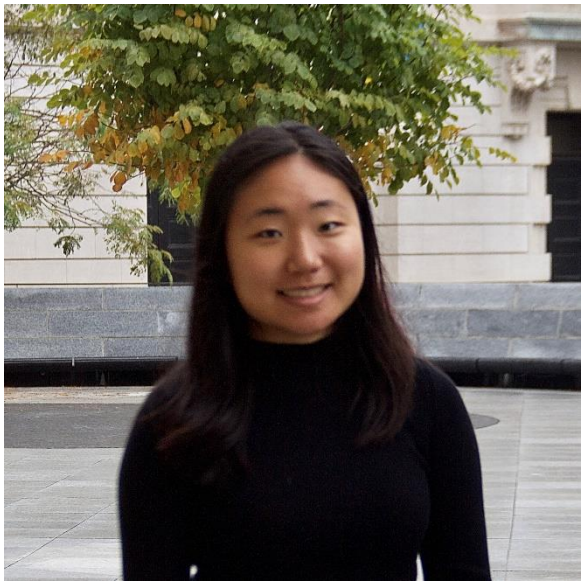
2024-2025 Williams Prize Award Winner



Caitlin Hong

May 23, 2025

Caitlin Hong (Grace Hopper College) was the winner of the 2025 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies. The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Caitlin at graduation, and she kindly answered a few of our questions about her essay.

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "Citrus Farming, Tourism, and Globalization: Jeju Island's Transformation Under South Korea's State-Led Development"?

My senior essay examines the economic and cultural transformation of Jeju Island from the 1960s to the present, focusing on the interrelated development of the citrus farming and tourism industries. I argue that Jeju's transformation was shaped not just by South Korea's top-down, state-led modernization strategies, but also by the island's distinct regional identity and evolving relationship to the mainland. Drawing on policy, oral histories, and fieldwork conducted in Jeju, I explore how citrus farming—often portrayed as a success story of rural development—relies heavily on under-recognized migrant labor, and how tourism is both a symbol of national pride and a source of tension for local communities. My work emphasizes the adaptive strategies of farmers navigating demographic decline, land use pressures, and agritourism, positioning Jeju as a case study in how peripheral regions both absorb and resist the logics of globalization.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?

I first visited Jeju while studying abroad in Seoul on the Light Fellowship, and I remember feeling struck by how culturally distinct the island felt from the rest of Korea. Even though Korean is the dominant language, Jeju felt like a place that was both part of the nation and somehow apart from it. That curiosity stayed with me, especially as I noticed how central tourism and citrus were to the island's image. Originally, I planned to research how tourism was reshaping the island, but the more I learned, the more I became drawn to the longer story of citrus farming as a window into Jeju's layered economic and regional identity.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?

The most surprising finding was the role that undocumented migrant labor plays in sustaining Jeju's citrus industry. It's a topic that's largely absent from academic literature—especially in English—though it came up frequently in my interviews with both farmers and migrant workers. While I had come across a few policy documents and news articles referencing seasonal labor programs, I had no real sense of how central migrant labor—both documented and undocumented—was

to the citrus industry until I was on the ground. One farmer told me, almost offhandedly, that without migrant workers, "the citrus industry wouldn't exist," and that sentiment was echoed almost universally across my interviews. It was striking how matter-of-factly farmers described something that's virtually invisible from the outside—especially in academic literature. That disconnect underscored how easily certain realities can go unrecognized until you speak directly with the people living them, and it reminded me that part of what ethnographic research can do—maybe even what it ought to do—is draw attention to issues that are widely understood within local communities but largely unacknowledged beyond them.

What was the most challenging part of your research?

Conducting ethnographic fieldwork independently was by far the most challenging. Coordinating interviews, earning trust, navigating the Jeju dialect, and even just renting a car and driving myself around rural Jeju were all new experiences. As someone who isn't from the island and speaks Korean at an intermediate level, building rapport with farmers took time and sensitivity. On the academic side, working with Korean-language sources presented challenges. I learned quickly that the structure of Korean academic publishing differs from what I was used to—fewer books, more articles—and it took time to adjust to how information was organized and accessed.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?

Professor Hwansoo Kim was an incredibly generous and thoughtful advisor throughout the year, and I'm especially grateful for his feedback and encouragement. Jude Yang, the Korean Studies librarian, was also indispensable in her help navigating Korean-language databases and locating relevant sources. I'm also thankful to CEAS, the History department, and Hopper College for funding that allowed me to conduct fieldwork in Jeju, which ultimately became the heart of the project.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?

Yes. I studied Korean at Yonsei University during the fall of 2023 through the Light Fellowship, and I returned to Korea independently in December 2024 to conduct fieldwork on Jeju Island. The Light Fellowship was essential in preparing me—not just in terms of language, but in giving me the familiarity and confidence to return and pursue independent research in a region I'd previously only known through family visits as a child.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?

It was absolutely essential. I would not have been able to access Korean-language documents or conduct interviews with local farmers and workers without sustained language study. But more than that, studying Korean at Yale and abroad allowed me to build cultural familiarity that made independent fieldwork possible. Before Yale, I had very little firsthand experience in Korea, so language study opened up the possibility of doing this kind of research.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?

I enjoy exploring new coffee shops and watching Korean dramas—recently, I started *When Life Gives You Tangerines*, which so many people have recommended to me because of my thesis topic. I also began studying Chinese during my senior year, which was a natural extension of my interest in East Asian history and has become something I plan to continue after graduation.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?

Start early—especially if your project involves fieldwork, a foreign language or unfamiliar archives. But also give yourself space to follow unexpected leads. My topic changed substantially from what I originally proposed, and the most meaningful parts of the project came from discoveries I hadn't planned for. I'd also recommend being proactive and organized about documenting your research process. Also, at my advisor's suggestion, I wrote a short piece, something like a YDN article, that helped me process what I'd seen and learned, what gaps remained, and how my thinking had evolved. It ended up being one of the most helpful things I did for myself to anchor the process.

What will you be doing after graduation?

I'll be moving to New York to work in investment banking. While it's quite different from academic research, I'm hoping to carry forward the skills I developed through this project and find ways to stay connected to East Asia both personally and professionally.

2023-2024 Williams Prize Award Winners

Jaehyun Kim, Lucas Miner, and Isabelle Qian

June 4, 2024

Jaehyun Kim (Morse College), Lucas Miner (Silliman College), and Isabelle Qian (Pierson College) were the winners of the 2024 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies. The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with them at the start of the summer and they kindly answered a few of our questions about their essays.

Jaehyun Kim

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "Korean Newspapers and the 'Irish Problem': Japanese Censorship in Colonial Korea, 1920-1930"?

The colonial Korean press (1920-1940) has been both praised for acting as a voice of the oppressed and criticized for its association and acquiescence to Japanese authorities. Building on recent scholarship on Japanese colonial press censorship and the early Korean press, my essay examines to what extent nationalist journalism was possible in two major Korean newspapers (the *Tonga Ilbo* and *Chosŏn Ilbo*) using reports on the Irish Independence War as a case study. During the 1920s, these two papers published frequently on the Irish Independence War and their reports were directly anti-colonial and established solidarity with them. The fact that these newspapers could publish so many Irish independence articles during a time of strict Japanese censorship indicates there were numerous logistical challenges to censorship, as well as a journalist community and readership deeply interested in and dedicated to the global self-determination movement despite Japanese efforts to co-opt Korean intellectuals and cultural leaders.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?

I became interested in early Korean journalism through my job at Yale's Center for Preservation and Conservation, at which book acquisitions (such as donations) are processed and made available for Yale students and faculty in libraries. One of the books I came across was "A Collection of *Tonga Ilbo* Articles Seized under Japanese Rule." I was struck by the depth and vividness with which the articles wrote about contemporary political issues, and those articles motivated me to explore Korea-Japan relations starting with a study of the colonial period. The next semester, I took Professor Shepherd's class "Korea and the Japanese Empire." I was particularly fascinated by the era of Cultural Rule (1920-c.1930),

when Japan loosened some restrictions on Korean cultural output in an effort to better uncover the Korean nationalist movement and co-opt cultural leaders while Korean intellectuals took advantage of changing colonial policies to spread nationalist ideas to the populace. These two experiences led me to explore Korean newspapers and how they illuminate the efforts by colonial administrators and newspaper writers to outwit each other. While I was searching through *Tonga Ilbo* and *Chosŏn Ilbo* articles from 1920-1930s, I came across enough mentions of the "Irish problem" that I felt the reports on the Irish War of Independence were not only a great example of Korean newspapers' role in keeping Korea engaged in the global anticolonial movement but also a topic that generated great interest and inspiration among Korean readers.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?

I was surprised to learn that, in the early 1920s, Japanese censorship of Korean newspapers was more chaotic and disorganized than previously assumed. When I started my research, I had assumed that any article that directly supported Ireland and endorsed key anti-colonial arguments would have been censored. Given the frequency of articles on Ireland and close colonial surveillance of the *Tonga Ilbo* and *Chosŏn Ilbo*, Japanese censors were well-aware of Korean readers' interest in the Irish War of Independence. However, many articles were digitized without noticeable traces of censorship, leading me to wonder how so many Irish independence articles could have been published in the first place.

Secondary research on Japanese press censorship argues that, at the beginning of the Cultural Rule period, Japanese censors severely underestimated the volume of Korean newspaper publishing as well as the challenges of censoring a newspaper which published a new edition and thousands of copies at least once a day. A particularly striking passage, with which I begin my thesis, describes how Japanese censors waited anxiously for the latest edition to come out, skimmed it as quickly as they could, and, if they found objectionable content, they communicated it to the representatives of the Korea newspaper by telephone as new copies were being printed.

I was also surprised to learn about the competition between the *Tonga Ilbo* and *Chosŏn Ilbo* to become the "paper of the Korean people," and how, within the newspaper company, there were frequent negotiations and conflict between management, journalists, and readers on where the company should be ideologically.

What was the most challenging part of your research?

Finding secondary sources that directly mentioned Ireland as a topic of interest in Korean newspapers was initially challenging. Irish articles were not discussed in comprehensive studies on Korean newspapers under Japanese rule, making it challenging to support my observations and arguments. During the winter break, I experienced a breakthrough when I came across the works of Han Sŭng-hun, Yun Tŏg-yŏng, and *Tonga Ilbo* journalists Yi Jin and Yu Wŏn-mo, who explained and supported my argument that Korean newspapers paid special attention to Irish independence as a current event in the 1920s. While their works did not make it to my final draft, I also found the works of Kim Hong-ch'ŏl and Pak Chi-hyang valuable sources for this fascinating topic.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?

