A Pandemic Year
CSEAS community adjusts to Southeast Asian studies in a virtual world
Page 10

Director’s Chair
The way ahead after a year like no other
Page 2

Faculty 360°
Pivoting to Zoom classes, distance meetings, and virtual conferences
Page 3–7

Grantsmanship
The Burma Art Collection gets a new home
Page 14

Horizons
An alumnus reflects upon the legacy of a road less traveled
Page 23

A CSEAS graduation stole is embellished with a matching handmade mask. CSEAS friend Linda Boardman Kerr made the set from Indonesian batik, cheerfully modeled here by graduate assistant Matthew Werstler
Director’s Chair
Eric Jones

While it is a cliché to mention “these challenging times” in reference to 2020 and 2021, for the past year and a half we have faced truly unprecedented challenges as a center. But we have also witnessed resilience and innovation in response to the pandemic. First and foremost, I want to recognize the patience and perseverance of so many students, staff, faculty, and international colleagues as they manage their own family and community health concerns while never giving up on valued programs and ideals even as projects morph, shift and delay. To paraphrase Illinois’s native son Abraham Lincoln, the crisis has brought out “the better angels of our nature.” Care, concern, compassion and sacrifice have more than offset the dreadfulness of the pandemic.

One moving example is the outpouring of help and assistance as Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs) who came to our campus in fall 2019 to help facilitate language instruction, found themselves trapped and uncertain as the virus spun out of control in the first half of 2020. Campus and community members reached out and opened their homes and hearts, and Center staff and associates worked double time to ensure these valued visitors felt safe as we facilitated their ever-delayed return home.

The increased level of collaboration among our sister Title VI National Resource Centers around the country has also been a welcome development. While the relationship among centers for Southeast Asian studies has always been warm and cordial, we are at a new level of coordinated planning and cooperation that will bear fruit for many decades. The new Henry Luce Foundation-funded consortium, Graduate Education and Training in Southeast Asian Studies (GETSEA), was formed with the mission of enhancing graduate education in Southeast Asian studies across North America through innovation and collaboration. As a cross-institutional network led by the eight current and recent National Resource Centers on Southeast Asia, GETSEA works to expand the collaborative infrastructure between the centers of Southeast Asian studies, including a virtual speaker series, specialized online mini-courses, a mentoring network, professional development workshops for graduate students, and the creation of a framework for shared language instruction. Another new collaborative organization is the Southeast Asian Language Council (SEALC). Luce awarded SEALC the five-year grant, “Professional and Materials Development to Strengthen Southeast Asian Language Instruction.” The SEALC project will professionalize the field of Southeast Asian language teaching in the U.S. by offering training workshops and materials development projects and by creating national standards, proficiency assessments, and instructional resources.

Scores of Southeast Asia program leaders came together to support the virtual Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) language training program and it enjoyed record enrollment as a result. These and other examples demonstrate that new spirit of cooperation.

In Southeast Asia we have watched with concern as democracy has been on the retreat. But even in the face of these worrying trends, we have been proud to support our international training programs across Southeast Asia and to assist our friends and partners. Our U.S. State Department-funded Southeast Asian Youth Leadership and Philippine Youth Leadership programs, both cornerstones of our identity as a Southeast Asia center, skillfully adapted and expertly deployed virtual training programs with impressive outcomes for young leaders across Southeast Asia. Behind the scenes, friends, donors, and colleagues came together to assist at-risk students and scholars from Myanmar. This heroism and generosity remain unknown to many but their work has meant the world to a few.

It has been an honor and a privilege for me to serve as Acting Director these past four years. As I conclude my term, I could not feel more confident and optimistic about the future of CSEAS as our returning director Judy Ledgerwood steps back into the role and continues to build on our record of accomplishment in the field of Southeast Asian studies. Here’s to a great next year.

Faces we’ll miss: Office Manager Lisa Heal and longtime CSEAS graduate assistant Azri Agoes (Ph.D. candidate, political science) are leaving Center staff to embark on the next steps of their respective careers. Lisa is headed to graduate school at NIU and Azri is in the process of completing his dissertation. Both have been at the Center more than five years, long enough to leave their mark on many CSEAS projects. We wish them both the best in their future endeavors.
Rahmi Aoyama (World Languages and Cultures)
- Received her doctorate in instructional technology from NIU in May 2020

Kenton Clymer (History)
- Was a guest professor June 26 to July 16, 2020 at Renmin University, Beijing
- Officially retired from NIU in September 2020 (see Transitions)

James Cohen (Education)
- Was elected a CSEAS associate by the Center Council in October 2020

Jessamine Cooke-Plagwitz (World Languages and Cultures)
- Was elected a CSEAS associate by the Center Council in October 2020

Rhodalyne Gallo-Crail (World Languages and Cultures)
- Directed the U.S. Department of State’s all-virtual Philippine Youth Leadership Program (PYLP) in May 2021

Aarie Glas (Political Science)
- Contributed “Diplomacy in the ASEAN” in the forthcoming compilation Oxford Bibliographies (Oxford University Press, 2021)
- Was a guest on the April 7, 2021 episode of the methods-oriented New Books in Interpretive Political and Social Science podcast, “Lee Ann Fujii’s Interviewing in Social Science Research”

Kikue Hamayotsu (Political Science)
- Was on sabbatical 2020–21
- Was elected chair of the Association of Political Science)
- Was a guest on the April 7, 2021 episode of the methods-oriented New Books in Interpretive Political and Social Science podcast, “Lee Ann Fujii’s Interviewing in Social Science Research”

Trude Jacobsen (History)
- Received the 2021 NIU Outstanding Mentorship Award from the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women
- Published the chapter “Querulous Queens, Bellicose Brai: Cambodian Perspectives toward Female Agency” in Women Warriors in Southeast Asia (London: Routledge, 2020)

Eric Jones (History/CSEAS)
- Was named general editor in 2020 for the six-volume A Cultural History of Southeast Asia to be published by Bloomsbury in 2022–23
- Hosted an April 29 discussion of the 2002 film The Quiet American for the NIU Lifelong Learning Institute’s series on revisiting Vietnam.
- Participated in a panel about undergraduate Southeast Asian studies April 28, 2021 at a virtual conference establishing the New York Southeast Asia Network’s Public Universities Consortium.

Judy Ledgerwood (Anthropology)
- Stepped down as Acting Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in June 2020 and began a one-year research leave in 2020–21
- Returned to CSEAS as Director July 1, 2021

Melissa Lenzewski (Geology and Environmental Geosciences, Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability and Energy)
- Was named a NIU Presidential Engagement and Partnerships Professor in April 2021
- Hosted Visiting Fulbright Scholar Seinn Lei Aye, chair of the University of Yangon’s Environment and Water Studies Department, during 2019–20
- With associates Tomoyuki Shibata (Public Health) and Tharaphi Than (World Languages and Cultures), met virtually with University of Yangon and international team of academics in August 2020 to finalize curriculum for new bachelor’s degree in water studies at Yangon.

Micah F. Morton (Anthropology)
- Was elected a CSEAS associate by the Center Council in October 2020
- Co-authored “Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Shifting State-Society Relations and Emerging Resource Frontiers in China’s Southwest Borderlands” with Jianhua Wang (Yunnan Minzu University, China) in Asian Ethnology (Vol. 79, No. 2)

Doris Macdonald (English)
- Officially retired from NIU in May 2020 (see Transitions)

Hao Phan (NIU Libraries)
- Paper Bells, a collection of poems by Hao Phan translated from Vietnamese into English by Hai-Dang Phan (New York: The Song Cave) in 2020, was listed among the top 10 poetry-in-translation books by PEN America Literary Awards Longlists in 2021

Alan Potkin (CSEAS Adjunct)
- Presented “Impasse on the Lower Salween/Thanlwin: Is It Resolvable?” in October 2020 at the Linden-Museum Stuttgart’s virtual Myanmar

continued on page 4
Kudos: Melissa Lenczewski gets a PEP

CSEAS associate Melissa Lenczewski (Geology and Environmental Geosciences) was named a 2021 recipient of the Presidential Engagement and Partnerships Professorship April 15, 2021. Lenczewski joined the CSEAS community seven years ago as a seasoned researcher in hydrogeology focusing on water quality and contamination. With the opening of Myanmar in 2012, she took the opportunity in 2013 to travel to the country to develop hydrogeology workshops for faculty at Yadanabon University and the University of Mandalay, in addition to recently collaborating with the University of Yangon and an international team to create a new undergraduate degree in water studies there. That initiative is the first program of its kind in Myanmar and will lay the groundwork for a new generation of water professionals. Lenczewski, as director of NIU’s Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability and Energy, has also identified water quality projects in Myanmar for institute faculty and students, bringing several students with her to Myanmar in recent years to conduct fieldwork.

