDA’s new research project, where she looks to demonstrate the relevance of cultural/literary exchange laying at the core of strong relationships between nations that go beyond economic interests.

On the other hand, Chilean society experienced its own revolt starting in October 2019, which culminated in the decision to call for a referendum towards the writing of a new Constitution, which approved this by 78%. This process will allow Chilean society to build their own future and to overcome the legacy of the Pinochet regime (1973-1990). In order to understand what happened and what's to come, the Latin American Studies track organized a seminar entitled "The Chilean Plebiscite Digested" which counted with the presence of Dr FERNÁNDEZ MELLEDA and Dr Roland VOGT as hosts. They were joined by prestigious scholars, Dr Walescka PINO-OJEDA, Associate Professor of Latin American Studies at The University of Auckland and Dr Pablo GREZ HIDALGO, Lawyer and Research Associate at The University of Birmingham.

On a Related Topic

The Everyday in Allende’s Chile:
Peter Lilienthal’s La Victoria & Raúl Ruíz’s Palomita Blanca

Spanish Programme, 5 Oct 2020 (Mon)

By Dr. Claudia SANDBERG

Theatre of War: Virtual Book Launch
by Charco Press

American Studies Programme, 8 Dec 2020 (Tue)

Author Andrea JEFTANOVIC and translator Frances RIDDLE in conversation with Dr. Bárbara FERNÁNDEZ MELLEDA
A Linguistics-based Approach to the Acquisition of Japanese Verb Categories

Japanese Studies, 17 Oct 2020 (Sat)

This is the first online public lecture of Japanese Department regarding Japanese linguistics in 2020. There were more than 70 participants, including Japanese language students and teachers who attended the lecture. We had a fruitful discussion on how to use transitive-intransitive verb and volitive-involitive verb correctly in elementary level. Verbs are misused easily by Chinese native learners because of crosslinguistic influence (CLI). Therefore, the acquisition of transitive-intransitive verb and volitive-involitive verb is difficult to handle in Japanese language education in Hong Kong. This lecture was a good chance for teachers with different background to develop better teaching methods to remedy this issue. Also, we have received many meaningful feedbacks by the students saying that they overwhelmingly appreciated the opportunity to learn about a specific topic of Japanese because it helps them to understand the concept at a deeper level. The participants also expressed an interest in further public lecture with other Japanese linguistics topics. We are going to hold other public lectures this year and are ready to discuss with students and teachers all over the world.

Unsettling the City: Queer Assemblages in Authoritarian-Era Seoul

Korean Studies, 24 Nov 2020 (Tue)

In this paper, "Unsettling the City: Queer Assemblages in Authoritarian-Era Seoul 도시공간의 재해석: 독재시대 서울의 퀴어아상블라주", Dr. Todd A. Henry (Department of History, University of California, San Diego) traces the development of Seoul’s queer spaces under capitalist authoritarianism to expand our understanding of this period of South Korean history as well as the Western-centric concepts used to study minority populations.

(Un)thinking Chinese Influence and Urbanity in Southern Africa
15 Sep 2020 (Tue)
By Dr. Romain DITTGEN
African Centre for Migration and Society,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (South Africa)

The Possibilities of Archival Thinking
16 Sep 2020 (Wed)
By Dr. Tinashe MUSHAKAVANHU
Wits Institute for Social & Economic Research (WiSER)
University of the Witwatersrand
South Africa

Jihad from Below: a Social History of Muslim Expansion in West Africa (15th-19th centuries)
16 Sep 2020 (Wed)
By Dr. Thiago H. MOTA
Professor of African History, Federal University of Viçosa - Brazil

Africa in Broader Perspective: Interdisciplinary and Interregional Enquiries
18 Sep 2020 (Fri)
By Dr. Samson BEZABEH
Makerere University

Moi, Mau Mau, and the Problem of Ethnological Reason
23 Sep 2020 (Wed)
By Dr. Alirio KARINA
History of Consciousness Chair’s Fellow, University of California, Santa Cruz
In the Media