I am indebted first and foremost to Professor Hwansoo Kim, who not only went out of his way to advise a student not in his academic department, but, throughout my senior year, generously shared his regional expertise, writing advice, and personal wisdom to make me a better student of history. Dr. Jude Yang, Yale's Korean Studies librarian, guided me to crucial secondary sources which would have been difficult for me, a student who had recently gained proficiency in academic Korean, to find on my own. Professor Hannah Shepherd, whose class through which I found my research topic, provided me with a great foundation for understanding the Cultural Rule period of Korean and Japanese history.

While all of my primary sources were digitized and available online, I learned so much about how to search for and analyze primary sources through the Beinecke's workshops (which I attended as part of a few history classes).

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?

I did not travel to Asia during my time at Yale, but I will study in Japan for the summer and academic year on the Light Fellowship after graduation.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?

Without language study, my research would not have been possible. Professor Lee-Smith and Professor Choi were instrumental in improving my Korean to the point where I could read Korean secondary and primary sources.

My interest in East Asian history, particularly Korea-Japan relations, motivated me to begin studying Japanese starting junior year. While I have a long way to go, Yale's Japanese department has done an excellent job making language learning fun, accessible, and collaborative. I can definitely see myself continuing to learn Japanese after graduation, and my goal is to be able to read Japanese historical sources in a few years.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?

I am a violinist at the Davenport Pops Orchestra, a 100+ member ensemble that performs popular songs and music from movies and video games. I also like to dance! I am part of Yale Danceworks and Peristalsis (a club that teaches dance to children at the Yale New Haven Hospital).

During my sophomore year, I worked part-time at Center for Preservation and Conservation, where I helped process over 400 books on Korean studies donated to Yale. I am also lucky to have attended cultural events hosted by Yale's Korean and Japanese departments; I would highly recommend them!

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?

Use the summer to find and read primary sources related to your topic. They do not need to be the ones that make it into your final draft, but it is important to start searching early, especially if you plan on using sources written in a non-native language.

If you are stuck in your research or writing process, talk to your advisor! Don't try to ignore it or wait it out. Your advisor is there to give help but it is your responsibility to reach out when you need it. I had lunch a few times with Professor Kim during my senior year, and our conversations not only gave me new ideas and perspectives on my research but also were a great opportunity to get to know him personally.

Also, I want to pass along what I heard at the senior essay meeting for History majors during my junior spring: that the only difference between writing an academic work and a novel is that academic works have footnotes; you can't make stuff up, but you still have to write a good story. You are writing about a topic that both means a lot to you personally and you believe is important for the world to know. You also have the space in a 10,000+ word essay to let your ideas, voice, and creativity shine. Don't simply focus on getting the history right—take the time to make your writing exciting, engaging, and unique!

What will you be doing after graduation?

I have received the Light Fellowship to study in Japan for the summer and academic year. I plan to return with proficient Japanese communication skills, a better understanding of Japanese society and culture, and be prepared to research Korean-Japanese history in Japanese in addition to Korean and English.

Lucas Miner

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "The One-and-a-Half Chinas' Problem: Taiwan and the Origins of Peaceful Reunification, 1978–1988"?

My essay studies Cross-Strait relations during the pivotal decade from 1978 to 1988, during which time a series of momentous changes altered the status quo between Taiwan and the Mainland. My essay primarily focuses on one such change—the PRC's sudden shift from a hostile policy to "peaceful reunification." My essay explores how Taiwan responded to peaceful reunification; how proposals meant to realize peaceful reunification evolved; how the PRC and ROC maneuvered rhetorically and politically on the matter of reunification; and how a new equilibrium in Cross-Strait relations emerged as a result.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?

I originally became interested with the period of history—Deng's reforms and the post-Mao transition—during a Chinese history seminar I took with Professor Denise Ho in my sophomore spring. I spent the subsequent summer in Taiwan as a Richard U. Light Fellow and became deeply fascinated with the history of the island and its contemporary geopolitical

significance. I decided to marry these two interests with my thesis by looking at Cross-Strait relations under Deng Xiaoping, and my research proceeded from there.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?

I think the most interesting findings generally pertain to how much the PRC prioritized accomplishing reunification. At face value, the whole notion of "peaceful reunification" might seem like a disingenuous ploy, but I think my research convincingly demonstrates that both the PRC and ROC treated the prospect of reunification with an existential seriousness. I think this comes through clearest in my analysis of the PRC's United Front, and how both sides of the Taiwan Strait engaged in intense and wide-ranging political warfare meant to advance or resist peaceful reunification. These findings are made all the more surprising by the fact that few other works on Cross-Strait relations treat peaceful reunification and this decade with anywhere near the level of rigor and depth it deserves. The implications remain pertinent for present day Cross-Strait relations, and I think I think Professor Maura Dykstra put it best in her reader report for my essay:

"The deterioration of cross-strait relations has darkened the hopes of many… To read Miner's essay on how these things once came together while they seem to be falling apart offers a lovely symmetry that encourages the reader to imagine whether the best analogy for this problem is more like spilt milk or an unfinished puzzle."

What was the most challenging part of your research?

The writing. I sifted through hundreds of pages of primary sources in Chinese that touched on a broad range of historical events, characters, and themes. This alone was challenging, but I then had to decide how to incorporate all these sources and pulled-on threads into a cohesive structure for my thesis with a cogent, unique argument. It was an enormous mental challenge, and for all the time I spent reading and researching, I spent at least double the time just thinking about how to put pen to paper.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?

More so than any archive collection or database, I found the people at Yale to be the most helpful resource while writing my thesis. I spent many hours discussing the structure and developing the arguments of my essay with my advisor, Professor Odd Arne Westad. Throughout the entire research process, I also constantly bounced ideas off friends writing their own theses, regardless of whether their topics related to mine. At the very least, it was a great outlet for commiseration about deadlines and procrastination, but hearing about my friends' research often gave me fresh intellectual inspiration for my own thesis.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?

I travelled to Taiwan on a Light Fellowship in the summer of 2022. My experience there sparked my research interest in Taiwan and Cross-Strait relations, and I returned the following summer with funding from CEAS to undertake thesis research at the Academia Historica archives in Taipei.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?

Extremely important. I placed into L5 Chinese as a first-year student and have taken five Chinese language classes in total. I also spent additional time as a Light Fellow studying Chinese in Taiwan. The primary sources I accessed, especially those from the Academia Historica, required high-level Chinese reading comprehension to parse in an efficient manner. Even with the preparation I received from my language study, I still initially had trouble deciphering the highly formalized political lingo used in these primary sources.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?

During my senior year I have prioritized spending time with friends during my downtime, whether it be playing squash, lifting in the gym, competing in bar trivia together, or enjoying movie nights. I also frequently invite friends over to my apartment to study/chat and enjoy Alishan high mountain tea, prepared using my Chinese tea set.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?

Let the sources guide your thesis and be comfortable with uncertainty. Just a few fascinating primary sources can inspire your entire thesis, but it takes time to dig through mounds of documents (especially in a foreign language) so start the research process over the summer. In the meantime, do not stress if you are not entirely certain about the exact direction of your essay. It will come in due time, maybe inspired by just a single quote or paragraph you dig up during your primary source research and secondary reading.

What will you be doing after graduation?

I will be undertaking graduate studies in Beijing as a Yenching Scholar at Peking University.

Isabelle Qian

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "True Bones: Catholic Infanticide Scandals and the Act of Truth-Making in 1950s China"?

My essay investigates the Chinese government's allegations of infanticide against Catholic orphanages in the 1950s. Relying primarily on newspaper and government reports—but also on children's books, online forums, and video games—I sought to consider these allegations beyond simple judgements of true or false. Instead, I analyzed the infanticide scandals as examples of the Chinese state's attempts to "create truth" during the early years of the PRC. I closely analyzed rhetorical devices such as the theme of revelation within the infanticide depictions and the active participation of the Chinese public to illustrate how the PRC was an affective and pedagogical regime, in which the government used emotion to actively teach their new citizens the "correct" ways of looking at the world. I also traced the scandals' afterlives into the present to demonstrate the various ways that propagandistic narratives can be memorialized in both state and grassroots memory.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?

I was first inspired when my mother mentioned a picture book that she read as a child in China during the 1960s or 70s. Although she had forgotten the book's title, she remembered that it was about a group of Chinese orphans who were abused by a nun in a Catholic orphanage. When we think about orphanages within the Chinese context, we often think about the wave of American adoptions that occurred in the 1990s. However, I realized that I knew very little about orphanages during the earlier years of the PRC and decided that I wanted to learn more. One of the most exciting moments in my research was when I was able to track down the original picture book that my mother had read all those years ago. That book eventually became one of the most interesting and crucial sources for my analysis.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?

I was most surprised and excited by the richness of the scandal's afterlives. I originally believed that the infanticide allegations had mostly been forgotten; other than a few physical memorials and social media posts that tied the scandals to other abuses in the Catholic Church, there didn't seem to be much about the orphanages in common memory. Then, when I had already moved on to the writing stage, I discovered a Chinese video game that was centered on infanticide in Catholic orphanages. This then led me to an urban myth about a Shanghai department store haunted by the ghosts of orphans, which ended up tracing back to the aforementioned picture book. I was fascinated by these examples of how propaganda narratives can be perpetuated even decades after their first dissemination—maintained not explicitly by the CCP, but rather by a subtler general consciousness, an example of how the reproduction of "truth" can transfer from the state to the public.

What was the most challenging part of your research?

I found myself struggling with a lot of doubt about the subject and direction of my research. I pivoted multiple times throughout the process because of roadblocks in accessing sources, as well as a fear that I just didn't have anything interesting or ambitious to say. Of course, the research itself was challenging simply because research often is challenging. For me, however, the most difficult part probably was a lack of confidence and focus that often led me down unhelpful paths, only for me to realize that I should have just chosen one angle and stuck with it.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?

I received the Light Fellowship the summer after my sophomore year to study Japanese in Osaka with the CET program.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?

It was certainly very important. I took advanced Chinese courses during my sophomore and junior year, which helped prepare me to search for and analyze my primary sources, almost all of which were in Chinese.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?

