Letter from the Director

Dear CSEAS Friends,

Let me wish each of you a happy new year! For those of you who don’t know me, I am a Professor of Political Science. My research focuses on political institutions, parties, and elections in Southeast Asia with a focus on Thailand and the Philippines. I served as CSEAS director many years ago and have been happily helming CSEAS this year as Interim Director while Professor Mike McGovern enjoys a much-earned sabbatical.

Thanks to the tireless work of the Professor McGovern and the CSEAS and II staff, I am pleased to announce that CSEAS had its Title VI funding restored this summer. With that foundation we have been put together that foundation we have been put together even more in the semester ahead.

In this newsletter you will find information about some of our past and future events in the field of Southeast Asian studies. Some of our awards include the Judith Becker Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Research on Southeast Asia, the Thai Studies Awards for Undergraduate and Graduate Research, SE Asia Language Scholarships, and Fulbright and FlAS Grant Fellowships. We also support faculty research grants and bring scholars based in Southeast Asia to the University of Michigan.

Where possible we invite others of you to participate in our programming remotely.

Best wishes,

Allan Hicken
Interim Director
Center for Southeast Asian Studies

Faculty Update

Trent Walker Joins the U-M Department of Asian Languages and Culture

Trent Walker joins the faculty of Asian Languages and Culture as Assistant Professor of Southeast Asian Studies and Thai Professorship of Theravada Buddhism. His work focuses on Southeast Asian Buddhism, literature, and music. He received his PhD in Religious Studies from Stanford and a PhD in Buddhist Studies from UC Berkeley, where his dissertation focused on Cambodian chanting manuscripts.

His research spans the medieval period to the present, focusing on handwritten materials—bark-paper documents, palm-leaf manuscripts, and stone inscriptions—and their performative realization in speech, chant, and song. He has long worked with Thai, Khmer, Lao, Pali, and Sanskrit sources, and more recently with those in Tai Khmu, Tai Lue, Shan, and Vietnamese. In the field of Khmer literature, he authored Until Nirvana’s Time: Buddhist Songs from Cambodia (Shambhala Publications, 2022) and co-edited a major anthology, Out of the Shadows of Angkor: Cambodian Poetry, Prose, and Performance through the Ages (Manoa/University of Hawai‘i Press, 2022). His recent publications include articles on Thai literary history, Lao and Shan exegesis, Theravada nuns, Pali-vernacular homiletics, Khmer epigraphy, and Vietnamese Buddhist translation.

Michael Hawkins joins as CSEAS Lecturer

Michael Hawkins joined as a lecturer for CSEAS and he will be teaching the SEAS 501 course. He recently completed his PhD in Geography at the University of North Carolina. His dissertation, “From Colonial Cargo to Global Containers: An Episodic Historical Geography of Manila’s Waterfront, 1898–2020,” narrates an episodic historical geography of the Port of Manila and examines a series of key moments that transformed it.
IN MEMORIAM

Amnuay Viravan
MAY 22, 1932 – APRIL 18, 2023
Dr. Amnuay Viravan, Thai government official and Michigan alumnus, passed away on April 18, 2023. He was 90 years old.

Dr. Viravan received three degrees from the University of Michigan. He first received an M.B.A. with distinction in 1954. His second degree was an MA in Economics in 1957, swiftly followed by a PhD in Business Administration in 1958. He later received an honorary Doctor of Laws in 1990.

His public service career started in 1963 when he served in Thailand’s Ministry of National Development. He later entered politics ascending to the position of Minister of Finance on two separate terms, from 1980 to 1982 and 1992 to 1995. When he retired, he was also appointed Deputy Prime Minister.

Dr. Viravan remained a lifelong member of the Thai government and now have the opportunity to learn about the rich traditions of Thai Buddhism. The University of Michigan and its students bid farewell to Dr. Viravan.