Scot Schraufnagel (Political Science)
• Co-authored “Testing for Incumbency Advantages in a Developing Democracy: Local Chief Executive Elections in Indonesia” in Contemporary Politics (Vol. 42, No. 2, 2020) with graduate student Testriono (Ph.D. candidate, political science)
• Prior to COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020, worked on collaborations with Thai universities, including the establishment of a dual-degree program between NIU and the Faculty of Political Science at Thammasat University and joint programming Chiang Mai University

Tomoyuki Shibata (Public Health)
• Hosted Visiting Fulbright Scholar Chit Wityi Oo, a lecturer in the Department of Industrial Chemistry at the University of Yangon in Myanmar, in spring 2021 to work on air quality and public health research

Tharaphi Than (World Languages and Cultures)
• While on leave in fall 2021, will teach the online mini-course, “Scholar-Activism and the Myanmar Spring Revolution,” for the Henry Luce Foundation-funded Graduate Education and Training in Southeast Asian Studies (GETSEA) consortium with University of California-Berkley postdoctoral fellow Hilary Faxon
• Published “Nationalism: The Wrong Framework to Understand Local Activism in Myanmar?” in ISEAS Perspective 2020
• Contributed the article “Decolonization in the South” in the Journal of African Studies in 2020

Kanjana Thepboriruk (World Languages and Cultures)
• Was an invited speaker for an April 10, 2021 webinar, Thai Teaching and Learning Thai in the U.S.,” presented by the Thai American Samakkee Colation, a national organization promoting and supporting the Thai American community
• Presented “Il Duce, Der Führer and Phunam: The Birth of Military Rule in Thailand” March 26, 2021 for the virtual Association of Asian Studies annual conference
• Presented “From Words to Pictures and from Pictures to Words: Visual and Linguistic Analyses of Historical Texts” at the Feb. 26, 2021 Qualitative Inquiry Collaborative Online Speaker Series
• Was awarded a $14,500 Summer Research and Artistry Opportunity Grant in 2020 for “Thai as a Heritage Language in the United States,” her project assessing Thai language instruction in the U.S. with the goal of helping increase American K-12 Thai language proficiency.
• Published “Dressing Thai: Fashion, Nation and the Construction of Thainess, 19th Century to Present” in the Journal of Applied History (Vol. 1, No. 2).
• Organized the 2020 Council of Thai Studies (COTS) annual meeting, held virtually Nov. 13–15, 2020.

Kheang Un (Political Science)
• Was promoted to Professor July 1, 2021.
• Was appointed by Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker in spring 2021 to a four-year term on Illinois’ Holocaust and Genocide Commission.
• Served as CSEAS Assistant Director during 2020–21.
• Presented “Assessing Sino-Khmer Relations from Cambodian and Chinese Perspectives” at the April 2–5, 2021 virtual Centennial Celebration of Xiamen University, China.

Jui-Ching Wang (School of Music/CSEAS)
• Will be coordinating NIU’s Asian American Studies program in addition to her School of Music teaching.
• While on sabbatical in 2020–21, conducted research in Taiwan in spring 2021 observing Vietnamese and Indonesian women and documenting their musical interactions with their children.
• Was promoted to Professor July 1, 2020.
• Was a visiting lecturer for Yogyakarta State University for eight weeks in fall 2020 teaching about world music and world music pedagogy to undergraduate and graduate students in arts education.
• Presented “I Sing, Therefore I am: Tembang Donanan Anak and Its Historical, Local and Global Context” December 5–7 at the 2019 SEASIA Biennial Conference in Taipei, Taiwan.

Shei-Chau Wang (School of Art)

In the immediate aftermath of the Feb. 1, 2021 military coup in Myanmar, the press came to call on CSEAS expertise to help explain the coup’s implications domestically and internationally. Within hours, producers for “Inside Story” on the Al Jazeera network contacted CSEAS associate and Burma scholar Tharaphi Than (World Languages and Culture) to join Michael Charney, professor and chair of Asian and military history at SOAS at the University of London, and Paul Donowitz, Myanmar campaign leader at Global Witness, to discuss world reaction Feb. 2, 2021. She was asked back Feb. 7 to discuss growing pressure for international firms to distance themselves from the military’s business investments. Than also appeared Feb. 9 on a flash panel hosted by the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies at the University of Notre Dame’s Keough School of Global Affairs. NIU’s Public Radio station, WNIJ, also interviewed her shortly after the coup as have other media outlets subsequently. Meanwhile, CSEAS graduate assistant Azriansyah Agoes (Ph.D. candidate, political science), 1945 (Cornell University Press, 2015) posted his take on the coup, “Myanmar: It’s Déjà Vu All Over Again,” on the Cornell University Press blog the day after the coup. He was later interviewed by National Public Radio reporter Scott Neuman for a June 20, 2021 piece about the prospects for ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi in the wake of post-coup uprisings in the country.

Red balloons in support of ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi festoon Yangon streets Feb. 5. (Photo/Reuters)
Faculty Spotlight: Micah F. Morton

CSEAS welcomed new faculty associate Micah F. Morton, who joined the Anthropology Department as an assistant professor in fall 2020. Born in Philadelphia, Micah received his Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2015. His dissertation is entitled “From Blood to Fruit: Crypto-nationalism and Reformations of the Ancestral Burden in the Akha World of Mainland Southeast Asia and Southwest China.”

Before coming to NIU he was a faculty associate in research at Cornell University’s Southeast Asia Program and served as a visiting assistant professor at the State University of New York at Oswego. This fall he will be teaching ANTH 328/790, Anthropology of Religion. Micah is married to Haiying Li (Misuo), an Indigenous Akha scholar and artist/designer originally from southwest China who will be pursuing a master’s degree in English at NIU and studying intermediate Thai as a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellow this year. They are the parents of Aiden, their six-year-old son who has lived in Asia for half of his life so far, Micah notes.

What drew you to anthropology?
As an undergraduate at Juniata College in Huntingdon, PA (where I finished a B.S. degree in biology with a minor in cultural ecology), I had a wonderful opportunity to study abroad for a semester in Kerala, India. That rich experience and raw and direct exposure to what I perceived at the time as a radically different yet more meaningful and simple way of life compared to what I had previously known—coupled with a long-term interest in the environment and religion (inspired by my parents), and advice from a kind and supportive faculty member at Juniata College (Dr. Paula Wagoner, the sole anthropologist)—led me to anthropology, specifically ecological anthropology.

What has interested you in indigenous peoples globally and in Southeast Asia, particularly in these times of social upheaval, political tensions, and climate change?
This is an interesting time to be working on these issues and Indigenous Peoples (intentionally capitalized here) here in the U.S. and beyond have much to contribute to current discussions on issues such as the environment, social (in)equality, and the broader search for other ways of organizing human societies in a more humane and sustainable way. I have been interacting with and learning from Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia, especially north Thailand, east Myanmar, and southwest China, for some years now. During long-term fieldwork in Thailand (2009 to 2012), I was able to participate in and observe the development of a national level Indigenous movement including some 40 ethnic groups from throughout the country who were (and are) working to gain basic human rights and recognition as a distinct group of people, namely Indigenous Peoples. One angle that I’ve taken in terms of engaging with the movement is thinking about the ways in which the Indigenous movement in Thailand (and Asia more broadly) compares and contrasts with much older movements in the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand. Indigenous Peoples in most of Asia face a particularly difficult situation in that their national governments and publics do not recognize them as Indigenous Peoples and their experiences of marginalization and oppression as such are largely whitewashed over with broader utopian narratives of post-colonial equality and unity in diversity.

As a new professor, what have you found to be most challenging about teaching remotely?
The biggest challenge is finding ways to meaningfully connect with students, to more fully engage them in the learning process, and to facilitate connections between them. Teaching and learning are truly about making connections and I really struggled to incorporate this basic philosophy into the virtual setting.

How are you finding life in rural Illinois?
It has been a strange time for everyone, and I think the sense of strangeness was magnified for those of us starting something new. Yet my family and I are slowly adapting to life here in the cornfields and finding ways to connect with people, places, and more. A number of folks from the CSEAS and the Anthropology Department have gone out of their way to help us feel welcome and more at home.
Two CSEAS faculty associates retired in 2020: Kenton Clymer (History) and Doris Macdonald (English). We wish them well.

**Kenton Clymer:**
A storied career

Distinguished Research Professor and CSEAS associate Kenton Clymer retired in September 2020. Clymer joined the History Department at NIU in 2004 after 33 years of teaching history at the University of Texas-El Paso. A graduate of Grinnell College, Clymer received his doctorate in 1970 from the University of Michigan. A specialist on the history of U.S. foreign relations in Southeast Asia and Asia, he was widely traveled in the region, having lived in the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and China at different times during his career.