China Studies

Dr. Loretta KIM

Don’t Try to Tame Me: Mongols in China Protest Plan to Teach in Chinese

Inkstone News, South China Morning Post
31 Aug 2020

Prof. Stephen CHU

相愛也未算萬能
RTHK, 歷史係咁話 2020
15 Sep 2020

Dr. John D. O. WONG

挺粵落英不普通 (Languages in Hong Kong)
RTHK, 歷史係咁話 2019
27 Aug 2019

Dr. Mercedes VÁZQUEZ VÁZQUEZ

Measures to prevent the spread of Covid in Hong Kong

Cosmopolitik of Radio Samán, Colombia
Oct 2020

El Futuro Del Español 2020

Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, Tinta China
Dec 2020

European Studies

Dr. Stefan AUER

Russian interference in US election and Belarus

RTHK, The Pulse
9 Oct 2020

Spanish

Dr. Mercedes VÁZQUEZ VÁZQUEZ

Measures to prevent the spread of Covid in Hong Kong

Cosmopolitik of Radio Samán, Colombia
Oct 2020

El Futuro Del Español 2020

Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, Tinta China
Dec 2020

何處香港 (Situating Hong Kong)

RTHK, 學人串社科 2020
23 Dec 2020
Publications

AUER, Stefan (with CHAN, Ching Yeung Kenneth)
“Power, Violence and the Politics of Hope: Global 1989 from Czechoslovakia to Hong Kong.”

CHU, Stephen Yiu Wai
“Hong Kong (in China) studies: Hong Kong popular culture as example.”

CHU, Stephen Yiu Wai
“Introduction: Mediating borders: New boundaries for Hong Kong studies.”

CHU, Stephen Yiu Wai (with WONG, Chi Wah, NG, Yuet Wah and LO, Wai Han)
香港文學大系一九五○—一九六九: 歌詞卷

FERNÁNDEZ MELLEDA, Barbara
“In Mistral's footsteps: “The Other” (1954) as the substrate poem for contemporary Chilean women poets.”
Literature Compass, vol.17, no.11, 2020, 1-16.

GRUENEWALD, Tim (with WITTEBORN, Saskia)
“Wang was missing: Rediscovering Wayne Wang's independence.”

GRUENEWALD, Tim (with WITTEBORN, Saskia)
“Feeling good: Humanitarian virtual reality film, emotional style and global citizenship.”
IBANEZ GARCIA, Estela (with KNOTHE, Florian) (Eds.)
*Colours of Congo: Patterns, Symbols and Narratives in 20th Century Congolese Paintings*
Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2021.

KIM, Su Yun
*Imperial Romance: Fictions of Colonial Intimacy in Korea, 1905–1945*

VISION, Su Yun

TESFAYE, Facil (with CHOW, Shun Man Emily)
“(Re)mediating ‘Blackness’ in Hong Kong Chinese Medium Newspapers: Representations of African Cultures in Relation to Hong Kong.”
*Asian Ethnicity*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2020, 384-406.

WONG, Dixon Heung Wah (with YAU, Hoi Yan)
*Censorship in Japan*

WONG, Max Wai Lun
“誰是香港急需狀態的法官？ — 历史运用紧急规制的法律转变”
M. Ng and J. Wong (Eds.), *香港動盪: 法與治的歷史與文化解讀*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2020, 65-76.

WONG, Max Wai Lun
“Flexible Corporate Nationality: Transforming Cathay Pacific for the Shifting Geopolitics of Hong Kong in the Closing Decades of British Colonial Rule.”
*Enterprise and Society*, 2020, 1-33.
SMLC Language Week: South East Asian Festival and Global Language Carnival

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, 23-28 Nov 2020

23 Nov 2020 (Mon) - Opening Ceremony

24 Nov 2020 (Tue) - Malaysian Cultural Day
Movie: Ola Bola / DIY Wau & Batik Set Workshop / Singing Performance

25 Nov 2020 (Wed) - Indonesian Cultural Day
Movie: Ada Apa Dengan Cinta / Drums Workshop / Dancing Performance

26 Nov 2020 (Thu) - Arabic Cultural Day
Movie: X-Large / Belly Dance Workshop / Belly Dance Performance

26 Nov 2020 (Thu) - Russian Cultural Day
Movie: Piter FM/ Motanka Doll Workshop / Gingerbread Printing Workshop / Dancing Performance

27 Nov 2020 (Fri) - Thai Cultural Day
Loy Krathong Workshop / Dancing Performance

28 Nov 2020 (Sat) - Global Language Carnival
German Speaking Contest for Students

German Programme, 21 Nov 2020 (Sat)

On November 21, 2020, SMLC hosted the final round of this year’s German Speaking Contest for Students “Zukunft ohne Plastik? – A Future without plastics?”. The event was jointly organized by the Goethe Institute Hong Kong and Tonja Fung of the German Programme and was supported by the Consulate General of Germany, the Consulate General of Switzerland, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and the ALBA Group, with great technical support by William and Kin. Dr. Roland Vogt kindly gave a welcoming speech.