Priscilla Rogers
MARCH 5, 1949 – MAY 3, 2023
Professor Rogers received her B.S. (1971) and M.S. (1975) from Western Michigan University and her Ph.D. (1986) from the University of Michigan. She held a number of positions in management and was known for her outstanding contributions to business communication research, teaching, and pedagogy. She was recently awarded the top honor from the Association of Business Communication, its prestigious Fellow Award, for achieving extraordinary excellence in business communication in 2020.

Professor Rogers’ publications have appeared in the Journal of Business and Technical Communication, Academy of Management Discoveries, and the Journal of Business Communication. She was still active as a researcher at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Professor Rogers served as co-chair of the Law, History and Communications Area and the head of Business Communication at the Ross Business School. She was a pioneer in the field of management communication and was known for her outstanding contributions to business communication research, teaching, and pedagogy. She was recently awarded the top honor from the Association of Business Communication, its prestigious Fellow Award, for achieving extraordinary excellence in business communication in 2020.

L.A. Peter Gosling
NOVEMBER 14, 1927 – DECEMBER 13, 2023
L. A. Peter Gosling, passed away peacefully, from a recurrence of lymphoma, at his home in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on December 13, 2023, surrounded by his immediate family.

Pete was a world-class geographer, working on the dynamics of rural development in Southeast Asia, conducting extensive fieldwork in Malaysia and Thailand on populations whose livelihoods would be disrupted by developments like mechanization, road construction and dam building. He was also a pillar of the Southeast Asian Studies community at Michigan.

Pete was instrumental in the founding of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (then the Center for South and Southeast Asia) at Michigan, directed the Center on three occasions (a total of eight years) between 1962 and 1980. Throughout his career at Michigan Pete was a bridgebuilder, entrepreneur, and fierce champion for Southeast Asia Studies. Pete worked tirelessly to raise money from outside funders in support of Southeast Asia program and within the university, and dedicated to hire Southeast Asians.

In order make the case for a Center to the university Pete scoured the ranks of faculty in the professional schools, identifying several faculty who had done work in the region from Engineering, Nursing, etc. He then pitched the idea of an interdisciplinary center to administrators as a way to bring programs and scholars from across the university together.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Center for Southeast Asian Studies would likely not exist were it not for Pete.

His work in support of the Southeast Asian Studies also extended well beyond the University. Pete was closely involved with the Association for Asian Studies throughout his career, serving as Secretary Treasurer for a total of 14 years between 1965 and 1994, and working to broaden the organization’s focus to include more attention to Southeast Asia. Continuing this legacy Pete and his wife Professor Linda Lim recently established the Gosling-Lim Postdoctoral Fellowship in Southeast Asian Studies, housed at the Association for Asian Studies, and hosted at Michigan, designed to provide expanded research opportunities for scholars from Southeast Asia.

Throughout their years at Michigan Pete and Linda helped build and strengthen the CSEAS community by opening their home to visiting scholars, faculty, and students. Countless numbers of people enjoyed the warm Gosling-Lim hospitality, eating good food, chatting about Southeast Asia, and building lasting connections.

Pete and Linda also established Gosling-Lim Southeast Asia Library Fund in 2020 to support to CSEAS’ Southeast Asian Studies Library Collection at the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library. You can support the fund at https://giving.umich.edu/w/gosling-and-lim-sea-library-fund.337379.
Gavin Ryan is the 2023 recipient of the Judith Becker Award. He is a dual-enrolled Master of Arts in Media Arts and Doctor of Musical Arts in Percussion graduate student at the University of Michigan. The combination of these two degrees often places his work and artistic aesthetic firmly in experimental and progressive fields. But the influence of his Balinese teachers prompted him to pursue the forefront of performance technology not in spite of tradition, but as a mode of honoring it.