I enjoy going out for Chinese food, as well as watching independent Chinese films from the 1990s and 2000s. I was also an editor for the Yale Historical Review, which allowed me to develop my familiarity with historical research and provided me with a warm community of individuals who are excited by history.

That being said, I spent most of my free time with friends. Especially in my senior year, I realized how important it was to just be around all these people whom I love—not thinking about research. We will never all be in college together again. I don't regret spending any of that time with them.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?

I heard a lot of advice going into the senior thesis: start reading over the summer, make use of Yale funds to conduct research, begin your writing early. This is all good advice; I wish that I had followed it. Personally, I would remind rising seniors that the senior thesis is just a project. It's a long project, and it will likely be difficult, but it's just a project. There are some people who are extraordinarily in love with their thesis and who are excited whenever they get to work on it. Those are lucky people, and I don't know any of them myself. The senior thesis does not have to be the best or most important thing that you have ever written. It just needs to be a serious attempt. Take it seriously while giving yourself grace for imperfection, and I think you will have something that you are proud of at the end of the year.

What will you be doing after graduation?

I actually don't know yet. I'm weighing a couple different options at the moment for the coming year, but ultimately, I am hoping to attend a graduate program after some time off from school.

2022-2023 Williams Prize Award Winner

William McCormack

June 2, 2023

William McCormack (Timothy Dwight College) was the winner of the 2023 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies for his essay submitted to the East Asian Studies Program, "A Race Against Death: Renwu Magazine's Exposé on the Working Conditions of Chinese Food-Delivery Drivers."

The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with William at the end of the spring term and he kindly answered a few of our questions about his essay.

William McCormack

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "A Race Against Death: Renwu Magazine's Exposé on the Working Conditions of Chinese Food-Delivery Drivers"?

My essay considers food-delivery labor in contemporary China. I analyzed a widely-read *Renwu Magazine* feature published in September 2020 that spotlights the work of delivery drivers employed by China's most popular on-demand food-delivery platforms, Meituan and Ele.me. My essay dives into this longform investigation, examines its sympathetic characterization of delivery drivers, assesses the context that surrounded the article's publication, and considers what the article does not discuss.

The investigation really directs criticism for drivers' dangerous, time-pressured, and low-paid work towards the platforms — and specifically, towards the companies' non-human algorithms — while generally ignoring how government policies, broader economic conditions, and local labor organizing affect drivers' situations (or lead them to gig-economy delivery work in the first place). These omissions highlight the limits that constrain investigative journalism in contemporary China. Still, pieces of journalism like this *Renwu* feature can be impactful. The article affected public discourse over the next year and pushed Meituan and Ele.me to announce immediate policy changes that ostensibly eased a degree of drivers' pressure.

I also focused on the reaction to the investigation, which quickly went viral, among the general public; by the platforms; and by state media and government agencies. Ultimately, my essay considers how increased public awareness of drivers' labor grievances directed government's treatment of workers and platforms: as awareness of drivers' labor conditions

and discontent expanded, officials and government agencies increased regulation of platforms and public acknowledgement of drivers even while they simultaneously cracked down on driver activists.

Understanding this playbook for managing grievances, especially those raised by flexibly-employed workers, and how it might evolve is important as slowing economic growth increases the possibility of future labor unrest in China.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?

I developed the underlying interest for this essay when I lived in Beijing on a Light Fellowship during summer 2019, after my first year at Yale. Upon arriving, I was fascinated by how many food-delivery drivers I saw zipping through the streets on their two-wheelers, handing off plastic bags of packaged orders, and hovering outside malls waiting for new assignments. They were ubiquitous, a complete staple of the cityscape, and they really stood out because their corporate attire is so bright — yellow for Meituan, blue for Ele.me.

I have really enjoyed studying Mandarin since the start of high school, and cities have always fascinated me — I was born in New York City and moved to Boston when I was an infant. Spending that summer in 20+-million-person Beijing helped me identify urban issues in contemporary China, particularly how people and goods move through cities, as the root of my interest in the country and East Asian Studies. As a labor force, delivery drivers embody this movement given the nature of their work — and the fact that many are migrants who move to big cities for work.

The pandemic raised the profile of delivery workers around the world, and that's when I began to wonder if some sort of senior essay about food-delivery labor in China might be possible. My personal interest in the gig economy developed around the same time. I worked part-time as a delivery biker in 2020, completing about 200 Uber Eats orders over the course of four months in Boston. The experience prompted me to think more about the Beijing Meituan and Ele.me drivers I had observed from a distance the summer before, even though my work was much less intense, stressful, and dangerous than the labor of Chinese food-delivery workers — and many American drivers who rely on gig work for their main income.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?

Honing in on what the magazine feature doesn't say or de-emphasizes was interesting. For example, the investigation portrays delivery drivers as independent and unaware players in an "infinite game" of rushing orders around. This depiction is incomplete; in reality, many drivers participate in large mutual-aid group chats, and local strikes organized by delivery drivers increased sharply in the years before the investigation's publication. But the only time the verb for labor strike (*bagong* 罢工) appears in the 22,000-character feature is to metaphorically describe a driver's damaged scooter breaking down.

Considering why the feature may have left out other angles for understanding drivers' situations and focused so much on algorithms also led to some interesting discoveries. Once I was pretty deep into the first draft, I realized that the investigation's main source, a researcher who's referenced about twenty times across the feature's dozen sections, works for a large think tank with ties to the CCP. The research institute's president gained a seat on the Politburo last October and also became head of the CCP Central Committee's United Front Work Department. The researcher's interest in digital algorithmic labor may be totally natural, but it was interesting and illustrative to identify that high-level association between the Party, the source, and the feature's selective focus.

Despite these absences in the article and its relatively narrow diagnosis of drivers' problems, I was surprised by how much the investigation still achieved. It seemed to substantially influence public discourse around drivers and how government discussed drivers in the year following its publication. The day after its release, there was so much buzz that Meituan and Ele.me both announced policy changes and expressed support for drivers. A handful of months later, Xi Jinping referenced delivery drivers in a speech the same week that a Beijing government official went undercover as a Meituan delivery driver in a viral video, only earning the equivalent of about $6 in 12 hours. Another subtle "a-ha!" finding was when I noticed a mini allusion to delivery drivers in the introductory montage to China's 2022 CCTV New Year's Gala show (the world's most-watched TV program).

What was the most challenging part of your research?

Studying food-delivery labor without having access to delivery drivers or the ability to add an ethnographic component to the project. It would have been great if that was possible in a world with no pandemic and seamless research access to China, but that is a definite limitation to my essay.

I was lucky that so many Chinese and English sources for my project were available online, in part because so much of my topic — the feature's publication, the reaction, platform labor itself — played out digitally. But I also found it hard to manage just how much the internet gave me. It was difficult to sift through various resources — the *Renwu* article itself, Western and Chinese print and broadcast news, social-media commentary, ethnographic studies, Chinese state regulations — and make sure I was combining them in a way that worked for an interdisciplinary essay/contemporary history. I sort of felt like an orchestra conductor might, trying to highlight different findings without letting any single strain of research or source type overpower the whole piece. That could be a challenging balancing act.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?

Do the people count? My senior-essay advisor Valerie Hansen was incredibly helpful as I developed a focus and structure for my essay. (Given Professor Hansen's specialty in classical China and my interest in contemporary Chinese cities, we were an unlikely pairing but a great match.) She inspired me to see the project as a contemporary history and encouraged me to approach the magazine feature like a historian would.

Others at Yale with ties to the Council on East Asian Studies generously lent me their time and advice at the start of the semester as I considered different approaches to studying food-delivery labor, including David Borgonjon, Zeren Li, Odd Arne Westad, Peng Peng, Zekun Zhang, Dan Mattingly, and Yale's librarian for Chinese Studies Michael Meng. These early meetings were really helpful as I was narrowing my focus and considering sources to build a project around.

I also want to shout out the access to quality journalism that Yale and the Yale Library enable: everything from the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* to specific China-focused publications like *The Wire China*. That access helped a lot with this project, but more importantly helped me explore ideas, develop my thinking, and stay informed throughout my experience in the major and at Yale.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?

Thankfully, yes! COVID interrupted access to East Asia, and especially China, for the bulk of my college experience, but I was lucky to spend a summer in Beijing in 2019, right after my first year at Yale and right before the pandemic, with the Light Fellowship. I attended the Harvard Beijing Academy at Beijing Language and Culture University and learned from a great group of really dedicated instructors. My Chinese improved significantly, and that summer in Beijing seeded the idea for my senior essay.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?

Crucial. I'm very grateful for the truly phenomenal language instructors I was lucky to meet, interact with, and learn from at Yale, including Yu-Lin Wang Saussy, William Zhou, Min Chen, and Wei Su. Two specific classes — William Zhou's "Chinese for Current Affairs" and Min Chen's "Chinese for Global Enterprises" — prepared me to handle the news reports and economics terminology I encountered most often in this project. Getting to spend a year with language partners in Yale's Fields program for advanced language study was also a great opportunity. I want to thank my main high school Chinese teacher, Penghua Shen, at the Belmont Hill School for sparking my interest and giving me my language foundation.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?

My main involvement and hobby on campus was journalism. I was the Sports Editor and Digital Editor of the *Yale Daily News* and covered Yale's men's basketball program for three years. While there was no explicit East Asia connection on

the men's basketball beat, the first story I wrote about the program, as a first year in fall 2018, was actually about the team's preparations for a weeklong trip to Shanghai for the Pac-12 China Game. Yale opened its season that year with a special nonconference game against Cal/UC Berkeley in China, and the team supplemented their preseason basketball prep with a few weekly classes on basic phrases and the city of Shanghai.

I had fun working with the Yale-China Association as an NHPS Chinese Language Teaching Fellow the year before I wrote my thesis, tutoring 9th and 10th graders beginning Chinese. I loved eating out and running in New Haven and if I wasn't at a basketball game, watching friends' concerts. And I made many, many trips to Olmo for weekend bagels.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?

Hmmm. I would recommend keeping an informal list — on your Notes app or somewhere quick and easy — where you can keep track of random ideas or curiosities related to your major or area of interest. It might be a news story, a TV show, a billboard, or a conversation with a friend that sparks an idea. Holding onto these can help you identify common themes, see how they fit together, and develop a menu of potential topics. I would also recommend doing a two-semester thesis if it fits with your schedule. I chose a one-semester project because of my off-cycle graduation, but I always felt a step behind with the compressed timeline and felt like I didn't have enough of a chance to meander during the research process or follow random leads (or often felt a little guilty if I still did).