The author of eight books, including his most recent volume, *A Delicate Relationship: The United States and Burma/Myanmar* (Cornell University Press, 2015), Clymer has won wide recognition for his Southeast Asian scholarship. His two-volume work about the U.S. relationship with Cambodia published by Routledge in 2004 won the 2005 Robert H. Ferrell Book Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. He was also named a Fellow at the Wilson Center in Washington, DC in 2011-12 where he began work on researching and writing about Burma, which then was beginning to reopen to the world after decades closed to outsiders.

“Of all the countries in the region, Burma was my first love. We should not easily forget the country closed. Clymer's visit was part of an NIU initiative to revitalize the country's reopening. Clymer's visit was part of an NIU initiative to revitalize the country's reopening.

“My interest in now writing about American relations with Burma is both personal and professional,” Clymer said at the time. “On the personal side, an unexpected encounter in 1987 with Aung San Suu Kyi and her [now late] husband Michael Aris, aroused my interest in Burma. I met Michael and Suu Kyi when I was in India researching my book on India’s independence; the final month was spent at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in Simla. Aris, a leading Himalayan scholar from Oxford University, was one of the few foreigners at the institute and we soon became good friends. A few day after my arrival in Simla, Michael’s wife arrived and our families became good friends.” Later, after Suu Kyi was under house arrest in Myanmar, Clymer kept up with Aris, who was in England with the couple’s children. He organized Aris’s tour of U.S. universities and other institutions in early 1989 to discuss the plight of the Burmese democracy movement of which Suu Kyi was the leader. When Aris died at age 53 in 1999, Clymer said, “my wife and I represented [NIU] at his memorial service in Oxford. As a result of these experiences I resolved that I would eventually write a history of United States relations with Burma.”

Prior to the publication of *A Delicate Relationship* in 2015, Clymer traveled to Burma in December 2014 to spend a month teaching about the history of the U.S. history with Burma at Yangon University, the first foreign visiting professor to teach there since 1962 when the country closed. Clymer’s visit was part of an NIU initiative to revitalize Burmese higher education upon the country’s reopening.

In recent years, in addition to teaching at NIU, Clymer spent several summers teaching in China, including Renmin, Xiamen, and Yunan universities, and hosted visiting Chinese scholars at NIU. He also is doing his part to bring new scholarship into print as the editor of the Southeast Asia Series for the NIU Press (an imprint of Cornell University Press).

**Doris Macdonald:**
A mentor for all seasons

Doris Macdonald, who has been a mainstay mentor for the Center’s Indonesian Peningkatan Kualitas Publikasi Internasional (PKPI) since the semester-long program for Indonesian doctoral students began in 2010, retired in May 2020. Macdonald received her Ph.D. from Louisiana State University in 1991 and came to NIU in 1992. She was drawn to the PKPI program after being invited by CSEAS to be a faculty mentor for several students whose interest was in English as a second language and applied linguistics (her areas of study). Not surprisingly, a few years later she signed up for Indonesian to hone her language skills to help her work more closely with the visiting PKPI graduate students, many of whom she stays in touch with via Facebook and email.

Macdonald’s involvement with PKPI led her to Indonesia three times, twice to Makassar to present workshops and most recently as a visiting Fulbright Specialist in 2019 to Muluwarman University in East Kalimantan. “I feel lucky to have been invited to be part of the program,” Macdonald says. “Otherwise I may never have enjoyed this exciting stage of my career or met such talented and industrious scholars. While I don’t know a lot about the entire region, I have come to love Indonesia.”
While at NIU, Testriono has been a graduate assistant in the Department of Public Administration and received his department’s Martin David Dubin Memorial Scholarship and the Russell W. Smith Memorial Scholarship. His most recent publication, with Political Science Professor and CSEAS associate Scot Schraufnagel, is “Testing for Incumbency Advantages in a Developing Democracy: Elections for Local Government Leaders in Indonesia” in Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs (Vol. 42, No. 2). Since 2011, he has also served as assistant editor for the journal Studia Islamika at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta, where he received his bachelor’s degree in 2008.

With all classes taught by native speakers, the SEASSI program is equivalent to two semesters of language study. “Our students have missed the opportunity to study in the region, but the SEASSI program has consistently offered excellent language training in these less commonly taught languages that are so critical to understanding Southeast Asia,” said Acting CSEAS Director Eric Jones. “We are grateful students had that option.” The deadline to apply for summer 2022 FLAS grants and 2022–23 academic-year fellowships is Jan. 15.

The pandemic year did not stop the awarding of U.S. Department of Education Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) summer and academic-year fellowships in 2020–21 or 2021–22. For these two years, CSEAS has awarded 8 graduate summer FLAS grants and 17 graduate academic-year fellowships, and 8 undergraduate summer grants and 18 undergraduate academic-year fellowships.

With COVID-19 receding and then spiking in Southeast Asia over the course of the year, however, summer FLAS awardees were unable to travel to the region for intensive language training in either 2020 or 2021. The alternative was virtual learning through SEASSI. For the past two summers, the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has been providing its intensive language study program virtually since it, too, could not offer in-person learning even in the U.S. The eight-week SEASSI program, which has been hosted on-site by UW-Madison since 2000, offers academic credit for beginning, intermediate and advanced levels in Burmese, Tagalog, Hmong, Indonesian, Javanese, Khmer, Lao, Thai, Vietnamese.

The deadline to apply for the 2022–23 award is Jan. 15.

**Fellowship Notes**

**Two academic years, two sets of fellows**

Testriono, Agoes named King Fellows

Testriono (Ph.D. candidate, political science) been awarded the 2021–22 Dwight Y. King Graduate Fellowship for the Study of Indonesia. Azriansyah Agoes (Ph.D. candidate, political science) was last year’s King award recipient.

Testriono, the fourth recipient of the $1,000 fellowship, entered the Political Science department’s M.A./Ph.D. program in 2014, receiving his M.A. in comparative politics and American government in 2016. Currently writing his dissertation, Testriono’s research interests are democratization, subnational politics, religious conflict and identity politics, Islamic politics and social movements, comparative historical analysis, and Southeast Asia. “My dissertation aims to understand the subnational variation of democratic performance by drawing lessons from the Indonesian case,” he said. “This study takes insights from institution-centered explanations, hypothesizing that different types of political institutions affect the performance of subnational democracy differently.”

While at NIU, Testriono has been a graduate assistant in the Department of Public Administration and received his department’s Martin David Dubin Memorial Scholarship and the Russell W. Smith Memorial Scholarship. His most recent publication, with Political Science Professor and CSEAS associate Scot Schraufnagel, is “Testing for Incumbency Advantages in a Developing Democracy: Elections for Local Government Leaders in Indonesia” in Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs (Vol. 42, No. 2). Since 2011, he has also served as assistant editor for the journal Studia Islamika at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta, where he received his bachelor’s degree in 2008.

Agoes joined the M.A./Ph.D. program in 2012 and received his M.A. in 2015. He is currently writing his doctoral dissertation in comparative politics with research emphasis on Indonesia and Cambodia. As a graduate assistant at CSEAS, Agoes has administered the Indonesian Peningkatan Kualitas Publikasi Internasional (PKPI), taught the Center’s

SEA survey course, SEAS 225, and worked with the CSEAS director on various Indonesia initiatives. He was the first recipient of the King award in 2018.

The $1,000 King fellowship is funded through an NIU Foundation endowment established by late Political Science Professor and CSEAS Director Emeritus Dwight King. King, who mentored many Indonesian graduate students over his years as a professor, established the award to support the research efforts of international students pursuing SEA studies at NIU. The deadline to apply for the 2022–23 award is Jan. 15.
Firawati, Won awarded Neher fellowships

Titik Firawati (Ph.D. candidate, political science) has been awarded the 2021–22 Clark and Arlene Neher Graduate Fellowship for the Study of Southeast Asia. Firawati follows political science doctoral candidate Eunji Won, who was the 2020–21 Neher awardee.

Firawati, the 20th graduate student to receive the Neher fellowship, is from Kepanjen, a small town in the East Java province of Indonesia. Before coming to NIU, Firawati received her bachelor’s degree in international relations from Gadjah Mada University in 2005. After that, she traveled to the United States to pursue a master’s degree in international peace studies at the University of Notre Dame. At Notre Dame, her research focused on a comparative analysis of peace processes in Aceh, Indonesia, and South Thailand. She is continuing her specialization on peace, conflict and violence in Southeast Asia with her doctoral research analyzing variations in terrorism emerging out of communal violence in the Indonesian cities of Ambon-Manado and Posu-Palu.

“Indonesia is fertile ground for peace, conflict, and violence studies, but the number of Indonesian scholars who try to improve the studies is relatively small. With the analytical skills developed during my studies at NIU, I wish to make a significant contribution to the develop peace, conflict and violence studies in Indonesia,” she said. “By carrying out sustained research [in this area], I also hope to offer concrete suggestions to policy makers in Indonesia and elsewhere on how to deal with conflict and violence peacefully.”