Students from Baptist University, the Chinese University, and the University of Hong Kong gave well-researched presentations in German in front of a jury and teachers. In the end, the big prize for best performance in the B level deservedly went to SMLC’s own Luo Ruijie, Annabelle! Annabelle can now look forward to a four-week summer language course at a German university of her choice including flights and accommodation.

Latin American Conference on Spanish for Specific Purposes

Spanish Programme, 11 Dec 2020 (Fri)

Dr. Vázquez Vázquez was invited as the Keynote Speaker of the Latin American Conference on Spanish for Specific Purposes co-hosted by Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile) and Universidade Federal da Paraíba (Brazil) in December 2020. The keynote address presented a unique case study consisting in the application of a holistic approach to intercultural competence in a course of Spanish for Professional Purposes taught in the Spanish Programme of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at HKU. The course showcased in the presentation involved the collaboration of university students from Colombia and Hong Kong in the design of an Asian-Latin American business project. More than 3800 participants from all over the world registered for the event. The feedback received from the conference participants suggests that the presentation was well received and is likely to produce an impact in the teaching and learning of foreign languages for specific purposes.
De la Terre à la Lune
Novembre Numérique - Littérature
Au Vol

French Programme

Littérature au Vol is an exciting project in which HKU French students have the opportunity to discuss, contextualize and interpret collectively a text by a major French author.

This year, to match the theme of the 2020 edition of Novembre Numérique, “Univers/e”, a group of students had the opportunity to work on selected passages from De la Terre à la Lune, an 1865 novel by Jules Verne which inspired many subsequent literary, cinematographic and musical works.

Based on their reading and interpretation, participants adapted the text in the form of a short video using their own digital devices and collected materials. As a group, they were in charge of reading/performing the text, recording the video segments, editing and mixing the video. The video they created was presented as part of the 2020, Hong Kong edition of Novembre Numérique; a worldwide festival celebrating digital cultures.


French Expertise on Video Games - Digital November

Global Creative Industries, 16 Nov 2020 (Mon)

The Global Creative Industries Programme and the Consulate General of France in Hong Kong & Macau co-organized the workshop titled ‘French Expertise on Video Games – Digital November’ to introduce the French video game industry to students in GCIN2012. In the Zoom session, three prominent figures in the industry, Eric Chahi (Pixel Reef), Jehanne Rousseau (Spiders) and Frédéric Lecompte (Backlight), shared their career paths, representative projects and views about the future of video games. Students were amazed by the creativity and technology showcased in the presentations. In the Q&A session, the speakers also reminded students the importance of pursuing their passion.
HKU Virtual Information Day 2020

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, 31 Oct 2020 (Sat)

Programmes of SMLC took part in the “HKU Virtual Information Day for Undergraduate Admissions 2020” organized by the Admissions and Academic Liaison Section. This year’s Information Day was conducted online. Our teachers adopted various interactive approaches, for example, programme talks, Q&A sessions, games, and workshops, to provide important information about the programmes. The activities have successfully attracted more than 100 participants. Besides, the Live Chat function on vFairs, an online platform, enabled the participants to chat with Programme representatives and to obtain relevant information of the Programmes offered by our School.

Faces and Places from The Arab World Photo Exhibition

Arabic Programme, 14 Sep - 14 Oct 2020

The Arab World is the region that stretches from the Arabian Sea in the East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the North to the Indian Ocean in the Southeast. It consists of 22 Arab countries that form the Arab League.

The Arab World is rich in history and culture, and in every Arab country within the Arab World, you can easily see the harmony between the old traditions and the modern lifestyle.

This exhibition is a very short journey to some places in the Arab World, memories that are mainly shared by students of the University of Hong Kong.
Student Achievements

In the academic year of 2019-2020, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, we gave out 16 separate prizes in 7 disciplines to 45 students who have distinguished themselves in their studies. The donations provided our students with opportunities to immerse themselves in the language and culture they are studying. Since there was no SMLC Award Ceremony due to COVID-19 pandemic, we would like to list the prizes and the recipients here.