What will you be doing after graduation?

Because of a COVID-era gap semester, I graduated from Yale in December 2022. I interned in the NCAA men's basketball office this spring; traveled to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan; and will start a job at Boston Consulting Group in NYC this September.

2021-2022 Williams Prize Award Winner

Isabella Yang

June 14, 2022

Isabella Yang (Saybrook '22) was one of two winners of the 2022 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies for her essay submitted to the Department of History, "Wang Xitian and the Chinese Experience in Imperial Tokyo, 1899-1923: Class, Violence, and the Formation of a New National Consciousness."

The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Isabella during the summer and she kindly answered a few of our questions about her essay.

Isabella Yang

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "Wang Xitian and the Chinese Experience in Imperial Tokyo, 1899-1923: Class, Violence, and the Formation of a New National Consciousness"?

On September 12, 1923, a 27-year-old Chinese man named Wang Xitian was secretly murdered by Japanese soldiers under Tokyo's Sakai Bridge, as part of imperial Japan's efforts of purging politically disruptive factors in the aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake. My essay explores the question of who Wang Xitian was, and why he mattered to the Empire of Japan. It reveals how Wang's life overlapped with and connected two Chinese communities and their experiences in early 20th century Tokyo: that of the well-educated students, and that of the marginalized workers. Between the formation of the two communities, a new Chinese nationalism characterized less by class and more by ethnicity was formed in Tokyo, under the influence of changing politics in China, growing tensions in Sino-Japan relations, and the spread of new international ideas. Wang's work as a student-turned-activist bridged two previously dichotomized worlds at the empire's core, and was representative of how the historically suppressed Chinese community in Tokyo, through unification under a new national consciousness, acquired more agency at a time characterized by imperial surveillance and control.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?

I first got to know Wang Xitian's name during a conversation with my advisor, Professor Botsman, when I was exploring potential topics about Chinese people in Taisho Tokyo. Back then, I considered him to be a mere diversifying factor, as his life was different from many other prominent figures in Japan at the time. But I soon found out about the uniqueness of

his experience and how he could serve as a leading thread to another community less written about - that of the workers - and decided to look more into his life, which eventually led to the writing of this essay.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?

There were several really interesting discoveries. First, I didn't realize how small the world of Chinese students in Japan back then was, and how interconnected everyone's social networks were: everyone knew everyone else, and most people went to the same schools. As some of the people I wrote about went on to become important figures in completely different fields in China, it was very interesting to see how their paths crossed in their youths. Another interesting aspect was how much effort the Japanese government made to conceal the murder of Wang Xitian and the other Chinese workers after the 1923 earthquake; I did not know that the official narrative was decided directly by members of the Prime Minister's cabinet, which I suppose reflects much about the amount of tension and insecurity present in the Empire of Japan around these "anti-Japanese foreigners" like Wang at the time.

What was the most challenging part of your research?

The accessibility of primary sources. Because of Covid-19 and the impossibility to travel to East Asia for primary sources, I had to rely on published primary sources, which were very hard to find. But eventually, with the help of our East Asian librarians, I was able to locate two volumes in Chinese and Japanese respectively that were related to Wang Xitian and the 1923 post-earthquake massacre of Chinese workers in Tokyo. Finding those sources, however, took almost half a year.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?

I am extremely thankful of the librarians at Yale, particularly Haruko Nakamura for meeting up with me multiple times and fishing for potential sources among a pool of dead ends; and for Michael Meng for helping me locate the volumes published in Chinese about Wang Xitian's life. My advisor, Professor Daniel Botsman, has been extremely supportive and helpful throughout the writing of this essay. I was also able to interview Professor Kang-I Sun Chang and get to know her father's life as a student in Tokyo back in the 1930s, and read his letters through the Yale Divinity School archives, which all helped me construct a better picture of what living in Tokyo as a Chinese student meant back then.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?

Yes! I did Light Fellowship twice. I first did the Kyoto Consortium for Japanese Studies (KCJS) summer program in 2018, which was an utterly wonderful experience; I spent two months living in Kyoto, and decided to continue with Japanese and Japanese studies after that. Then I did the Inter-University Center for Japanese Studies (IUC) in Yokohama during the academic year, 2020-21; it was held online unfortunately due to Covid-19, but I was able to improve my Japanese much through the program. I passed the N1 exam after graduating from IUC, and would not have been able to conduct Japanese-language primary source research for this essay without the help of the education I received at IUC and the generosity of the Light Fellowship that allowed me to attend the program.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?

So important! As I explained in the previous question, I would not be able to write this essay without becoming fluent enough in the Japanese language to read early 20th-century archives. I also started Japanese as a first-year at Yale; I would not know that it'd be entirely possible to start a language as a first-year, and be able to use that language in my senior essay research! Looking back, there are so many steps I could have missed that would not allow the successful completion of this essay to happen. I'm really grateful for the wonderful language study I've received at Yale and all the language-study opportunities the school provided.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?

I was on the Yale Ballroom Dance Team for three years doing competitive dancing, and have been with Amoriem Labs, Yale's undergraduate game development group, designing video games for two years. I spent most of my free time this year studying and designing video games; one of my side projects is an interactive visual novel about Commodore Matthew Perry's expedition to Japan in 1854 and the opening of the country, which is set to be shipped soon in a month

or two! I also do lots of creative writing, fiction and nonfiction alike, and have even done writings in Chinese and Japanese for the Accent Magazine before. I also play traditional Japanese music! Sometimes, in my down time, I would have small koto-and-shamisen jam sessions with my friend and Saybrook grad affiliate Adam Haliburton, who is the only other person on campus I know who plays traditional Japanese instruments.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?

Don't be afraid of the project! It may look intimidating at first, but once you start writing everything will start to flow very smoothly. Do prepare early, and while you don't have to write anything over the summer, make sure you start considering potential subjects and especially make backup plans if your initial subjects don't work out. And always reach out to your advisor and the librarians whenever you encounter any troubles! They are some of the best resources you have, and they can help you in ways you wouldn't even think are possible.

What will you be doing after graduation?

I'll be moving to Los Angeles to work in management! Meanwhile, I'll also be continuing my side project of developing educational yet fun historical games, hopefully continuing my work this year with UT Austin's JapanLab. Our first game, *Ghost over the Water: Changing the Tides of Japan's Future*, will be released very soon, and if anyone reading this is ever interested in playing a game that explains how Japan opened itself to the world after three hundred years of maritime restrictions, please feel free to check out the game at UT Austin's JapanLab website!

2020-2021 Williams Prize Award Winners

Gregory Jany and Jenna Shin

May 27, 2021

Gregory Jany (Jonathan Edwards '21) and Jenna Shin (Morse '21) are the winners of the 2021 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies. Gregory, for his essay submitted to the Department of History, "Imperial Crossings: Chinese Indentured Migration to Sumatra's East Coast, 1865-1911," and Jenna for her essay submitted to the East Asian Studies Program, "A Comfort Women Redress Movement without Comfort Women."

The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Gregory and Jenna shortly before graduation and they kindly answered a few of our questions about their essays.

Gregory Jany

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "Imperial Crossings: Chinese Indentured Migration to Sumatra's East Coast, 1865-1911"?
In my essay, I trace the lives of Chinese indentured migrants to Sumatra in the Netherlands Indies across multiple archives located in Taiwan, Singapore, the Netherlands, and Indonesia. Between 1881 to 1900, more than 121,000 Chinese migrants left southern China, stopping in the port-cities of Singapore and Penang in the British Straits Settlements before leaving again to labor in the tobacco plantations of Dutch Sumatra. The journey of these indentured laborers across multiple jurisdictions produced curious inter-imperial connections across Asia.

First, I illustrate how the efforts of Straits Settlements and Netherlands Indies officials in the 1870s to regulate the movement of Chinese labor migrants strengthened a forming Anglo-Dutch border in the Straits of Malacca. These efforts emerged from the paradoxical need to secure the "freedom" of migrants through bureaucratic controls. Then, in the 1880s, Dutch planters attempted to redirect the route these migrants took to contest the power of Chinese players in the migration industry. They tried to recruit laborers directly from southern China and bypass the existing network of Chinese brokers in the Straits Settlements. The task the planters faced was never simple: they depended on inter-imperial networks to achieve their goals, and Chinese brokers and migrants alike complicated the planters' attempts through spectacular forms of mutiny and everyday forms of resistance. In the last chapter of my essay, I show how these laborers actively maintained ties to China as they navigated the brutality of plantation life. Concurrently, the Qing government made claims to protect these emigrants as a sovereign state. This mutual act of defining the relationship between China and its diaspora was central to the configuration of a more global China. By foregrounding these entangled histories, I

illustrate how historical transformations in the age of empire were constituted through the bodies, movement, and imagination of migrants.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
Two books sparked my academic interest in this topic. First, Eric Tagliacozzo's monograph, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders*, offered an account of the consolidation of the Anglo/Dutch border in the Straits of Malacca that followed an expanding regime of surveillance, mapping, and military enforcement on the two colonial frontiers. I was captivated by Tagliacozzo's vivid recording of smugglers that transgressed this frontier, showing how the border had always been porous. In China studies, Shelly Chan's *Diaspora's Homeland* was illuminating. The book showed how the migration of Chinese overseas influenced China's own history, creating what Chan calls a migrant temporality that intersected with local, regional, and global histories. I could trace Chan's argument to an earlier lecture Philip Kuhn gave titled "Why China Historians Should Study the Chinese Diaspora and Vice-versa." I was interested in how following a single network of Chinese migration could illuminate the interconnected histories of China, the overseas Chinese, and also of Southeast Asia in general.

A trip to Penang, Malaysia in my sophomore year tied these academic themes together. A friend had told me about two sister temples in Medan, Indonesia, and Penang, Malaysia that provided a space to worship five indentured laborers who had become apotheosized as local deities. Local histories tell that in 1871, the colonial police had sentenced the five laborers to death for allegedly murdering an overseer on the plantation. I was curious to discover the larger story behind these two temples and trace the connections the temples illuminated across the Straits of Malacca. While I was reviewing secondary literature, I also noticed that many works on the overseas Chinese in Indonesia focused on their role as entrepreneurial merchants. I thought that researching the lives of indentured labor migrants on Sumatra's plantations could complicate this narrative.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
Taking a trans-imperial perspective on Chinese migration allowed me to discover how the figure of the Chinese migrant was central to multiple projects that manifested transregionally in late imperial Asia. Seemingly disparate actors—Leiden-trained sinologists, young German and Dutch merchants chasing profits, Qing officials thinking about China's place in the world, and British legislators debating about freedom—all thought and wrote about these migrants. Why were they so interested in these migrants? What stake did they have in a movement that was underpinned by family networks in southern China? Each new answer I came up with tied the journey of these migrants with other historical processes going on in late imperial Asia; for example, the production of a border in the Straits of Melaka, or the reformulation of China's position in the international system of nation-states.