Despite the associations of gamelan selonding with religious rituals and a reputation of sanctity, many of the younger gamelan selonding musicians Ryan met were equally as interested in forward-thinking and innovative practices in gamelan music. Many of his collaborators in Bali, Indonesia viewed preservation and transformation as complimentary sides of their artistic output, and they often discussed a concept of “innovation as tradition.” Ryan will use the funding from the Judith Becker Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Research on Southeast Asia to collaborate with and commission I Putu Arya Deva Suryanegara to compose a new gamelan work with live, interactive electronics for Gamelan Kyai Telaga Madu, to be premiered by our ensemble in the 2023 and 2024 academic years.

Judith Becker Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Research on Southeast Asia 2023
ReConnect/ReCollect
Reparative Connections to Philippine Collections at the University of Michigan

A recap by PROFESSOR DEIRDORE DE LA CRUZ

From the 1870s through the first half of the twentieth century, the University of Michigan played an important role in the US colonization of the Philippines. U-M faculty, students, and alumni traveled to the Philippines as colonists, administrators, educators, researchers, and entrepreneurs, resulting in the acquisition of thousands of flora and fauna specimens, archaeological artifacts, photographs, and archival materials currently housed in multiple repositories across campus. For most of their history, these collections have been accessed and used only across campus. For most of their history, these artifacts, photographs, and archival materials were categorized and accessible and developed reparative approaches towards things like finding aids and catalogues, drawing attention to offensive or outdated language and offering alternative descriptions for materials that had long been categorized by colonial provenance. This resulted in a “Glossary of Harmful Language” and technical tools that other institutions can use to remediate their own collections.

We also piloted an ambitious series of community engagement programs that aimed to bring U-M’s Philippine collections to communities of Filipino and Indigenous descent, and vice versa. Throughout the two-year period we offered several public events for the U-M and greater Southeast Michigan communities, grounded in the collections, and mounted a popular exhibit at Kalayaan, the annual Philippine Independence Day celebration that draws hundreds of Filipinos and Filipinos Americans from the region. We organized three artist and culture bearer residencies that opened our Philippine collections to Filipino, Filipino American and Indigenous People (IPs) from the US and the Philippines for inspiration, reflection, and collaborative learning. Over the course of a year, we hosted eight artists and culture bearers from the US, the Visayas, and Indigenous communities of the Cordillera in residencies that ranged from one to two weeks. Their time in the collections was inspired and intense, and we were fortunate to have them share their reflections and expertise through public roundtables and demonstrations. The culmination of this engagement programs took place this past August, when a group from ReConnect/ReCollect traveled to the Cordillera region of the Philippines to hand over digital and print copies of several of our Philippine photographic and archival collections. We engaged, shared, celebrated—and even danced—with members of the Baloyo, Bontoc, Kankanay-ay, Ilagao, and Illoget indigenous communities in the collections, and created new materials that was both humbling and moving.

ReConnect/ReCollect developed a website that chronicles our collective journeys and archival collections. We engaged, shared, and continue to work on food and the environment. This volume thus brings together a transnational community of scholars, writers, activists, and food enthusiasts from the Philippines and the Filipino/Filipinx diaspora. Its 12 chapters representing the vegetable frontiers of far-northern Benguet to the seaweed farms of far-southern Pan-Tag, and the gardens of Lumad (Indigenous) Schools to the carceral geographies of urban Manila, challenge the selective fetishization of culinary culture by revealing emerging issues that have propelled the archipelago both into the global limelight and into certain ecological precarity. A chapter-writing workshop was held in June 2022 and an editorial workshop in January 2023. Hallo-Halo Ecologies is currently under contract and under review with the University of Hawaii Press, and has received generous support from the University of Michigan Center for Southeast Asian Studies.