Firawati credits growing up in a family that valued social and cultural diversity—her father is a Javanese Muslim and her mother is a Chinese-Indonesian Buddhist who converted to Islam after marriage—for shaping her academic interests and her personal outlook on life. Her mother never finished high school, she said, due to government repression against ethnic Chinese and her father, whose family lived in extreme poverty, never finished elementary school. “I grew up in an environment where diversity and hardship were the realities that I had to confront every day,” Firawati said. “This profoundly impacted my attitude toward other people, [teaching me] respect, tolerance, and empathy.”

Won, who taught the Center’s survey course, SEAS 225, for the past two academic years, entered the Political Science department’s Ph.D. program in 2013 and is currently writing her dissertation. Her research interests are democracy, authoritarian regimes, and political economy in SEA, particularly Malaysia and Thailand. Her dissertation focuses on explaining the mechanisms of the durability of authoritarian regimes in strong states through comparing Malaysia and South Korea. She has studied both Indonesian and Thai languages and conducted field research in the region in addition to serving as a teaching assistant for POLS 371 (Politics in Southeast Asia), POLS 376 (Political Violence), and POLS 377 (Revolt, Revolution and Genocide).

NIU Political Science Professor Emeritus and former CSEAS Director Clark Neher and External Programming Director Emeritus and CSEAS associate Arlene Neher established the Neher fellowship in 2002. The Center awards the annual $5,000 fellowship plus tuition waiver to one advanced-level graduate student. The deadline to apply for the 2022–23 award is Jan. 15.
A Pandemic Year

Conferences, exhibits go virtual

No conference? No way!
SEA Club steps up

As the COVID-19 emergency unfolded in spring 2020, universities across the globe had to act quickly to salvage a semester’s worth of classes and activities. As NIU prepared to close campus March 21, 2020 the NIU Southeast Asia Club (SEA Club) and CSEAS faced cancelling its annual spring Southeast Asian Studies student conference—or find another way. The answer? Hold a virtual conference on YouTube, a first for the club and an early entry into coronavirus conferencing.

A team of graduate students, who had been working diligently since fall on an in-person event set for April 18 in the Holmes Student Center, scrambled to notify presenters and move the event online in less than a month’s time. In the end, 16 CSEAS presenters from NIU joined 10 other students from as far away as Seoul University in submitting video presentations, which club conference organizers then pulled together for a worldwide audience to watch on the appointed day and thereafter.

As with all academic conferences, participants had submitted abstracts first in fall 2019, followed by complete research papers. Among the 26 papers submitted, research topics ranged from political involvement in Laos under colonialism and a news analysis of the Philippine drug war under President Rodrigo Duterte to a legal analysis of the South China Sea debate.

After promoting the new format through email and social media, the virtual conference went live April 18, beginning with a welcome video from Acting continued on page 12

The Council on Thai Studies annual meeting got on the Zoom bus in 2020, making use of live and pre-recorded presentations. (Bangkok bus photo by Candy Krajangsri)

COTS in two time zones

Led by CSEAS associate and Thai language professor Kanjana Thepboriruk, the NIU Thai Studies Group broke new ground for the 2020 Council of Thai Studies annual meeting, which was held as a virtual event Friday through Sunday, Nov. 13–15, 2020, with all events presented live via Zoom webinar in two time zones. Presentations were both live and pre-recorded. There were two keynote speakers, one in the U.S. and one in Thailand. Wasana Wongsurawat, associate professor of history at Chulalongkorn, presented “The Crown and the Capitalists: Thai Studies from a Transnationalist Perspective” Friday evening U.S. time, Saturday morning Thai time. Nancy Eberhardt, Szold Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology at Knox College in Galesburg, IL, presented “De-centering Thai Studies: A View from the Northwest Borderlands” Saturday evening U.S. time, Sunday morning Thai time. A plenary roundtable, “Daring to Imagine the Future: Youth and Democracy in Thailand,” took place Saturday morning in the U.S. (Saturday evening Thai time).

Members of the NIU Thai Studies Group include associates Aarie Glas (Political Science), Micah F. Morton (Anthropology), Catherine Raymond (School of Art), Scot Schraufnagel (Political Science) and Kurt Thurmaier (Public Administration). Conference organizers also included graduate students Matthew Werstler (FLAS fellow, Thai) and Duangkamon Winitkun (former Thai FLTA and Department of World Languages and Cultures graduate assistant).

“Planning the first ever online COTS for the 2020 meeting has truly been a challenge in every sense of the word and in every way, especially with presenters who are in nine different countries and even more time zones,” Thepboriruk said before the conference began. “But at the same time, we are able to welcome presenters and participants from all over the world this year. Some of our participants are first-time presenters at COTS and are able to join us only BECAUSE we are online this year. The online platform allows greater connectivity and resulted in this wonderful sense of camaraderie. . . . And for that, we in the organizing committee were happy to work extra hard to make it all happen.”
The Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia Collection and the Center for Burma Studies (CBS) continued their educational missions by organizing three virtual exhibits during 2020–21.

With an exhibit of Burmese contemporary art planned to go on display in conjunction with a postponed Southeast Asia performing arts showcase in April 2020 in Boutell Memorial Concert Hall, CBS moved the exhibit online (www.centerforburmastudies.com) in July. The exhibition, Looking at Women in Contemporary Burma, focused on the changing portrayal of Burmese women today, highlighted modern artists’ views of women within the context of a traditional Burmese society undergoing radical change. The exhibition is centered on a recent donation by Ian Holliday of the University of Hong Kong, featuring part of a gift of 29 paintings by contemporary Burmese artists executed between 2006 and 2015. With the SEA performing arts event now rescheduled for Nov. 5, 2021, viewers will have the opportunity to view the exhibit in person during fall semester at the Whitney Gallery adjacent to Boutell Hall.

Meanwhile at Founders Library, Southeast Asia Curator and CSEAS associate Hao Phan and library assistant Joanna Kulma put two virtual exhibits together. In recognition of Women’s History Month in 2021, and drawing from the Hart Collection’s vast troves of materials, Kulma put together a digital exhibit about women in Southeast Asia. Kulma, who has worked in the Hart Collection since 2013, spent weeks pulling together images, books, quotes, and profiles of SEA women ranging from royalty to revolutionaries. From participating in nationalist movements and fights for independence in the 19th and 20th centuries, the exhibit reveals that women have continued to actively shape the future with their leadership efforts in SEA politics, education, the environment, and rights movements among other areas. Among those featured in the exhibit is Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, who received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from NIU in 2013. The exhibit will be a permanent part of the collection’s digital archives, Kulma said. Kulma also organized a virtual exhibit in honor of Asian American Pacific Islander month in May.

It was a difficult decision to postpone Burmavision 2020, the 14th International Burma Studies Conference, which was scheduled as an in-person event for fall 2020 at NIU. With the pandemic shutting down countries and international travel, there was little choice but to postpone the biennial conference that regularly draws 300 scholars from around the world, said Center for Burma Studies (CBS) Director Catherine Raymond.

With NIU safety protocols in place, and the academic world fully adjusted to online conferencing, however, Burma Studies announced a call for papers or multimedia presentations in March 2021 for a rescheduled conference in September, either in-person or virtual. With the pandemic resurging in Southeast Asia in late spring, however, conference organizers made the decision to go forward with the conference online, Raymond said.

“The ravages of the global COVID-19 pandemic, followed by Tatmadaw General Min Aung Hlaing’s military coup d’etat present grave concerns for the present wellbeing and political future of Myanmar and beyond,” conference conveners note on the Burmavision website. “Our goal is to provide an interdisciplinary space where students and researchers of the country and region can come together and share their findings, debate ideas, and discuss controversial issues. We fully acknowledge that the political circumstances are changing quickly, and we strive to be inclusive, and will update any organizational changes on the website as circumstances warrant.”

“Burmavision 2021: Political Crisis, Social Resilience and Cultural Vibrance in Myanmar” will take place Sept. 16–19.
Five years ago, CSEAS Assistant Director Eric Jones rustled up a surplus table, a couple of microphones, and swaths of Indonesian batik to “soundproof” a corner of his office for a makeshift studio space on the second floor of Pottenger House. The goal was to expand the CSEAS’s global reach with an educational podcast series moderated by Jones and featuring interviews with Southeast Asia experts from around the world.

Today, with a pandemic year driving more listeners to online media, Southeast Asia Crossroads has racked up 72 episodes and 50,000 listens from more than 100 countries. Guests have been drawn from the center’s Friday lecture series, NIU faculty associates and affiliates, and visiting Southeast Asia scholars among others. During the past pandemic year with campus closed, Jones kept the series going by conducting interviews virtually. In addition, he and alumnus Matthew Jage (Ph.D. history, 2015) launched a second series, Napalm in the Morning, which covers the Vietnam War through film and already has built up a dedicated following.