African Studies
Ms. Cecilia Vong Prizes in African Studies
Mr. Cheung Lok Yin

American Studies
The Consular Book Award in American Studies
Mr. Fong Chun San
Miss Mak Charmaine
Miss Mak Yan Kiu Joyce
Miss Ngai Hiu Lam
Mr. Shiu Man Fung
Miss Tse Hei Lam Claudia
Miss Wong Yu Ching
Mr. Yip Lang Sen Samuel

The Academic Excellence Award of the American Consulate
Miss Kwok Ka Ling
Miss Xiao Wenquan

French
Prize of the Consulate General of France
Miss Leung Wai Ki

German
German Consulate General Book Prize
Miss Kwok Ka Ling
Miss Lin Xueping

Hong Kong Studies
Yuet Hing and Ho Sin Ming Prize in Hong Kong Studies
Mr. Choi Tsz Kei
Miss Pang Ka Ching

Japanese Studies
Miss Chan Carmen
Miss Lau Wing Kiu

AEON Scholarship
Miss Cheng Wai Lam
Miss Ho Tsz Ching
Miss Law Hoi Ning
Miss Tsui Tsz Ki
Miss Wong Hing Yan
Mr. Wong Ho Chau
Mr. Yip Kin Chung
Miss Zhang Yuqi

Japan ICU Foundation Scholarship
Miss Chu Pui Sze

JASSO Scholarship
Miss Kam Lok Yin Charlotte
Miss Ma Yan Loi Jacqueline

Murakami Fuminobu Memorial Prize in Japanese Studies
Miss Wong Hui Yan

Resona Bank Scholarship for Japanese Studies
Mr. Chan Tsz Ho
Mr. Poon Tsun Wing

Shun Hing Exchange Scholarships
Mr. Tang Chun Wa

Soka Makiguchi Foundation
Mr. Chu Chun Ming
Miss Tse Wan Ying

Special Honours in Japanese Language 2019
Miss Chan Yuen Ying
Miss Seto Yuen Ying
Miss Wong Sze Ning
Miss Wong Yuk Yin Evelyn
Miss Yu Yan Yiu

Swedish
The Consulate General of Sweden Prize
Mr. Choi Chong Hing
Miss Chow Ho Shuen Amber
Mr. Pang Kwok Hang
Miss Sun Man Yan
Miss Tang Tsz Ching
Staff News

In loving memory of Marie Li Ying (August 14, 1958 - October 31, 2020)

French Programme

It is with great sadness that we learned the passing of our colleague and friend, Marie Li Ying, on October 31, 2020.

Born in Beijing in 1958, Marie Li completed her training in French at Beijing Normal School of Foreign languages (北京外国语师范学院) and taught French there for a period of two years before moving to Hong Kong. She went on to get her Master in French and Linguistics from Middlebury College while living in Paris for a year.

Marie joined the University of Hong Kong in 1994 where she taught French for the past 25 years. Beside teaching French language courses, Marie designed Chinese/French translation courses and was a regular editor of material for language learning and translation. She was also the author and co-author of several books on the subject.

Those who knew Marie will remember her for her genuinely caring nature, fun and outgoing demeanour, and for her love of life. Our deepest sympathy extends to her son Andrew.

New Staff

Dr. Samson BEZABEH
Assistant Professor
(African Studies)

Ms. Alvis SIO
Executive Assistant
(General Office)

Departing Staff

Dr. Estela IBANEZ-GARCIA
Assistant Professor
(African Studies)

Mr. Ludovic KEI
Clerk II

Staff taking up new positions

Dr. Loretta KIM
Associate Professor
(China Studies)

Dr. Su Yun KIM
Associate Professor
(Korean Studies)

Dr. Yoshiko NAKANO
Programme Director
(Japanese Studies)

Dr. Daniel POCH
Associate Professor
(Japanese Studies)

Dr. Roland VOGT
School Head

CONTACT

For more details on all of the above events, please visit https://smlc.hku.hk/news/

If there is any information you would like to see featured in future issues of the e-newsletter or if you have any comments or suggestions related to the current issue, please don’t hesitate to contact the Outreach and Development committee

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