Halo-Halo Ecologies

Lyssa Paredes, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, hosted a three-day workshop entitled, “Community-based Countermapping of Water Systems in Plantation Mindanao,” on June 27–29, 2023. Held in Davao City in the Southern Philippines, the workshop brought together Indigenous Peoples, forest and watershed guardians, civil society organizations, and local government units who have found their lives impacted by the presence of plantation agriculture. Cian Dayrit, artist-activist and geographer from the University of the Philippines Diliman, led the countermapping exercise, which resulted in fifty personal depictions of Mindanawon’s relationships with the rivers, streams, and springs of the Mindanao River Basin and the Davao River Basin. The workshop was formally supported by a generous grant from the U-M ADVANCE Program, and the Department of Anthropology. Paredes intends to use the results of the workshop to inform a chapter of her book manuscript, Bananapocalypse: Ecologies of Plantation Capitalism in a Global Mindanao, as well as future scholarship and community engagement.

In addition, Paredes and co-editor Marvin Montelano, Associate Professor of Social Sciences (Environmental Studies) at Yale-NUS College have launched the edited volume project Halo-Halo Ecologies: The Emergent Environments Behind Filipino Food. Halo-Halo Ecologies argues that we cannot begin to meaningfully consider Filipina and Filipino cultural or gastronomic identity formation without a new storytelling tradition that creatively combines critical studies on food and the environment. This volume thus brings together a transnational community of scholars, writers, activists, and food enthusiasts from the Philippines and the Filipino/Filipinx diaspora. Its 12 chapters representing the vegetable frontiers of far-northern Benguet to the seaweed farms of far-southern Pan-Tag, and the gardens of Lumad (Indigenous) Schools to the carceral geographies of urban Manila, challenge the selective fetishization of culinary culture by revealing emerging issues that have propelled the archipelago both into the global limelight and into certain ecological precarity. A chapter-writing workshop was held in June 2022 and an editorial workshop in January 2023. Halo-Halo Ecologies is currently under contract and under review with the University of Hawaii Press, and has received generous support from the University of Michigan Center for Southeast Asian Studies.
CSEAS Lecture Series

Lectures can be viewed on U-M CSEAS’ YouTube channel.

CSEAS Events

Fall 2022

September 2
Living with the Mekong: Archaeological Perspectives and Alternative Futures
Jittapim Yamprai, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

February 3
Refugee Youth Agency in Flux: Active and Passive Waiting in Transit Country Indonesia
Realiza Masuri, Universitas Gadjah Mada and University of Michigan

March 10
Fruit of the Poisonous Tree: The Marcos Diaries
Ambeth R. Ocampo, University of Michigan/Ateneo de Manila University

March 24
History in Ruins: Keramat and Stories of Singapore Islam
Teren Sevea, Harvard Divinity School

June 10
Reincarnation and Recursivity as Politics of Atmosphere
Ben Tan, Vanderbilt University

April 7
From the “Bloody Crown” to space travel: Diaries
Dana Moss, University of Notre Dame

Winter 2023

January 20
Western Cultures as Thailand’s Strategy for Independence
Jittapim Yamprai, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

February 5
Disorientations: Political Ecology of Displacing Communities from Cambodia’s Tonle Sap Lake
Sophie Chan, Michigan State University

February 9
Of Traditions and Innovations: Tio Nithakhong Somsanith’s Art Stenciling Project and Sustainability in Luang Prabang, Laos
Boneth Ly, University of California Santa Cruz

February 12
Aesthetic Nationalism: Dancing the Tai Nation in the Thai-Myanmar Borderlands
Tani Sebro, Cal Poly Humboldt

March 22
From Migasuand to Migoslait: Preserving and Transformation of Oral Tradition into Written Form in Lumad Mindanao
Oma Panedas, University of California Los Angeles

March 29
The End of Accountability? The Philippines Under Duterte and Marcos
Prabang, Laos

April 5
The Movement of Female Islamic Scholars in Indonesia
Nor Ismah, Nahdlatul Ulama University and University of Michigan

April 19
Explaining Intra-Institutional Rebellion Using the Case of the US War in Vietnam (1960-75)
Dana Moss, University of Notre Dame

Winter 2024

February 20
Southeast Asia in the Muslim World
Ismail Fajrie Alatas, New York University

