

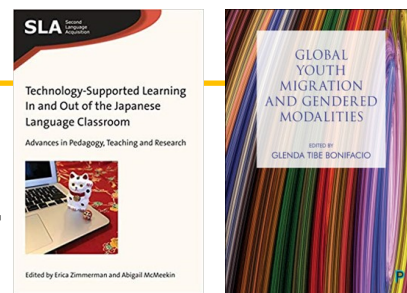
# ASIAN STUDIES U OF L NEWSLETTER

FALL 2019 - 1ST ED.



**Asian Studies** is an interdisciplinary program at the University of Lethbridge which seeks to understand the human experience in Asia and the Asian diaspora. We create opportunities for students to learn about Asia through courses, presentations, exchange programs, and faculty research. Many thanks to our colleagues, staff, students, the Arts & Science Deans, and the International and President's Offices for your support!

Gideon Fujiwara, Coordinator, Assoc. Prof., History



## Michael Chan Prize in Asian Studies,

established by Prof. Bonnie Lee (Health Sciences), awards \$1,000 to a student each year, in the memory of Michael Wing-Cheung Chan, a Chinese Canadian scientist and humanitarian. The 2019 winner is Jessica Knoop-Lentz (Religious Studies major, Asian Studies minor), for her outstanding essay, "Shades of Green: A Consideration of the Multiple Perspectives on Buddhist Ecology," written for RELS 4110 – Buddhism & Science. Thank you to adjudicators, Prof. Trevor Harrison and Prof. Richard Mueller. Congratulations, Jes!! She writes: "I explore questions of how Buddhists are choosing to engage in environmental behaviours and how they are justifying these acts, revealing that there are numerous reasons – religious and otherwise – for Buddhist engagement in conservation practices."

**Next submissions due Aug 20, 2020.**

### Past winners:

2018 Silva Baiton, "Warmth in Human Society, Light in All Human Beings': Origins, Development, and Early Resistance of Burakumin in Early Modern and Modern Japan"

2017 Co-winners: Rutika Gandhi "Spiritualizing the Internet: Exploring Modern Buddhism and the Online Buddhist World"

Fallan Curtis "Utilization of Traditional Chinese Medicine with Western Medicine: A Field Inquiry"

2016 Derek De Coste, "Remembering the Nanjing Atrocity"

2015 Kaelah Collins, "A World of Opposites: Manifestations of Nonduality in Zen Buddhist Art"

2014 Aaron Eelhart, "China Field Study Reflection Paper"

## Recent Faculty Publications—Kudos!

Abigail McMeekin & Erica Zimmerman, eds. *Technology-Supported Learning In and Out of the Japanese Language Classroom: Advances in Pedagogy, Teaching and Research*. Second Language Acquisition Series. Bristol: Multilingual-Matters, 2019.

Glenda Bonifacio, ed. *Global Youth Migration and Gendered Modalities*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2019.

Steve Ferzacca. *Sonic City: Making Rock Music and Urban Life in Singapore*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, May 2020.

## Anniversaries in Asia: years since events

- 1900: Kanishka's accession to rule Kushana Empire
- 550: birth of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism
- 500: 1st circumnavigation of globe led by Ferdinand Magellan in search of spice islands (Indonesia) that led to the Philippines
- 150: birth of Mahatma Gandhi
- 100: March 1 Movement in Korea
- 100: May 4 Movement in Beijing
- 70: founding of People's Republic of China
- 70: ceasefire in Kashmir; adoption of India's Constitution
- 50: "Moratorium to end war in Vietnam"
- 50: "My Lai Story" (S. Hersh)
- 30: Tiananmen Massacre

**7 recent U of L grads** are now working in Japan as English teachers and cultural ambassadors of Canada for the **Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme**.