It was surprising for me to find instances of the laborer and broker's ingenuity in taking advantage of a new system of migration implemented by Dutch planters in the 1880s. For example, I read about how two emigrant laborers had pretended to be recruiters in the port-city of Shantou to receive cash that was meant to be given as payment for recruiters. It's also interesting to discover how these indentured workers maintained ties with China. A wooden tablet in a temple donated by an indentured laborer suggests how workers used their meager capital to participate in religious life that connected them to the folk deities of their native-place. Colonial reports documented the remittances (*qiaopi*) workers would send back to their families each year. Photographs of plantations at the time also showed how overseers invited Chinese opera troupes from the Straits Settlements to perform in the tobacco plantations of Sumatra, allowing workers to listen to folk tales from their home provinces.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
I wanted to try my best to portray the indentured migrants I am writing about as protagonists of their own narratives. It was challenging to attempt to capture the intentions and aspirations of these laborers. It is not a given that scholarship would discuss these indentured migrants as active historical agents. These migrants often left few explicit traces in colonial archives. I tried to carefully read between the lines of official reports to find moments where these laborers took action, bended rules, or raised their voices. It was sometimes unclear how events had actually unfolded—for example, a British colonial inquiry report on the kidnapping of Chinese labor migrants in the Straits Settlements contained contradictory testimonies from brokers, policemen, and colonial officials. Searching for the migrant's voice also required me to have a more expanded sense of the archive. In the end, I incorporated contemporaneous fiction, police interviews, court cases, newspapers, and even tombstones to discern the migrant's lived experience beyond what colonial officials recorded.

Locating primary sources was also a challenge, especially in the context of a pandemic. Yet, in some ways, the conditions of the pandemic pushed me to be more tenacious and creative in my exploration of digital sources. These sources often appeared unexpectedly after countless searches on online databases. It was also challenging to try to give the reader a real sense of the lived experience of the migrants I am writing about. I revised my draft many times to make sure I portrayed the rich texture of their social and cultural lives as best as I could.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
The encouragement and feedback from my advisor, Professor Denise Ho, were indispensable. I am also grateful to Mr. Michael Meng, Librarian of Chinese Studies, who guided me as I searched for Chinese sources. My residential college, Jonathan Edwards, and the History Department provided me with generous funding to conduct my research. The JE Writing Tutor, Kate Hunter, offered detailed suggestions to improve my draft. Lastly, Jiahua Yue, who was part of the CEAS Senior Project Language Support Program, provided crucial feedback for the Chinese translations I prepared.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
I spent my first-year summer studying advanced Chinese at Princeton in Beijing. Princeton in Beijing was a challenging academic experience. Nevertheless, the rigor of the program provided me with confidence in my Chinese, especially in my ability to improve my skills outside of a classroom setting. Spending time at Beijing Normal University also became one of my fondest memories of college, and I enjoyed getting a taste of university life in China. I made enduring friendships in Beijing and often reminisce about my time there with former classmates. The delicious noodles we enjoyed after our weekly exam each Friday is unforgettable, even today!

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
I could not have completed my research project without language study at Yale. Studying advanced Chinese at Yale and Princeton in Beijing with Professor Zhang Yongtao allowed me to analyze Qing sources for my senior essay. I also challenged myself to write a paper with Chinese primary sources in a history research seminar with my eventual thesis advisor, Professor Denise Ho. Writing that paper gave me the confidence to use Chinese language sources at a larger scale for my senior essay.

I also benefited from the Richter Fellowship at Jonathan Edwards College, which allowed me to enroll in an online course that taught basic Dutch reading comprehension. Taking the course opened new avenues for me to analyze documents in Dutch written by officials and sinologists from the Netherlands Indies. In doing so, I was able to further uncover the trans-imperial dimension of the migration of Chinese laborers to Sumatra.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
At Yale, I spent a lot of time with the Yale International Relations Association organizing educational conferences on global affairs for high-school students from all around the world. I devoted most of my time organizing YIRA's annual Model United Nations conference in Taiwan, which I led as Secretary-General from 2019-2020. Going to Taipei each year to meet high-school students from around Asia eager to learn about current issues has been an incredibly fulfilling experience.

Besides my extracurricular activities, I love to hop around different cafes in New Haven and try out new Italian pastries. I also have fond memories of cooking with friends at the Asian American Cultural Center before the pandemic.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
One piece of advice I received as a rising senior is to start early! Even narrowing down your interests to two or three potential topics in junior spring can be helpful. From there, you can start reading secondary sources to see if there might be an academic conversation you are eager to contribute to. You can also search for possible archives or primary source collections to assess the feasibility of conducting your research. A lot of funding deadlines for the summer happen early in junior spring, so it's good to start thinking about a topic.

I have also benefited from a well-organized system to manage my primary sources and from citation management software like Zotero. It was especially helpful for me to maintain detailed notes and folders as I was keeping track of a large number of sources. For the Qing memorials I analyzed, I created a simple document guide with a timeline that featured key details, such as the author, the recipient, the date, a summary, and where the memorial was referenced in a secondary source. Such a system was helpful for me to review those sources quickly as I started writing, even while my argument and outline changed.

Last, research a topic you care about. Writing my thesis has provided me with some surprising comfort in periods of isolation during the pandemic. Having a vision of the work you would like to produce can provide extra motivation when times get tough. I tried to write what I would love to read, and I sought to emulate the books I enjoyed reading the most when I was assigned them in my seminars.

What will you be doing after graduation?
I will be working in finance in Singapore. I hope to remain engaged with public history in Southeast Asia, especially by supporting the important work of local archives and heritage organizations.

Jenna Shin

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "A Comfort Women Redress Movement without Comfort Women"?
Former comfort woman Yi Yong-su testified to the public on May 25, 2020 regarding the exploitation of her and her fellow former comfort women by Yun Mi-hyang, former head of the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (hereafter referred to as the Korean Council). Since its founding in 1990, the Korean non-governmental organization has been the main advocate for former *wianbu* or comfort women, a euphemism for the tens of thousands of women, the majority of whom were Korean, who were forcibly enslaved by the Japanese military from the early 1930s until 1945 to provide sexual services to Japanese soldiers.

In my essay, I attempt to critically evaluate the Korean Council's role as advocate and support network for the former comfort women in light of the May 2020 controversy. First, I explore how the Korean Council is not representing the former comfort women but rather disregarding and silencing their voices. Second, I examine how the Korean Council's focus on framing and maintaining the movement as an international women's and human rights movement has resulted in the loss of the survivors' voices from the movement. As a result, the Korean Council perpetuates the silence of the former comfort women and prevents them from once again obtaining closure and resolution. The human rights movement and discourse has drawn immense global attention to the formerly forgotten and silenced former comfort women. However, in the Korean Council's attempts to frame the former comfort women's voices and experiences within the larger global human rights discourse and movement, the survivors' voices have been appropriated for its own agenda, resulting in a truly tragic irony in which the victims are revictimized by their very own advocate.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
I first got interested in my topic of research as I was taking a class on postwar Japan and began to understand the greater historical context of current issues like the comfort women. As a Korean American woman, I had hitherto been exposed to the hate-filled, extremely polarized and politicized narrative that dominates public discourse in Korea concerning the comfort women. However, through the course, I was able to learn about the underlying historical issues as to why the former comfort women still to this day have not achieved closure as well as the complicity of countless actors beyond simply the Japanese government. I kept asking myself why these women had been forced into silence for nearly 50 years and why they still to this day have not been able to find closure. Around the same time, news concerning former comfort woman Yi Yong-su's public criticism of the Korean Council surfaced as well, leading me to decide to learn more about the role of the women's support networks such as the Korean Council and what their relationship was in light of the recent controversy.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
The most interesting finding of my research was the cognitive dissonance that seemed to be occurring within the Korean Council. After observing their press conferences and written statements, they sincerely and genuinely expressed care, love, and respect for the women yet exhibited actions or attitudes that seemed to contradict those sentiments. I think this was most exemplified in their disregard of Yi Yong-su's demands such as changing the Wednesday demonstrations despite her status as the very victim they were representing. However, while this was an interesting and surprising finding, I realized that this is likely an altogether unfortunately common trap in which advocacy organizations like the Korean Council can fall into, revictimizing and exploiting the very victims they support.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
The most challenging part of my research was approaching my research objectively. Given the polarization and politization of the comfort women issue, it was extremely easy to "take sides" and have my perspective colored by the various dominant narratives surrounding the issue. However, I realized my research was ultimately not in order to make insightful conclusions or support one narrative or another but about the individual women themselves who had endured unspeakable horrors yet were courageous enough to make the issue known. I wanted to represent their voices and opinions well and avoid marginalizing their voices even within my own research and writing.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
There have been so many wonderful people who have helped me throughout this process!

The Yale library staff deserve an immense shoutout for shipping an obscene amount of books to my home where I was remotely enrolled, and Korean Studies librarian Jude Yang deserves my utmost thanks for helping me narrow down my research question, compiling valuable resources, and providing last-minute romanization advice! The Korean language program at Yale was also invaluable in improving my Korean language abilities and thus making this research possible. The encouragement of and advice from my thesis advisor, Professor Yukiko Koga, were absolutely irreplaceable in both guiding my research and sharpening my analysis despite having never met in person! And her course, Postwar Japan: Ghosts of Modernity, was what started this incredible journey in the first place. This essay would never have become what it is without the help of every single one of these people, and I am so incredibly thankful.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
Unfortunately, I was not able to travel to Asia during my time at Yale. I had planned on going on a Light Fellowship to Korea the summer before my senior year but was unable to do so because of the pandemic. However, I am incredibly lucky that most of my research was possible via the various virtual platforms that became more popular during the pandemic.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
My language study at Yale was incredibly important to my research. I came to Yale with very basic Korean language skill gained through listening to and speaking with my family, but the Korean language program at Yale improved my Korean abilities immensely. As a result, I was able to read and analyze Korean language sources, which were essential to my research.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
When I had some downtime on campus, I loved to simply spend quality time with my friends, eating good food off-campus, having movie nights, baking, and doing life together! I also love watching Korean dramas and listening to K-pop as well as searching for good Asian (particularly Korean) food around campus.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
While writing a senior thesis might seem like an incredibly daunting task, don't stress out or worry too much! While it is a wonderful opportunity to research a topic of your choice and work closely with a professor, it should be fun, enjoyable, and ultimately what you want it to be. I think viewing my senior thesis as a culmination of my entire Yale career was both terrifying and untrue and prevented me from really enjoying and seeing the process for what it was – an opportunity to

create and produce something of my own. But practically, it is definitely a good idea to create a schedule and to follow it! Deadlines are your friend when conducting an entirely self-driven project.