The podcast project has proven to be a durable extension of CSEAS’s educational outreach as a U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center, according to Jones.

"I think the podcast has more than met its mission of expanding our educational reach quantitatively and qualitatively beyond anything we could have envisioned," Jones said. "Just recently I was looking back through an old grant application and a few years ago we were astounded that we had five thousand listens and now here we are with ten times that."

In the past five years, Jones has hosted conversations on topics ranging from the military coup in Myanmar, regional inequality, and election outcomes in Thailand and Indonesia to dangdut music in Indonesia and Moro villagers at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Occasionally CSEAS associates and graduate students have stepped in as co-hosts bringing their own areas of expertise to the purposefully interdisciplinary mix.

“We strive to reflect diverse perspectives and a wide range of views generating debate on Southeast Asia and international affairs and we regularly explore tough and complicated issues from a variety of angles with leading global specialists on those questions,” Jones said. “But I think we would like to explore a wider range of voices and experiences on the podcast. One advantage of the pandemic it has expanded our willingness to interview people anytime anyplace around the world and so we now have that as a real option.”

In addition to its global audience, the podcast has also made its way into some Southeast Asian studies classes on campus, a use that Jones hopes to expand. “The various faculty who have used it in the classes have had pretty good experiences,” Jones said. “Students have their minds blown when we have interviews with the author that they are reading, for example.”

Students also have been able to participate as production assistants as the studio has become a more professional space to record in. “It’s possible to produce a decent podcast with a USB microphone and a laptop, but if you want to have several participants then you run into needing a mixer and a recorder and multiple microphones etcetera,” Jones said. “Luckily because we’ve been able to hire talent with training in these fields of sound and sound editing, graduate students and outside staff have contributed their substantial knowledge to the way the podcast has evolved.”

Southeast Asia Crossroads is available on Soundcloud and Apple Podcasts.

**Behind the mic: A podcast story**

CSEAS Director **Eric Jones** and SEA Club President **Thomas Phetmeungmay** (B.A. anthropology). Individual papers were listed on the conference YouTube page allowing viewers to watch presentations in any order and revisit later. Presenters welcomed comments and many included their email addresses to address follow-up questions.

In the week after the conference, the virtual conference garnered 800 views, a good sign people were interested, said conference video master **Matthew Werstler** (M.M. music), adding he initially thought the club should cancel. “This was an opportunity for students to get a line on their CV, but I think it also was an opportunity for students to demonstrate academic perseverance,” Werstler said, noting that the virtual format allowed students from universities overseas to participate.

By all accounts, conference participants were happy for the chance to present. “Thank you for putting together a fantastic virtual conference,” San Francisco State University history graduate student **Scott Pribble**, who won the conference award for Best Graduate Student Paper, told Werstler. “I know it would it would have been easier to cancel the event, so I personally appreciate all your hard work and dedication to SEA scholarship.”

The club repeated its virtual conference act in spring 2021 with 41 participants on five panels, including two students from the Philippines and Thailand.
From safe to skeptical in Chiang Mai

By James Dewitz

CHIANG MAI—“Thailand has officially beat the Coronavirus . . .” The English language Facebook groups were full of expats extolling Thai government expertise in employing a harsh but workable amount of control over the populace to curb the pandemic. In Chiang Mai, where I’ve lived for six years, early on reached a maximum local infection total at a whopping 35 individuals. The local government entered into a month and a half lockdown. Prohibition, a 10pm-4am curfew, reduced office hours, and business closures. For nearly two months, Chiang Mai locals willingly hit the streets to support their neighbors with free meals and supplies. When it was over, local transmissions fell to zero. By July 2020, Chiang Mai beat COVID-19.

And then, everyone just kind of forgot about it. While the country closed its borders, no new locally transmitted cases were reported. Thailand, traditionally reliant on tourism, destroyed its international tourism sector to get a handle on the pandemic. Until November, Chiang Mai did not see any growth in cases and the general population grew increasingly complacent and secure in the assumption that, as Facebook groups had repeatedly posted, we had beaten the new coronavirus disease. International newspapers began publishing stories about how Thailand had become an international COVID success story. The second country to encounter the disease rapidly mobilized to become the first country to lock down, band together, and make the sacrifice to eliminate the disease. Reports of imported quarantined cases appearing in Bangkok would show up in the newspapers. The limited number of individuals allowed to come to Thailand were required to quarantine in hotels for 14 days and register on an app. Users would then have to pass a COVID test in order to leave state or alternate-state quarantine. The Coronavirus problem had officially been solved.

While it may be true that cases were limited prior to November 2020, it has definitely not been true after. The daily reality of border control means that the mountainous border with Myanmar can’t be monitored in every place all the time; people did cross in the night. In one such case, a woman who had worked in a hotel in Myanmar, brazenly documented her experience crossing the border illegally with her friends. She left her group of friends to their self-quarantine in Chiang Rai on the border and traveled 116 miles to Chiang Mai in the middle of November, infecting as many as 35 people along the way. Chiang Mai’s cases had not risen for months at this point, and the sudden panic throughout the country when everyone realized that people had been crossing the borders illegally then focused extra scrutiny on migrant worker camps in Bangkok and the surrounding metro. To no one’s surprise, clusters of COVID infections were discovered in November and December at markets and places where groups of migrant workers congregated in and around Bangkok. Local citizens congratulated themselves on swiftly gaining control of the situation.

After the “second wave” faced by sudden attention to the border crisis, Thailand strengthened immigration controls and began heavy enforcement of “Alternate State Quarantine” (fancy hotel-quarantine) for new entries to the country. During the 2021 New Year holiday, a 25-year-old woman visited a number of pubs and cafes in Chiang Mai and across the country after completing somehow roughly half of her mandated quarantine time. The woman later tested positive for the highly contagious UK Variant. Backtracking her movements and contacts revealed that she had been in contact with some 1,000 or more individuals, many of whom also tested positive. By the end of January 2021, Chiang Mai entered a “soft lockdown” for nearly a month, asking residents to stay home and limit contact as much as possible.

For whatever reason, Thailand did not arrange for the production, importation, or rollout of vaccines until late in the game. While other countries were preparing to implement vaccination programs, Thailand took a “wait and see approach” to vaccinating the population. February came and went with a slow but steady increase in cases and Chiang Mai found itself in yet another lockdown as the UK variant swept through Chiang Mai University before May. While Chiang Mai’s total infected numbers sat at no more than 75 cases for an entire year, the sudden wave of cases in the tightly packed student community caused the number to balloon into the thousands. Once again, locals distanced themselves. Shops remained take-out only. No alcohol was served in any restaurant. Businesses were forced to close before 9 PM, with various stages of reopening allowing for modifications to this plan...
over time. By the middle of June, the measures had clearly worked and Chiang Mai had again defeated the Coronavirus. There was a celebration when the last of the patients housed at the field hospital went home.

A week later, the Delta variant was detected in Bangkok. Cases again rose throughout the country, but the complacency that had prompted most Thais to “wait and see” with vaccination has led to a situation where it is nearly impossible to find vaccines available, even for those eligible. In some places, Thais and at-risk residents can get the Sinovac vaccine. In other places such as private hospitals, pre-booked supplies of Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines sell out within minutes of their initial offerings. As of mid-July, the situation in Chiang Mai was cautious and steady as the numbers of the Delta variant increased.

The next hurdle is whether the bulk of the fully vaccinated population that received Sinovac will remain protected over the long term. The situation changes daily, sometimes multiple times in a week. In the week beginning Sunday, July 11, the public was told Monday, July 12, that Sinovac is safe and effective. Tuesday, we were told that those receiving Sinovac will need a booster shot of AstraZeneca. Wednesday we learned that those eligible to receive vaccines will receive one shot of Sinovac and one shot of AstraZeneca. On Thursday, we were notified that there are no vaccines available anyway.

One wonders where this will lead, but rest assured, someone in Chiang Mai will again publish that the city has again defeated Coronavirus once this wave subsides. In the meantime, all we can do is wait for confirmation that our vaccination registration can be matched to a dose.

James Dewitz (M.A. history, 2015) is a freelance photojournalist, teacher and researcher in Thailand. He is still waiting for a vaccination.
Outreach Update

A ‘lost’ year becomes a ‘found’ year

By Rachael Skog

CSEAS Outreach began 2020 before the pandemic shutdown in March with an artistic extravaganza in February. In collaboration with the Thai Studies Committee and the Royal Thai Consulate, CSEAS was honored to host National University Singapore’s **Irving Chan Johnson**, a Harvard-trained anthropologist and traditional Thai illustrator and mural painter at Wat Uttamayanmuni, a Thai Buddhist temple in Singapore, for a five-day public workshop on the art of Thai illustration. Chan also gave a lunchtime lecture during the week about depictions of Thai everyday life in traditional temple murals. During the four two-hour evening workshops, Johnson took participants through the process of creating traditional Thai images, using math and geometry to bring figures to life on paper. Participants, who came from campus and the community, attended a Friday reception to show their resulting art works. The reception was hosted by Royal Thai Consul General of Chicago **Pisanu Sobhon** and organized by Thai language professor **Kanjana Thepboriruk**, and featured music provided by Thai Music Ensemble Director **Chamni Sripraram**. During the week the Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia Collection staff at Founders Library also put together an exhibit about Thai temple murals as part of the week. The workshop was sponsored by the NIU Foundation’s Thai Teaching and Research Endowment Fund.