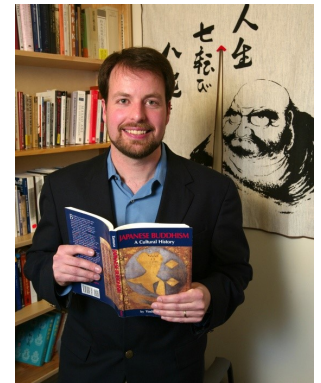
To the JETs & their supporters おめでとうございます!!  
Read more: <https://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/six-u-l-alums-now-teaching-japan-through-jet#.Xa9KnOhKjIX>

## Asian Studies Emerging at the U of L: Interview with Prof. John Harding (Assoc. Prof. in Religious Studies, Global Citizenship Cohort Coordinator)

1) Dr. Harding, as Founding Coordinator of Asian Studies at the U of L, describe for us your personal beginnings with Asian Studies. Although I am in the Religious Studies department here at the U of L, as an undergraduate student my major was in Asian Studies. I moved from Montana to the West Coast to attend the University of Puget Sound, a private, liberal arts university south of Seattle in the city of Tacoma, Washington. Its Asian Studies was very strong, in part due to its location on the Pacific Rim, but primarily because of superb faculty members who focused on Asia from within their departments of Religion, History, Political Science, Art History, and beyond. I majored in Asian Studies while also completing their four-year Honors Program, which created interesting comparative opportunities. Although the Honors Program was initially rooted in Western Classics, the capstone course emphasized Asian literature, religion, philosophy, history, and culture. Additionally, I traveled to Japan to conduct research for my honor's thesis during the summer between my third and fourth year. By graduation I also had a minor in Religious Studies, and strong interest in Hinduism and India as well as Buddhism and Japan. Ultimately, that time in Japan, the mentorship of my professor in Japanese religions, and my 100+ page thesis on Japanese Buddhism and modernization in Japan's Meiji Era led me to pursue a PhD focused on Japanese Buddhism at the University of Pennsylvania. Even at Penn where I was awarded a PhD in Religious Studies, my supervisor, William LaFleur, was in an Asian Studies department (by a different name).

2) When and how did you come up with the vision to start Asian Studies at U of L?

I was a little surprised that we did not have some kind of Asian Studies program given the deep roots of the Japanese-Canadian community in southern Alberta, the number of professors with a research and teaching focus on Asia, and the university's strategic plan that references adopting a global perspective as one of the university's fundamental principles. I learned that there may have been one or more attempts in the past, but it had not gained traction. Trevor Harrison and I began to meet and discuss how we might get such a program off the ground. Although he did not teach courses on Japan within Sociology, he had been part of our popular faculty exchange with Hokkai Gakuen University in Sapporo, Japan, and he had since written on Japanese society and politics and become active in academic conferences with that focus. We began inviting other scholars into our meetings and discussing ideas of how to get such a program off the ground. Some, such as Judith Whitehead from Anthropology, have since retired. However, most of those faculty members from early meetings are still key contributors to the program, including Hillary Rodrigues (RELS), Jan Newberry (ANTH), and Abby McMeekin (MODL/JPNS). I was also meeting with scholars at Asian Studies conferences, such as Suzanne Wilson Barnett from my alma mater. She had started the Asian Studies program at the University of Puget Sound and wrote a book on the importance of Asian Studies programs. All of these discussions were helpful as was our research into existing programs in Canada. However, we also needed a critical mass within the U of L faculty. History had been without a specialist in Asia for a couple of years following a retirement, but once Gideon Fujiwara was hired, I felt we had reached the threshold needed to launch the program.



Prof. John Harding

3) Our program is now in its 7th year. How would you describe the growth of Asian Studies here? What is unique about it?

The program has grown in a number of ways, from the creation of the minor in Asian Studies along with additional courses we have developed with an ASIA number, to sponsoring events on campus and in the community, such as Asian Culture Week. It has grown in its connections beyond the faculty of Arts and Science. For example, Bonnie Lee (Health Sciences) has taken students to China for field work and created the Michael Chan Prize in Asian Studies in honour of her late husband. Andrea Amelinckx (Dhillon School of Business) has been involved in meetings for Asian Studies almost from the beginning and takes students to Malaysia each year from before our program even began. It is a real benefit that our minor is now accessible across the university. So far, the courses with an ASIA number are within Arts and Science. I taught the ASIA 1000 introductory course required for minors during the first three years, but this too is a story of growth. Now I am one part of the rotation for that course along with Gideon Fujiwara (HIST) and Glenda Bonifacio (WGST). We have long had an important exchange with HGU in Sapporo, but we now also have a very active relationship with Gakushuin Women's College in Tokyo including an innovative team-taught videoconferencing course (with an ASIA course number) in which Gideon Fujiwara and a group of students here meet in real time twice a week with a group of students and a professor in Tokyo.