What will you be doing after graduation?

After graduation, I will be returning home to Georgia and working as a Corporate Analyst for Fiserv as a part of their Corporate Analyst program in which participants rotate around the company with the goal of discovering the career path they would like to pursue. I am excited to gain new skills, learn about the working world and myself, and grow in general in ways that I might not have been able to at Yale. Eventually, I would love to be in East Asia, building relationships and continuing to learn more about the region I have come to cherish.

2019-2020 Williams Prize Award Winners

Yoojin Han and Tiana Wang

May 26, 2020

Yoojin Han (Berkeley '20) and Tiana Wang (Ezra Stiles '20) are the winners of the 2020 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies. Yoojin, for her essay submitted to the Department of History, "Redefining through Remembering: China's Political Objectives as Reflected in Chinese State Commemoration of the Korean War, 1950 - 2010," and Tiana for her essay submitted to the Department of Sociology, "A Changing Tea Culture, A Changing China: Variations in Conceptions of Gift Tea Among Tea Sellers."

The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Yoojin and Tiana shortly before graduation and they kindly answered a few of our questions about their essays.

Yoojin Han

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "Redefining through Remembering: China's Political Objectives as Reflected in Chinese State Commemoration of the Korean War, 1950 - 2010"?

This essay analyzes the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Korean War commemoration from the year 1950 to 2010, to examine the party's domestic and international use of the historical narrative of the Korean War. It argues that the CCP used its Korean War narrative as a propaganda tool for rallying domestic political support and signaling the CCP's perception of its relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Republic of Korea (ROK), the United States, and the Soviet Union. The Korean War narrative had always responded to domestic needs, initially focused on consolidating the home front, and later on legitimizing the CCP's political rule. Since 1954, the narrative additionally served as an international signaling tool for trumpeting China-North Korea relations. This DPRK-oriented message, however, decreased in fervor during the Cultural Revolution and later from 1972 with PRC-U.S. rapprochement, and from the 1990s the narrative's international message expanded to accommodate differing historical narratives of China's new partners, such as the ROK.

Despite these changes, the CCP maintained its portrayal of the United States as China's opponent, intentional ambivalence on who started the war, justification of China's intervention as protecting China's national interests, and emphasis on the "correct leadership" by the CCP. These consistencies suggest that these messages' underlying political objectives are still relevant today: namely, its perception of rivalry with the United States, conciliatory approach to North Korea, the CCP's political correctness and legitimacy, and importance of buffer states in national security.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
It's difficult to pinpoint exactly when or how I became interested in this topic. I think it developed naturally over time from my three key academic interests: international relations of Northeast Asia, historical narrative as the result and influence of these relations, and my native country, Korea.

If pressed, though, I would say that the latter half of 2017 was the key turning point. This was when U.S.-DPRK relations reached an all-time low, and everyone was interested in speculating the future of the Korean peninsula. One thing that everyone seemed to agree upon was that China would play a key role in what will come next in the Korean peninsula, but there seemed to be no consensus on what exactly China would do. Existing articles on China's goals toward North Korea focused primarily on the beginning of the two countries' relations from the Korean War in 1950, then shifted directly to contemporary relations of the 2000s, with almost no explanation on PRC-DPRK relations between those years. This gap prompted my curiosity—how did PRC-DPRK relations change over time during that period?

At the time, I was taking a course on how the CCP actively uses historical narratives to fit its political goals, so I wrote my final paper for that course on China's historical narrative on the Korean War, the event credited to have founded the modern PRC-DPRK relationship, to see how the CCP has crafted its historical narrative about North Korea to meet its political needs. It turned out to be a fascinating topic and I only got to scratch the surface of it with my term paper, so I decided to continue my research through my senior essay.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
The biggest surprise was not how the narrative changed over time, but the parts that didn't change. If the Korean War narrative was indeed crafted by the CCP's political goals, then its consistencies can be seen as reflecting the CCP's objectives that remained constant over the past six decades.

I was particularly interested in two of these consistencies: how the United States was clearly labeled as China's war opponent, and the CCP's intentional ambivalence in who started the war. The first part is noteworthy in that the Chinese narrative has portrayed the "Korean War" as, at times in openly accusatory language, a conflict mainly between China and the United States, with other players—even the two Koreas—given only marginal attention compared to these two "protagonists" of the war. Even PRC-U.S. rapprochement did not dampen this narrative of rivalry, suggesting that the CCP may be genuinely seeing its relationship with the United States as a competition. If true, this perception has significant implications on the prospects of future U.S.-China relations and U.S. strategy toward China.

The second part is equally significant in that it suggests China's reluctance to label North Korea as the starter of the war and refute North Korea's (false) narrative that the war started as an invasion from the U.S.-led south. This reluctance in turn signals China's willingness to remain attentive to North Korea's needs and demands, even as it balances competing demands from its new diplomatic partners such as South Korea and the United States. In the light of speculations on how far China will push North Korea on issues such as abandoning its nuclear arsenal, this revelation of China's conciliatory approach suggests that China, at least as of now, is not willing to pressure North Korea too far.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
The biggest struggle was compiling a sufficient collection of primary sources on the CCP's changing Korean War narrative. There were a lot of sources on the historical memory of the Korean War, but most of them were constricted time-wise, either primarily from wartime years and the immediate aftermath, or from 2000 onwards. Thankfully, I came across Chinese news reports on Korean War commemoration events, which provided reliable coverage of the 60 years of interest with decent continuity.

Another challenge was the dearth of studies on the historical development of PRC-DPRK relations. Considering the contemporary importance, I was expecting a lot of existing literature on the topic, but I was surprised to find the contrary, especially for the years after Mao Zedong. It was daunting to do research on a topic with so few existing studies to guide me, but it did make my findings all the more exciting!

The last struggle was to reach a level of Chinese proficiency where I can digest hundreds of pages of reports and speeches with relative ease. I was fortunately able to squeeze in a full year of Chinese language studies before I started my senior year, which provided me with solid groundwork to push forward with my thesis research when I came back to Yale.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
It's difficult to pick the single most helpful resource—I consulted so many!

The advice from my professors, mainly Professor Denise Ho and Professor Fabian Drixler, was absolutely irreplaceable. They were willing to spend hours of their time advising me on finding an exciting but manageable topic, planning my research, and guiding me to relevant resources. The vast collections of the Yale Library, the guidance that Mr. Michael Meng, Librarian for Chinese Studies, provided me in using those collections, and Yale's support for my language studies, were also equally significant in making this research possible.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
Yes! Thanks to the Richard U. Light Fellowship, I had the opportunity to study Chinese for a summer (2016) and full academic year (2018-19) in Beijing, where I attended Harvard Beijing Academy and Inter-University Program for Chinese Language Studies, respectively. Less relevant to my thesis but equally memorable, I also spent a summer (2019) in Yokohama attending the Inter-University Center for Japanese Language Studies. Lastly, in 2017, I took summer courses on Korean history and foreign affairs at Seoul National University.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
Absolutely critical. Since the vast majority of my primary sources (and a large part of my secondary sources too) were in Chinese, my research would have been impossible without my language studies and improvement in my Chinese language proficiency during my time at Yale. For that, I am more than grateful for all my language instructors, from Yale and beyond, as well as the Richard U. Light Fellowship that enabled my terms abroad.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
My biggest involvement during my time at Yale was with the Yale International Relations Association (YIRA), where during the year 2016-2017 I served as the Secretary-General of its annual Model United Nations conference in Seoul, South Korea. I also edited for the *Yale Review of International Studies*, where I was primarily in charge of papers on East Asia.

As a huge foodie, I loved trying out new food spots in New Haven and, once I moved off-campus, cooking food myself. One of my favorite pastimes is watching cooking videos from Korea, Japan, and China, and some of my most memorable moments at Yale include cooking Korean food with my friends!

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
Start early, plan in advance, and make full use of the resources Yale has to offer! I encourage all my friends in their junior year to start thinking about their thesis topics at least by spring semester, so that they can start looking for sources over the summer. I'd also say don't be shy about reaching out to professors for advice; my professors' advice was critical in helping me brainstorm and finding really useful resources. You might get a head start in finding your thesis advisor that way, too!

What will you be doing after graduation?
I will be working in Washington, D.C., as a consultant at McKinsey and Company. Through this opportunity, I hope to broaden my perspective by working with clients from industries I am unfamiliar with, while staying engaged with government and social sectors, through both work and the local D.C. community.

Tiana Wang

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "A Changing Tea Culture, A Changing China: Variations in Conceptions of Gift Tea Among Tea Sellers"?
Tea is not only a beverage for personal consumption in China, but it also functions as a gift object in *guanxi* social relations. Although *guanxi* relations—which are historically rooted in notions of Confucian reciprocity—exist between family members and friends, a vertical form between those of lower rank and their superiors is present within government and company bureaucracies as well. My paper draws on interviews and observations with 20 tea sellers in Beijing, Shanghai, and Jinan to examine how the cultural and economic meanings of tea in *guanxi* relations have changed in reaction to 1) a demographic transition in the buyers and sellers in the tea industry and 2) the 2013 anti-corruption campaign, which specifically targeted luxury gift-giving within vertical *guanxi* relations.