With the March shutdown, the Outreach team suddenly found itself with the rest of the world looking at a calendar full of cancellations. The team quickly dreamed up new ways to connect with students: We organized a socially distanced and masked meet-and-greet to kick off the fall 2020 semester. We supported virtual conferences, including two student conferences and the Council on Thai Studies (COTS) annual meeting. We also worked to offer online cultural happenings each month. These included a virtual Thai New Year Songkran celebration in collaboration with the University of WI-Madison and the University of Washington, an Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month storytime series with SEA stories read by Southeast Asians both at NIU and abroad, and a full-line up of online SEAS-focused events for International Education Week that connected hundreds of students from the U.S. and SEA in real time and in meaningful ways. We also kept up with NIU’s Southeast Asian studies students, who were all learning remotely, by “visiting” them in their language and area studies classes to keep them up to date on academic and funding opportunities.

Outreach also announced a substantive if abbreviated virtual lecture series during 2020–21, with scholars speaking on topics ranging from Indonesian domestic worker communities in Singapore to spiritual transformation in post-genocide Cambodia; from elephants of the Burmese and Kachin forestlands to cultural resilience in Borneo. One speaker, **Mesrob Vartavarian** (Visiting Fellow, Cornell Southeast Asia Program), gave a second evening talk, co-hosted by a local public library to expand his audience to those in the community interested in America’s Cold War involvement with Southeast Asia.

During the pandemic year, K-12 schools were necessarily shut down and moved online, making our usual style of hands-on involvement with area schools impossible. Again, we found ways to effectively—and safely—increase the world’s knowledge and understanding of Southeast Asia through outreach efforts. One of those activities was a U.S.-Thai Middle School Cultural Exchange. Coordinated with Sycamore Middle School’s Social Studies teachers and 2020–21 Thai Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Tirada Soda, CSEAS Outreach helped connect local middle school students to SEA and with informational videos and to Thailand more specifically with cultural and fun language (“How to say ‘hi’ in Thai”)

Irving Chan Johnson with some of the temple illustrations created by workshop participants at the CSEAS workshop in February 2020.

continued on page 16
Above, a screenshot from one of the videos made by students from Piyamaharachalai School in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, for students at Sycamore Middle School. At left, Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Tirada Soda, center, wraps up a hardworking year in May as the Center’s only 2020–21 FLTA with supervising Thai language professor Kanjana Thepboriruk and CSEAS Acting Director Eric Jones.

The CSEAS Outreach team is happily making plans for the coming academic year, building on what wasn’t a lost year, but a found year in many ways: we found new paths, new abilities, new ways to solve problems, and new ways to engage with each other and the world. Join us for the exciting events in the coming year!

Rachael Skog is CSEAS’s Outreach Coordinator.

SEA Performing Arts: A virtual year, a showcase postponed

2020–21’s pandemic year was particularly challenging for Southeast Asian performing arts at NIU, with gamelan and Thai music ensembles relegated from face-to-face classes to live Zoom practices and virtual performances. But instructors Alex Yoffe (gamelan) and Chamni Siripraram (Thai ensemble) prevailed, keeping students engaged if at a distance in spring 2020. The Thai Music Ensemble had planned a joint spring performance at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music with the UCLA Thai Music Ensemble and the Korpha Band from Thailand. With no one able to travel, plans were set to get all 13 musicians to collaborate and perform together online. The group presented “Lao Joy,” from a musical suite called “Phra Lo Tam Kai,” featuring instrumentalists and a vocalist, in early May 2020.

For CSEAS associate Jui-Ching Wang, the biggest pivot was putting a Southeast Asia Performing Arts Showcase, originally set for April 4, 2020, on hold just days after the campus shutdown. The showcase, part of NIU’s 125th Anniversary Celebration, was ready to go with performances of wayang kulit (Balinese shadow puppetry) by University of Indiana professor Jennifer Goodlander, the NIU Javanese Gamelan Ensemble, the NIU Thai Music Ensemble, Vietnamese guitar musician An Tran, with world premieres of compositions by David Gordon (“The Hammers That Forge Time” performed by the NIU Percussion Ensemble) and Chinary Ung (“Four Elements” performed by Beyer).

lineup of performers will be Goodlander, the NIU Javanese Gamelan Ensemble, the NIU Thai Music Ensemble, Vietnamese guitar musician An Tran, with world premieres of compositions by David Gordon (“The Hammers That Forge Time” performed by the NIU Percussion Ensemble) and Chinary Ung (“Four Elements” performed by Beyer).
Student News

Acing the pandemic year

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Republic of Indonesia, the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, DC, invited communities, organizations, and institutions (including CSEAS) to participate Dec. 19, 2020 in an Angklung Goes to America Program. FLAS fellow Glynnis White (M.M. music) stepped in for invited CSEAS associate Ju-Ching Wang (School of Music), who was on sabbatical abroad. White joined roughly 60 U.S. participants, including K-12 and university music educators and community music teachers, for the virtual event. The group's experience with angklung, a bamboo instrument from West Java, ranged from absolute beginner to one professor whose Ph.D. dissertation focused on the instrument, White said. During the hour and a half workshop, the group worked together to set up the bamboo instruments, learn how to read unique angklung notation, warm up and learn/practice scales, and then made music together (including “Brahm's Lullaby”). For her participation, White received several full sets of angklung and instructional materials for CSEAS; her participation also makes NIU eligible to participate in a yet unscheduled U.S. Angklung Festival.

Other noteworthy student news from 2019–20 and 2020–21:

History doctoral students Dan McCoy and Isabelle Squires organized the 2021 NIU History Graduate Student Conference on April 9, a daylong virtual event that drew not only NIU graduate students, but presenters from six states and four countries. McCoy and Squires also presented their own work: McCoy, “From Those Who Laid the Foundation to Those Who Assume the Torch: Southeast Asia Historiographical Field Essay,” and Squires, “'Bring Up Your Daughter Dignified and Sociable and Fair': Nationalism and Postcolonial Resistance to Gender Representation in Philippine Media 1965-1975.”

CSEAS graduate assistant Sinta Febrina (M.A. criminology) received the 2021 Mothers Memorial Scholarship. She also published “The Term ‘Pelakor’ Describes a Strong Gender Injustice” in the April 19, 2021 issue of Magdelene, an online continued on page 18
Northern Illinois University and CSEAS have a long history of working with universities across Southeast Asia. This includes Cambodia, which began sending students to NIU after the country’s reopening to the West following the United Nations intervention in 1993. In 2021–22, nine Cambodian students from several Cambodian universities will be attending NIU as graduate students. Helping solidify the Cambodia connection is the most recent of five collaborations between NIU and Cambodian institutions: the 2017 memorandum of understanding with the American University of Phnom Penh (AUPP). Founded in 2013, AUPP is relatively new on the scene. But in a short time it has become a premier higher education institution in Cambodia, offering well-rounded preparation for postgraduate school in Western countries. The NIU collaboration has resulted in a steady stream of AUPP alumni coming to DeKalb as graduate students, the next generation of Cambodians who began coming to NIU in the late 2000s.

Limeng ONG (AUPP class of 2017) and Rithiya SEREY (AUPP class of 2018) are currently pursuing their doctoral degrees in political science, Limeng in comparative politics and Rithiya in international relations. Two more AUPP alumni—Socheata MEAS and Sopheachanboramey TUON—will join the Political Science department in fall 2021.

The quality of AUPP graduates has been impressive, according to faculty members who have worked with them. “Limeng Ong and Rithiya Serey are among the best PhD students in the political science PhD program at Northern Illinois University,” said CSEAS associate and former department chair Scot Schraufnagel, noting that both regularly attend department-sponsored extracurricular activities. Limeng and Rithiya have already had classroom experience teaching American students.

The skill set that Limeng and Rithiya received at AUPP, said CSEAS associate and Assistant Professor Aarie Glas, “equipped them with the foundational knowledge and learning skills necessary to navigate and thrive in higher education in the United States. Both students have developed thoughtful, important, and rigorous research programs building on these foundations.”

This past spring, the NIU Graduate School selected Limeng as the department’s 2021 Outstanding Graduate Student Award for Research and Scholarly Activity. “It is clear that Limeng’s education at [AUPP] prepared him well with language, mathematical, and critical thinking skills that have enabled him to be so successful in graduate school,” said Assistant Professor Ches Thurber.