March 10
Beyond Center and Periphery: Locating Southeast Asia in the Muslim World
Jane Ferguson, Australia National University

March 24
Fruit of the Poisonous Tree: The Marcos Diaries
Ambeth R. Ocampo, University of Michigan/Ateneo de Manila University

April 5
The Movement of Female Islamic Scholars in Indonesia
Nor Ismah, Nahdlatul Ulama University and University of Michigan

April 19
From the “Bloody Crown” to space travel: Diaries
Dana Moss, University of Notre Dame

Ambeth Ocampo, Visiting Professor of Southeast Asian Studies

In the Winter 2023 semester, Professor Ambeth Ocampo served as a Visiting Professor of Southeast Asian Studies thanks to a Philippine Studies grant by the Republic of the Philippines. He taught two classes at the University of Michigan: SEAS 215—Contemporary Social Issues in Southeast Asia: Under Two Empires: The Philippines, Spain, and the US; and SEAS 455—Topics in Southeast Asian Studies: Unlocking Historical Documents: Jose Rizal and the Emergence of the Filipino Nation.

He delivered guest lectures at the University of Michigan and at universities across the United States. His CSEAS lecture last March was entitled, “Fruit of the Poisonous Tree: The Marcos Diaries,” which discussed the historical relevance and his experience dealing with diaries of the late Philippine president, Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. He also gave a lecture, “Rizal, the First Swagapino” with U-M Filipino American Student Association and Filipino Young Leaders Program (FYLPO).

Professor Ocampo currently is the Horacio de la Costa Professor in History and the Humanities at the Ateneo de Manila University. He is a public historian whose research covers the 19th-century Philippines—its art, culture, and the people who figure in the birth of the nation. Professor and former chairman of the Department of History at the Ateneo de Manila University, Professor Ocampo writes “Looking Back,” the longest-running editorial page column on history for the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

The Center for Khmer Studies (CKS) promotes research, teaching, and public service in the social sciences, arts, and humanities in Cambodia and the Mekong region. CKS is a private American Overseas Research Center supported by a consortium of educational institutions, scholars, and individuals. CKS is also the first member institution of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) in Southeast Asia.

CSK MOU Signing

In January 2023, CSEAS partnered with the Center for Khmer Studies through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enhance education and research on Southeast Asia. The center looks forward to collaborating on Khmer Studies projects in the future.

University of Michigan Museum of Art Exhibition Opening

Angkor Complex

Cultural Heritage and Post-Genocide Memory in Cambodia

Guest Curator: Nachiket Chanchani

On View February 5 – July 28, 2024

A cycle of crises public health, economic instability, authoritarian regimes, racial injustice, and climate change spread around the globe, millions are experiencing distress, conflict, uncertainty, and vulnerability. This troubling combination of experiences is nothing new for Cambodians. Between 1975-1979, when the Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia, about a quarter of the country’s population died of infectious diseases, weapon wounds, and malnutrition.

This exhibition brings together more than 80 works of art spanning a millennium to present how the visual culture of Cambodia and its diaspora has changed in the face of upheaval. Angkor Complex also allows viewers to encounter the still-fresh scars of a genocide and critically appreciate the strategies evolved to nurture resilience in trying times.

Picture by Pete Pin, one of the featured artists at Angkor Complex
GIVE TO CSEAS

Making a gift to U-M CSEAS supports the programs and research projects that reveal the complexity and uniqueness of Southeast Asia today. It also supports the work of our world-class faculty and students who collaborate in providing new understandings of this increasingly important region.

To help in any way, make a donation to the CSEAS Strategic Fund.

Your gift helps. Any amount helps.

For example:
An $100 gift supports a U-M student’s registration to present their research at an academic conference
A $500 gift creates a Southeast Asia-specific curriculum module for Michigan K–14 classrooms
An $1,000 gift supports bringing a national expert on Southeast Asia to present to our students, faculty, and community members at our CSEAS Lecture Series