Even before the 2013 anti-corruption campaign, the meanings of tea for sellers were changing in response to the demands of a growing group of younger middle-class tea consumers, who have been influenced by ideas of individualism and connoisseurship. Whereas the value of the *guanxi* tea previously relied upon its social or public image, its worth as a gift object is increasingly becoming dependent on its value as a consumer good. When the campaign cracked down on the giving of luxury gift teas, the shift in the values associated with gift tea accelerated. Today, *guanxi* gift tea generally conveys a combination of social, public values and hedonic, consumer values. Differences in perceptions of the values associated with gift teas vary along educational and generational lines for the tea sellers. Geography, too, affected the extent to which tea sellers approached and reacted to changes in the industry.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
I've been fascinated with tea since I was eleven or twelve. I really got into it because it was a way to bond with my dad—we would sit around the kitchen table and talk about the brew that we were drinking, and when we were making jasmine tea, he drove me around to nurseries to find the perfect jasmine flower bush. Somewhere along the line, this personal interest turned more academic and artistic. I wrote a thirty-page research paper on tea in middle school. In high school, I wrote essays and poems about tea. When I got the chance to go to China in college, I knew that I wanted to do research related to tea for my senior thesis.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
The truly wonderful thing about tea—to a sociology major, at least—is that it is intertwined with social rituals and customs. I began my research expecting tea sellers to only talk to me about tea ceremonies and consumer values (which earlier researchers of tea culture had investigated). I was thus very surprised when the sellers in Beijing kept on bringing up anti-corruption policies. As I explored this topic further, I realized how tea was instrumental in certain kinds of social structures (specifically vertical *guanxi* relations in bureaucracies and companies), and how that social structure was targeted by the anti-corruption policies. This led to a corresponding shift in rhetoric in how the tea sellers presented their teas. Before, the merchants could make one-time sales by saying a tea was valuable as a gift tea. Now, however, more sellers touch on consumer values of health and connoisseurship when marketing the tea to their customer base.
The importance of the anti-corruption policies to the tea market was the first surprising thing; the second was the difference in the tea sellers' experiences. From my conversations with the sellers in Beijing, it sounded like the market essentially collapsed because so much of the sellers' revenue came from these one-time big spenders, who would buy teas as gifts to give during Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival.

But when I spoke to merchants outside of Beijing, they told me that their businesses were not only largely unaffected by the anti-corruption policies, but some were even expanding. Why was the scale of financial devastation for these tea markets so different compared to that for the tea markets within Beijing? This perplexed me until I realized the extent to which geography influenced these tea sellers' experiences: the impact of the anti-corruption campaign on tea sellers was not uniform because in Beijing, the political center of China, the market served more clients who purchased teas for vertical gift giving.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
The biggest challenge at first was building my knowledge base about tea in China. I spent hours upon hours drinking tea with tea sellers, attending tea events on campus, and visiting tea exhibitions to gain a more comprehensive understanding

of tea in China. My interviews with the tea sellers improved in terms of depth and complexity as I learned more about tea; for example, the tea merchants often discussed growing conditions, but, as someone from Los Angeles, I didn't know what they meant by the "mists and high mountains" until I had visited a tea plantation in Hangzhou in person.

Synthesizing all of the research was also challenging. My interview subjects had provided a lot of information on a lot of different things, and incorporating their contributions into a single cohesive, strong argument was very difficult. This was made harder by the timeline of my project. Nine months passed between when I had finished my last interview and when I started *really* analyzing the data; in those nine months I had worked on my literature review and waffled over the focus of my thesis. Once I had all the transcriptions in front of me in March 2020, I realized that my initial idea of writing on tea culture in China at large would have made for a disjointed, unsatisfying paper. I committed instead to concentrating on changes in perceptions of *guanxi* gift teas. With incisive feedback from my adviser, I basically rewrote my paper the week before it was due—two days to read two crucial books, and then deleting, writing, and restructuring around sixty pages in four days. I wouldn't recommend it, but I don't regret the process: the work that I had put in took my paper to where it needed to be, even though the road had quite a few twists and turns.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
The Human Subjects Committee and Brandy Lagner were immensely helpful when I was getting IRB approval for my research in China. My thesis adviser, Jeffrey Alexander, offered invaluable encouragement and feedback throughout the project. I am grateful, too, for my former supervisors at the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, Glen Davenport and Meghan Bathgate. Glen and Meghan trained me in qualitative coding and taught me so much about the research process. Under their generous guidance, I became a more critical thinker and researcher. The final draft of my paper benefited greatly from the stylistic suggestions offered by the Residential College Writing Tutors, and Cathy Shufro in particular.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
The Light Fellowship allowed my research to be possible. In spring 2019, I enrolled in the Inter-University Program, a language study program at Tsinghua University in Beijing. It was my first time in China since I had immigrated with my parents to the U.S. in 2004. I think I was able to make the most of the incredible opportunity because I was returning to the country after fifteen years. At Yale, I usually spent the weekends holed up in my room, reading. In China, I explored a new park, museum, or marketplace every weekend. A few times a month, after classes ended in the afternoon, I would bike to the station to catch the subway to Maliandao and drink tea with the sellers until the market closed.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
All of my interviews were conducted in Mandarin, so my language study at Yale was very helpful. Like a lot of people who speak Chinese at home, I had more chances to practice speaking than reading and writing. I was fairly confident in my ability to ask questions and keep the conversation flowing, but the classes that I had taken at Yale proved to be essential to the transcription and translation process, developing my vocabulary to the point where I felt comfortable working with written Chinese materials.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
My time in China provided so much artistic inspiration! One of my two forthcoming poems in *Poetry* is a reinterpretation of Cui Hao's "Yellow Crane Tower"; the idea for the other emerged out of meditations on the tonal nature of Mandarin. Besides writing poetry, I love taking photographs—a virtual exhibit of my photos from China and England can be found at https://jackadam.cc/tianatime/.

Perusing Panjiayuan Antique Market in Beijing sparked my interest in antiques. I've found so many kinds of exciting antiques at estate sales in New Haven and surrounding areas, from Hitchcock furniture to mid-century brass duck head bookends. One of my favorite finds was a vintage Thonet-style bentwood rocking chair—I had to go down to Bridgeport to pick that up.

Since returning to Yale, I've also started weaving scarves down in the Stiles/Morse fiber arts studio with the amazing Barbara Hurley. The repetition of motion is so relaxing! Learning overshot weaving has been one of my proudest achievements this year.

In my downtime from my downtime, I drink and blend tea (no surprise there!). I adore puer and Tieguanyin, and recently discovered some exquisite Taiping Houkui that is faintly sweet and ends on a note of orchid. Last semester, I hosted a tea-blending workshop in my residential college, which over 50 people attended. It was wonderful to see everyone being creative as they made their own tea.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
Try to start as early as possible, but be patient. The process of conducting research is not linear; you are not given a story with a single set narrative, nor are you expected to tell one. At times, it will seem like every piece of your data is equally indispensable. At other times, the data may seem uniformly irrelevant. It will feel like the argument can proceed in a thousand different directions, or that there are a thousand strands of argument to pursue. In these moments, I recommend that you take a break from overthinking. Return to the existing literature and reduce the arguments to the simplest terms. Do those keywords align with your findings? Is there something that does not fit? Embrace changes in the conceptualization of your thesis topic and overarching argument; conversely, be wary of an argument in stasis, one that does not advance as you incorporate more information into the paper.

As you develop your thesis, you will find yourself growing not only as a student, thinker, and researcher, but also as a person in the world. There will be growing pains, so before you start, I think it is important that you deliberate over your long-term goals and aspirations. Where does your project fit in the life that you see for yourself? What kind of person do you hope this research can help you become, one year or one semester later? Avoid the myopic view of the senior thesis as simply an academic requirement, and approach it as a thrilling opportunity to engage deeply and thoughtfully with a topic that you would like to talk about with passion and care years down the line. Ideally, pick a topic that you can enjoy researching, so that even if the writing stage does not go the way that you anticipate, you will have no regrets—buoyed, hopefully, by your fond memories of doing research.

For those who are working with primary research (specifically interviews), I highly recommend keeping detailed logs. Note demographic information. Unless you are working exclusively with interviewees who have been introduced by a mutual acquaintance, you will find that not everyone is willing to talk to you. This is a completely natural part of the research experience! Do not be discouraged. Try to gauge subjects' willingness to participate early on; you do not want to be in a situation where it is too late to submit a revised IRB, if necessary.

My final piece of advice actually comes from a close friend: "Your undergraduate thesis doesn't matter that much in the grand scheme of things, but you only get to write one. Make sure you know that you did the best you could."

What will you be doing after graduation?
I will write poetry full-time for a year with the support of a fellowship from Yale. I had originally planned to visit places in different regions of the U.S., such as Maine, Alaska, and New Mexico, studying the material culture of these states. With my ability to travel now limited due to the pandemic, I want to take the chance to pick up my studies in Chinese language and poetry again. After this year-long poetry project, I intend to go to law school. I've always been passionate about creators' rights, and collaborating with other artists has made me realize how difficult but crucial it is for legislation to protect these rights while preserving the open exchange of ideas in society.

2017-2018 Williams Prize Award Winners

Charlotte Cotter

May 31, 2018

Charlotte Cotter (Grace Hopper '18) and Andrew Weiss (Davenport '18) were two winners of the 2018 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies. Charlotte, for her essay submitted to the East Asian Studies Program, "Alternative Marriage Practices of Wartime Urban China in Discourse and Practice (1937-1949)," and Andrew for his essay, also submitted to the East Asian Studies Program, "Towards a Beautiful Japan: Right-Wing Religious Nationalism in Japan's LDP."

The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Charlotte and Andrew shortly before graduation and they kindly answered a few of our questions about their essays.