“In addition to his strong scholarship,” CSEAS associate and Professor Kheang Un said in his nomination letter for Limeng, “Limeng is also a good citizen of the POLS department’s graduate student body. I have heard from a number of our graduate students discuss Limeng’s willingness to help them in their quantitative courses.”

Since coming to NIU, Limeng and Rithiya have also presented their research at professional conferences. “I have full confidence they will go on to have successful and impactful careers once they leave NIU,” said Professor Colin Kuehl.

Parts of this article originally appeared in NIU Today.
Dan McCoy: Teaching at the crossroads

History doctoral student and CSEAS Teaching Assistant Dan McCoy may be a native Illinoian, but his heart belongs to the bayou. McCoy, who will be teaching SEAS 225: Crossroads of the World this year, was born in Chicago and grew up in Louisiana. “While not originally from the Pelican State,” McCoy said, “all the wonderful cultural traits associated with ‘da bayou’ fill my heart with nostalgia and a touch of perpetual homesickness.”

Receiving his M.A. in history from the University of New Orleans in 2016, McCoy returned to Illinois in 2018 to begin a Ph.D. in history at NIU. “The multifaceted array of subject matter and academic disciplines associated with Southeast Asian Studies, along with the numerous career paths open to graduates, are what attracted me to the NIU program,” McCoy said. “Moreover, the friendliness and camaraderie that CSEAS exudes made the transition to NIU quite smooth and allowed me to ingratiate myself in the milieu quickly. NIU’s Southeast Asian Studies program is a jewel in the Illinois cornfields, rivaling SEAS programs at larger universities at every turn.”

McCoy, whose career goals range from work as a Southeast Asia historian for a government entity, think tank or academic institution, is currently preparing his dissertation prospectus. “My doctoral research interests include examining the roles played by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and principally Indonesia during the Third Indochina War,” McCoy said. “In addition to examining the fault lines between ASEAN member nations in how to address Vietnam’s protracted incursion in Democratic Kampuchea, I am interested in examining how Indonesia helped steer ASEAN, while navigating the geopolitics of regional and global powers, toward mitigating regional tensions and ultimately helping to end the conflict.”

In teaching the Center’s Southeast Asia survey course, McCoy hopes to draw more students into his own passion for the region. “I hope to show undergraduate students the innumerably diverse facets of Southeast Asia through the insight and expertise offered by a smorgasbord of NIU-based guest lecturers ranging from social scientists to language professors to humanities scholars to graduate students,” McCoy said. “Furthermore, I hope this course encourages and, more importantly, excites students to pursue and incorporate Southeast Asian studies into the remainder of their curriculum and perhaps even their future career aspirations.”

In addition to teaching and working on his doctorate, McCoy is also the NIU graduate student representative for the recently formed Graduate Education and Training in Southeast Asian Studies (GETSEA) consortium of which CSEAS is a member. GETSEA is a network of National Resource Centers for Southeast Asian Studies working to leverage collaboration between institutions to enhance graduate study and research of the region.

The Southeast Asia Club’s new officers for 2021–22 are: Isabelle Squires, president; Vilaya Sirivong, vice president; Hanna Schaumberg, treasurer; Connor Knutson, secretary; Holly Young, social/cultural events coordinator; Lauren O’Toole, marketing; Patricia Buczynski, student conference coordinator; Mitchell Rigert, assistant conference coordinator. Club officers for 2020–21 were Matthew Werstler, president; Glynnis White, vice president; Vilaya Sirivong, secretary; Agam Jayantora, treasurer; Elayna Lachs, marketing coordinator; Patricia Buczynski, social/cultural events coordinator; and Isabelle Squires, conference coordinator.

Matthew Werstler (M.M. music) won the Division of International Affairs’ Outstanding Student Award in November 2019 for his contributions to international education at NIU, citing his numerous efforts in building cross-cultural understanding, empathy and peace at NIU.


Staying connected in these times

Iqra Anugrah (Ph.D. political science, 2018) presented “Movement for Land Rights in Democratic Indonesia” at the Dec. 5-7, 2019 SEASIA Biennial Conference sponsored by the Consortium for Southeast Asian Studies in Asia in Taipei. Anugrah is currently a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Postdoctoral Fellow at the Kyoto University Center for Southeast Asian Studies and a research associate at the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information in Jakarta.

I Younan An (B.A. political science, 2019), former SEA Fellow and 2018 NIU Lincoln Laureate, is on his way to the University of Toronto to pursue his doctorate in public policy after completing his master’s degree at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Political and International Affairs. I Younan was a 2014 Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program Cambodia participant.

Thomas (Thommy) Brown (MA history, 2019) spent 2020–21 as a visiting instructor of history at Huntington University in Huntington, IN.

Paul Chambers (Ph.D. political science, 2003), on leave from Naresuan University as a fellow at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, has contributed to a recently published monograph in the Yale Southeast Asia Studies series, Coup, King, Crisis: A Critical Interregnum in Thailand. The monograph, described as the first book-length analysis of this transition from the rule of King Bhumibol Adulyadej to his son and successor King Maha Vajiralongkorn, explores the royal transition from the 2014 coup through the 2017 Constitution and 2019 election. Chambers and fellow alum Punchada Sirivunnabood (Ph.D. political science, 2009) were interviewed in the Jan. 20, 2020 edition of Bloomberg News about the state of Thai politics. Sirivunnabood, associate professor in the Faculty of Sciences and Humanities at Mahidol University in Bangkok, returned to NIU as a Fulbright Scholar for the fall 2019 semester.

Shoua Yang (Ph.D. political science, 2006) has been promoted to full professor at St. Cloud University.

Peter Colina (M.B.A. 2013) and Mirah Kertayuda (M.A. political science, 2016) launched into entrepreneurship in 2021 with Pasyon Packs, a multi-functional, environmentally sustainable backpack. The couple’s goal is to create a “social business . . . where a portion of the social business’s net profit will be allocated to quality charitable organizations focusing on urgent need (natural disaster and children food security),” according to Colina. The two met while students at NIU and were active participants in CSEAS programs and the Southeast Asia Club. They married in 2017.

Younan An (B.A. political science, 2019), former SEAFellow and 2018 NIU Lincoln Laureate, is on his way to the University of Toronto to pursue his doctorate in public policy after completing his master’s degree at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Political and International Affairs. I Younan was a 2014 Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program Cambodia participant.

Thomas (Thommy) Brown (MA history, 2019) spent 2020–21 as a visiting instructor of history at Huntington University in Huntington, IN.

Paul Chambers (Ph.D. political science, 2003), on leave from Naresuan University as a fellow at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, has contributed to a recently published monograph in the Yale Southeast Asia Studies series, Coup, King, Crisis: A Critical Interregnum in Thailand. The monograph, described as the first book-length analysis of this transition from the rule of King Bhumibol Adulyadej to his son and successor King Maha Vajiralongkorn, explores the royal transition from the 2014 coup through the 2017 Constitution and 2019 election. Chambers and fellow alum Punchada Sirivunnabood (Ph.D. political science, 2009) were interviewed in the Jan. 20, 2020 edition of Bloomberg News about the state of Thai politics. Sirivunnabood, associate professor in the Faculty of Sciences and Humanities at Mahidol University in Bangkok, returned to NIU as a Fulbright Scholar for the fall 2019 semester.

Shoua Yang (Ph.D. political science, 2006) has been promoted to full professor at St. Cloud University.

Peter Colina (M.B.A. 2013) and Mirah Kertayuda (M.A. political science, 2016) launched into entrepreneurship in 2021 with Pasyon Packs, a multi-functional, environmentally sustainable backpack. The couple’s goal is to create a “social business . . . where a portion of the social business’s net profit will be allocated to quality charitable organizations focusing on urgent need (natural disaster and children food security),” according to Colina. The two met while students at NIU and were active participants in CSEAS programs and the Southeast Asia Club. They married in 2017.

Shay Galto (M.A. sociology, 2012), former FLAS fellow and 2009 NIU Lincoln Laureate, has been promoted to
vice president of advancement research and analytics at Ruffalo Noel Levitz, a higher education enrollment and fundraising management firm based in Cedar Rapids, IA.

**Anthonie Laurence Tumpag** (MA anthropology, 2016) is curating exhibits for ATAYAL, a non-profit organization serving indigenous communities. During 2021, he collaborated with different ethnic communities on a virtual exhibit, CULTURALLY CONNECTED While Physically Apart, through the Trickster Cultural Center in Schaumburg, IL, where Tumpag worked until April 2021. The exhibit highlighted art, objects and stories from the Indonesian, Malaysian and Philippine communities among others. "While the figurative carvings come from different cultures, people’s experiences with them can recollect feelings relevant in these unprecedented times," Tumpag said. “While many of us must remain apart from loved ones during the pandemic, our love for our cultures and their teachings can still bring us together and help us stay connected in uncertain times.” In July 2021, he facilitated Distant Journeys of Cultural Exchange exhibit for ATAYAL at the Trickster Gallery.