There is growth for sure, but at the same time, we are still a very small program that exists through the goodwill and cooperation of faculty members who have research and teaching interests in Asia. There is no major, department, hires specific to Asian Studies, or secure annual budget. We have received funds from the community and the university (A&S Dean's Office, President's Office, International Office) to support Asian Culture Week and similar programs. At times, we have received support from these same university sources,

especially A&S, for sessional support to help our home departments maintain staffing levels when we are teaching Asian Studies courses. I think this arrangement is rather unique and frankly too precarious. However, it also speaks to the strong collegiality of coordinating existing resources and freely offering guest lectures and other forms of service in an effort to grow and maintain Asian Studies for our students to have more diverse educational opportunities.

4) What do you envision for the future of the program? How has it influenced your own research and, perhaps, your view of the world?

The program has been very capably coordinated by Gideon Fujiwara (HIST) for a couple of years already and I appreciatively see that leadership continuing into the future, along with the generous support from everyone involved--all the professors, staff, and administrators who recognize the value of the program and contribute to cultivate its growth. It is still young, and I envision students and members of both the university and the community learning more about Asian Studies. This may lead to larger student numbers, additional programming of events and talks on campus as well as courses eligible for the Asian Studies minor. Perhaps, at some point, there will also be more stable funding to better assure the future of Asian Studies at the U of L.



Jizo by Shikoku pilgrimage route

Yes, Asian Studies influences my research and view of the world. One of the reasons I loved Asian Studies as an undergraduate major had to do with its interdisciplinary breadth. I could pursue ancient history, current events, literature, art, religious studies, and comparative political and economic systems all under the umbrella term of Asian Studies. My home department of Religious Studies has a similar interdisciplinary scope with a similarly full range of possible pursuits to the extent that each touches on religion. Now that I am teaching courses in both, I get to indulge my wide interests and encourage students to make connections across eras, regions, and disciplines through the ASIA 1000 class. I had frequently traveled to Japan for research in the past, but since we launched the Asian Studies program I have added research travel to countries such as India and China. The focus of that research travel remains rooted in my scholarship on global Buddhism, but I try to expand my awareness to other areas that may be of interest to students in the Asian Studies courses.



Varnasi ghat

5) Do you have favorite places you've visited in Asia? Where would you like to visit next?

Kyoto, Japan remains a favourite. That initial research trip to Kyoto in the summer before my final year of undergraduate studies introduced me to the beauty, history, and culture of a 1200-year old city with approximately 2,000 temples and shrines. It remains a touchstone for travel in Asia. I have enjoyed visiting sacred pilgrimage sites that often combine stunning natural landscapes with long histories of religious associations. In particular, I am thinking of the Shikoku pilgrimage route in Japan from research I did almost 15 years ago, some of the sacred mountains of China and early Buddhist caves there near Datong, Dunhuang, and Luoyang from travel just 16 months ago, as well as some of the sites in India and Nepal connected to the life story of the Buddha from a research trip closer to three years ago. Although these trips focused on Buddhist sites, the ancient city of Varanasi in India was a favourite as well. The list of places I have not seen is so much longer than where I have been. I want to see many new places and revisit old favourites--I am not sure which will be next.

Thanks so much, John, for establishing the vision and foundations of our program! What an exciting journey it's been with our colleagues and students! I look forward to continuing to work with you and our colleagues in building up our program. (GF)

### Spring 2020 Courses

RELS 2100 - <b>The Hindu Tradition</b> (Rodrigues)	HIST 2290 - <b>Main Themes in East Asian History</b> (Fujiwara)
RELS 2360 - <b>Japanese Religions</b> (Harding)	HIST 3850 - <b>Imperial China</b> (Fujiwara)
RELS 3850 - <b>Gender and Sexuality in Buddhism</b> (Erin Reid)	JPNS1100 - <b>Beginners' Japanese II</b> (McMeekin)
	JPNS2020 - <b>Intermediate Language II</b> (McMeekin)

**PUBLIC Professor Series:** Join religious studies professor, **Dr. Hillary Rodrigues**, as he explores **COMBATTING DELUSION: Gleanings from the Hindu Great Goddess and Eastern Sages.**  
**Thur, Feb 27, 2020 7:00pm - 9:00pm**

**See our renewed website:**  
<http://www.uleth.ca/artsci/asian-studies>  
 Contact the coordinator at [gideon.fujiwara@uleth.ca](mailto:gideon.fujiwara@uleth.ca)