**Rachel Jacob** (BA political science/history, 2018), a former FLAS fellow and 2017 NIU Lincoln Laureate, graduated from the University of Illinois-Chicago Law School in spring 2021 and will begin officer training for the U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate General in January 2022.


**Brett McCabe** (M.A. anthropology, 2011) is working for Amazon Web Services in Seattle. He and wife Mary McCabe moved from the Chicago area to the Northwest in October 2020.


---

*Anthonie Tumpag shows some of the objects in the Culturally Connected exhibit at the Chicago-area Trickster Gallery.*

*Mirah Kertayuda and Peter Colina with their new “passion.”*
That moment when alumni, professors become fellow scholars


Ron Leonhardt (B.A., history/political science, 2014), who received his doctorate in history from George Washington University in spring 2020, is now an assistant professor of history at Albany State University. After graduating from NIU, he earned a full scholarship to GW’s Columbian College of Arts and Sciences for both his M.A. and doctoral degrees. “Following my work on Southeast Asia at NIU as an undergraduate, I began to work more extensively with several Cold War specialists at The George Washington University,” Leonhardt said. “Under the direction of my dissertation advisor, Shawn McHale, my dissertation project looks at Cambodia’s modernist movement in the 1950s and 1960s. I use archival materials mainly from Cambodia, but archives in former Yugoslavia, Pakistan, and several private collections also help inform how I discuss Cambodia’s global anti-imperialist struggle.” Leonhardt’s dissertation is entitled “Under the Sangkum’s Eye: The Politics of Modernity in Cold War Cambodia, 1955-1970.” Keeping with his NIU connection, his dissertation committee included CSEAS associates Jacobsen and History Professor Emeritus Kenton Clymer. In January 2020, Jacobsen was a presenter on a panel Leonhardt organized for the Southeast Conference of the Association for Asian Studies.
By Jeff Rutherford

A man in my hometown of Rockford, IL, was surprised recently when I told him I had studied Thai at NIU. And his wonder increased when I told him I also had studied Burmese, and played a semester in an “Indonesian xylophone orchestra,” and took classes in Southeast Asian politics. “DeKalb?” he laughed.

I remember thinking the same thing in Taipei in 1998, when I stopped having to look elsewhere for grad school and settled on NIU. The logic was implacable: one of the first established Southeast Asian studies centers in the country; three professors of Thai politics; six or seven regional languages; the country’s only Burmese study center; a couple hundred Thai students; and people from and interested in Southeast Asia from around the world. And all this just down the way from family and Rockford, where I hadn’t really lived since high school.

I did my master’s in political science at NIU from 1999 to 2001 after having lived most of a decade in California, Thailand, and Taiwan. My daughter is now a second-year student and a Foreign Language and Area Studies fellow at the Center for Southeast Asia Studies. She was born soon after we left DeKalb for Chiang Mai, a treasure of a place I left having studied radical global political ecology with a concentration on Southeast Asia. That’s my take on it, anyway: what I wanted, what I got. We can’t blame the radical part on the professors. Their value was in the challenge, the context, the resource. Political Science professors Dwight King and Clark Neher were open but critical ears. I’ve got a kind of vetting board in my head that I turn to in need. On that board is Dr. King, dead-panning “Yeah, and you can make that point in a sentence. How are you going to prove it?” Formally, my M.A. was Poli Sci-International Relations. But almost every paper I wrote was the political ecology of this-that-whatever. And life was like that for a while: teaching college kids the political ecology of forestry in the hills of Mae Hong Son. Training environmental journalists on the Irrawaddy and the Mekong. Growing organic rice and ducks. My NIU time was tied to it all.

What I needed and didn’t always know I wanted, I also got, from the foundational macro stuff that Dwight King and Eliot Kang had me read, and the area knowledge from Clark Neher, Ladd Thomas, and Danny Unger. Not to mention the time and talk with my dear polyglot cohort of students. And I suppose it was peculiar to the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, but I found it remarkable how much of what I learned came from outside the classroom – in living rooms, walking on campus, my wife’s dinner parties, brown bags, and just bumping into people. U Saw Tun’s Friday night curry klatch was my favorite.

I lugged classics from Dr. Neher’s reading lists across the world and from home to home before I gave up trying to collect things, and his books found their own good home. I’d like to think that’ll be true of all the gifts I was given by a good couple of years as a student with the NIU Center for Southeast Asia Studies.

Thomas “Jeff” Rutherford (M.A. political science, 2001) teaches social science at RESA Middle School.
One last look

The Southeast Asia Club went global for November 2020’s International Education Week (IEW), organizing five days of international Southeast Asian language tables and cultural exchange via Zoom that drew nearly 300 participants from NIU and Southeast Asia. With the support of CSEAS, the NIU Burma Interest Group, 2020-21 Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Tirada Soda (Thai) and former FLTAs, NIU students were able to join their peers in SEA to converse and share experiences for an hour Monday through Thursday, each day focused on a different Southeast Asian language taught at NIU. On the last day, the club drew more than 91 participants from both sides of the ocean for an English language table. Participating international institutions included CALY Education Center (Burma/Myanmar), Cavite State University (Philippines), Professional Language Courses Bali (Indonesia), Tarlac National High School (Philippines), Thammasat University (Thailand), and Ubon Ratchathani University (Thailand). Kudos to Zoom-master and World Music graduate student Matthew Westler for keeping it all straight; to former FLTAs Songwut Bhattarachilyakorn (Thai), John Paul Dela Rosa and Lady Aileen Ambion Orsal (Tagalog), Ildi Kurniawan, Reza Fahlevi and Bunga Mastari (Indonesian), and Su Su Tin (Burmese) for coordinating in-country. And finally, to SEA Club members for not giving up on a popular IEW event in these pandemic times.

Welcome to the CSEAS donor family

You can help keep Southeast Asian studies at NIU alive and vibrant with your charitable contribution through the NIU Foundation. To contribute by phone, by mail or online, go to the NIU Foundation’s How to Give web page and where indicated, specify “Center for Southeast Asian Studies.” If your employer matches your charitable donations, please take a moment to also fill out that form and double your contribution. Your gifts help us give more students opportunities to expand their knowledge and experience of Southeast Asia. We thank you for your support.

Center for Southeast Asian Studies

520 College View Court
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115
PHONE: 815-753-1771
FAX: 815-753-1776
E-mail: cseas@niu.edu

ONLINE
▶ CSEAS: www.niu.edu/cseas/
▶ SEASite: Language and Culture Resources on Southeast Asia: www.niu.edu/clas/resources/seasite.html
▶ Facebook: CSEASNIU
▶ Twitter: @CSEAS_NIU

Happiness is a Thai language table on Zoom Monday during International Education Week

CSEAS Council 2020–21

Rahmi Aoyama / WLC
James Cohen / COE
Jessamine Cooke-Plagwitz / WLC
Rhodalyne Gallo-Crail / WLC
Aarie Glas / POLS
Kikue Hamayotsu / POLS
Trude Jacobsen / HIST
Eric Jones / CSEAS-HIST
Kheang Leang / WLC
Judy Ledgerwood / ANTH
Melissa Lenczewski / GEOL-ESE
Micah F. Morton / ANTH
Wei Luo / GEOG
Hao Phan / NIU Libraries
Alan Potkin / CSEAS
Catherine Raymond / CBS-ART
Scot Schraufnagel / POLS
Florensia Surjadi / FCNS
Tomoyuki Shibata / PH-ESE
Tharaphi Than / PH-ESE
Kheang Un / CSEAS-POLS
Jui-Ching Wang / MUS
Shei-Chau Wang / ART
Jim Wilson / GEOG

Staff
• Director: Judy Ledgerwood
  815-753-1771, jledgerw@niu.edu
• Assistant Director: Eric Jones
  815-753-1771, eajones@niu.edu
• Office Manager: Lisa Heal
  815-753-1771, lheal@niu.edu
• Communications: Liz Poppens Denius
  815-753-1901, edenius@niu.edu
• Advising / Outreach: Rachael Skog
  815-753-1595, rskog@niu.edu

Northern Illinois University

Northern Illinois University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, marital status, national origin, disability, status based on the Victims’ Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA) or status as a disabled or Vietnam-era veteran. Further, the Constitution and Bylaws of Northern Illinois University provides for equal treatment regardless of political views or affiliation, and sexual orientation. Inquiries concerning application of Title IX, Section 504, and other statutes and regulations may be referred to the Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources Center, 1515 W. Lincoln Highway, DeKalb, IL 60115, telephone 815-753-1118. Printed by authority of the State of Illinois. www.niu.edu 9/14.