Charlotte Cotter

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "Alternative Marriage Practices of Wartime Urban China in Discourse and Practice (1937-1949)"?
My paper argues that for urban couples in wartime China, material scarcity, population displacement, and economic inflation led to an increase in alternative marriage practices, namely a rise in "cohabitation" announcements and the proliferation of "war wives" and "war husbands." Not only did wartime intensify certain practices, but I also argue that the wartime period was crucial in creating space for the urban-middle-class to publically engage with alternative definitions of marriage. It was into this social atmosphere that the PRC began to implement family reform movements when they took power after 1949.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
In my first semester at Yale, I took a survey class on Modern Chinese History entitled "China's Global 20th Century" with Professor Peter Perdue and CJ Huang, and I became interested in China's involvement in WWII and the Japanese invasion of China. The concept of the Japanese occupation of China also fascinated me, especially in Shanghai, a uniquely cosmopolitan city that already been broken up into foreign concessions. For this first class, my final paper attempted to re-position the now beloved Chinese writer Eileen Chang within her original historical context of occupied Shanghai. In a subsequent seminar on Modern Cities in Asia, I explored the idea of the "solitary island" period that the international concessions experienced in the years between when the Japanese took the areas surrounding Shanghai to when they occupied the entire city the morning after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In his groundbreaking work on the re-building of governing institutions in the occupied areas of the Yangtze River Delta entitled *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local*

Elites in Wartime China, Timothy Brook aptly noted that women were often missing from histories of occupied China and that a social history of occupied Yangtze river delta China had yet to be written. I was interested to see what I could do to try to address this gap in the research. It was about this time that I found Hanna Diamond's work *Women and the Second World War in France, 1939-48: Choices and Constraints* documenting women's lives in occupied Vichy France, which was an initial inspiration for similar work that could be done on the China side. I also drew inspiration from Zhao Ma's work *Runaway Wives, Urban Crimes and Survival Tactics in Wartime Beijing, 1937-1949,* which drew on local court cases to paint a picture of the lives, struggles, and survival of lower class women in wartime Beijing. Based on the sources I was able to access, what began as an investigation into women's lives in occupied Shanghai turned into a look at changing marriage practices as a way for both women and men to cope with wartime population displacement, economic inflation, and material scarcity.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
I was looking for a topic where I enjoyed what I was reading about. Stories of wartime marriage, of course, were often fraught with pain and suffering, and I do not want to downplay the difficulty of decisions made under such conditions. However, sometimes, there was also a humorous element to these stories. In one of the stories, a man returns from Kunming to his hometown in Eastern China after the war only to find that his wife had remarried in order to support herself. In a rage, he demands that the new husband repay his original cost of the dowry and wedding. But this new husband does not have the funds to pay such money, and the original man has no choice but to accept a one-way plane ticket back to Kunming. I guess in a larger sense, the more light-hearted tone that was taken definitely surprised me – that was part of my argument that, even if temporarily and with the expectation that things would revert back at the end of the war, wartime opened up space for public discussion of these phenomena.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
For a while I was working primarily with a source called *nü sheng* 女聲[Women's Voice], a monthly women's life and culture magazine published in Shanghai during the occupation. I wanted to see whether it shed light on interesting aspects of women's daily life in the occupied metropolis. Unfortunately, I found that the articles largely ignored wartime conditions and suffering, like many other periodicals published during the occupation that targeted a war weary public which simply wanted to escape the difficult realities of daily life. That is, in the words of Susan Glosser in her piece "Women's Culture of Resistance: An Ordinary Response to Extraordinary Circumstances," "these journals tell us a lot about what women should have been doing about their families and their marriage, but very little about what they actually did." Finding a source that would reflect experiences of the average urban woman as they adjusted to the complexities and conditions of wartime would prove to be more difficult. When I did find sources that worked, I had to adjust my topic somewhat.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
I mostly relied on the online newspaper databases for which Yale has a subscription.

I'd like to thank the librarians at the East Asian Studies Library, especially Michael Meng, for helping point me in the direction of important databases that became crucial in my research. I also consulted with a number of different Professors and affiliates of Yale, including Professor Denise Ho and Mark Baker, and especially my advisor, Professor Peter Perdue. I remember that I encountered a lot of trouble with writer's block when turning from research to writing my paper, and Professor Perdue sent me a detailed and encouraging email with tips from his own experience. As simple as it seems, the most important thing for me to hear was that first drafts do not have to be perfect – that's why there are drafts!

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
I was very lucky to have the opportunity to travel to Asia multiple times while I was at Yale! I led two Building Bridges trips for Yale students to teach middle-schoolers in rural China, the first in Zhangzhou city, Fujian, and the second in Xinyang city, Henan. Additionally, During the Summer of 2015, I was on Light Fellowship in Harbin, China at the CET Harbin intensive Chinese language program. In the Fall of 2016, the Light Fellowship generously funded a semester of study at the International Chinese Language Program in Taipei. Of course, all of my language study and experience in China prepared for this thesis, but I'd like to especially single out my time at ICLP. I did not realize it at the time, but my classes at ICLP were crucial in allowing me to read many of the documents that I used for this project. Particularly, I think that working

with Yang Laoshi on translating the many classical Chinese passages in *Zhongguo jindaishi* 中國近代史 was critical, so I'd like to give him a shout-out.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
Crucial. All of the language classes and hours of study that I had put into Mandarin were put to the test during this project. My study of classical Chinese at Yale and during Light Fellowships very much helped in reading texts that were more classically informed.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
I love volunteering and working with kids, and some of my fondest memories of Yale are being involved in the student group CASPY, short for the Chinese Adopted Siblings Program for Youth, which hosts a day-long event at Yale once a semester for Chinese adoptees and their parents to connect with the community and learn about their heritage. As a Chinese adoptee who has benefitted a lot from the support of community and from early exposure to Chinese culture and language, it really meant a lot for me to pay it forward for other Chinese adoptees and their families.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
I'd say that beginning to write far before you feel ready is very helpful. Writing was crucial in helping me organize what I'd found and formulating coherent arguments about it, and it would have helped if I had been stepping back from the mountain of facts to process the larger picture of my research more along the way. The Senior Essay Handbook for seniors in the Yale History department also provided a wealth of knowledge from many generations of seniors who have written theses, and hearing some of the common pitfalls and some of the most successful strategies was extremely humbling and valuable.

What will you be doing after graduation?
I have always been passionate about building bridges between China and the United States and I want to continue to work toward that.

I continue to lead an organization that I founded in high school called China's Children International. CCI provides programming for Chinese adoptees including: networking opportunities, volunteer trips to China and mentoring programs. I am also working with a company which works with Chinese students who want to study in the United States. I will be facilitating some trips to the US this summer for those students. Also, I am doing some research for Yale Professor Denise Ho, which I will continue into the summer.

Eventually, I plan to go to graduate school in an area that will facilitate the type of Chinese American connections that are at the center of my interests. There are different (and overlapping) ways to build those connections - I would say that my focus would be education.

Andrew Weiss

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled "Towards a Beautiful Japan: Right-Wing Religious Nationalism in Japan's LDP"?
I researched the influence of religious groups, especially Shinto-linked religious groups, on right-wing policy positions in Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, finding a significant role of these groups in crafting certain key areas of policy.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
While studying abroad in Japan on the Light Fellowship, I noticed political material being distributed in Shinto shrines, which I had previously thought of as peaceful, apolitical places. Looking further into the subject revealed a network of religious groups and activists wide enough that I thought it merited further study.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
I think the most interesting finding was that Japanese public opinion is largely ambivalent about many of the issues that are seen as so important in the international media. I was surprised by how willing many right-wing activists were to speak with me.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
Going alone to Japan and setting up meetings with strangers, some of whom have what I consider to be extreme views, was challenging, especially as I had to do everything in a foreign language.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
The East Asian Library provided me with access while at Yale to essential databases and resources, and also helped me with access to libraries in Japan. My thesis adviser, Frances Rosenbluth also provided me with indispensable introductions.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
I traveled to Japan twice on Light Fellowships to study Japanese, and twice through the help of the Japan Foundation's Center for Global Partnership Grant to conduct research.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
This research would have been completely impossible without the high level of Japanese instruction I received at Yale and the support of the Light Fellowship to learn Japanese abroad.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
The earlier you start, the more and better research you will be able to do. Yale provides a huge amount of resources to seniors wishing to do independent research, take advantage of them.

What will you be doing after graduation?
I will be doing management consulting in Tokyo.

2016-2017 Williams Prize Award Winners

Claire Williamson and Max Goldberg

May 22, 2017

Max Goldberg (Pierson '17), Ryan Hintzman (Silliman '17) and Claire Williamson (Jonathan Edwards '17) were three of four winners of the 2017 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies. Max, for his essay submitted to the Ethics, Politics, & Economics Program, *Enclave of Ingenuity: The Plan and Promise of the Beijing Intellectual Property Court*, Ryan for his essay submitted to the Department of Comparative Literature, *Chinese Wines and Foreign Urns: Making Objects of Lyric*, and Claire for her essay submitted to the East Asian Studies Program, *A Coffee-Scented Space: Historical, Cultural, and Social Impacts of the Japanese Kissaten*.

The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Max, Ryan, and Claire shortly before graduation and they kindly answered a few of our questions about their essays.

Max Goldberg

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled *Enclave of Ingenuity: The Plan and Promise of the Beijing Intellectual Property Court*?
Generally speaking, intellectual property (IP) protection in China is weak. Nevertheless, the court system for IP has served not only as a model for relatively effective IP enforcement, but also as a proving ground for innovative legal procedures. This judicial experimentation finds its current form in the Beijing Intellectual Property Court (BJIPC), a new institution founded with the purpose of advancing both intellectual property protection and, more broadly, the Rule of Law in China. So far, the court has devised several new measures that significantly differentiate it from China's court system. While the BJIPC represents a step forward for an already above-average area of Chinese law, its real significance remains to be seen due to a developing understanding of how the reforms will impact the economy and encounter political obstacles if implemented on a broader scale. Still, because the BJIPC provides a functional model for legal capacity-building within China's IP infrastructure, it holds tremendous promise for increasing consistency and openness in China's legal system.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
My interest in Chinese law has a rather strange story behind it. I've had a longstanding interest in Chinese language (since I was 13 or so), but my interest in law didn't really solidify until my second year at Yale. Originally, my goal was to do a tutorial in "Legal Chinese" simply to "keep up" my skills. But my plans were foiled: no department would approve my

proposal. After scores of unsuccessful meetings, I sat down with Edward Kamens (then the DUS of East Asian Languages & Literatures), who told me that a visiting professor from Duke (Taisu Zhang, who was subsequently hired by YLS) was teaching a law school course called "Chinese Law and Society." Even though it wasn't exactly what I wanted, I enrolled and fell in love with the study of Chinese law. I wrote my term paper for that course on the connections between juvenile crime and internal migration in China—so you can see that, within the area of "Chinese law," my interests are still very broad—amorphous, perhaps!

As for my topic more specifically—last September, I happened upon Jeremy Daum's commentary on the BJIPC's first year of operation on his blog, *China Law Translate*. I started poking around for the actual cases from that strange court, and so began my research!

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
The most interesting finding for me was probably 2015 Case No. 177 (p.46-48 of the paper), which was a watershed moment in several ways, not least in terms of how the adjudication committee decided to open their deliberations in a public hearing. 2015 Case No. 1750 is a close second, though—it's totally unheard of for dissent to be acknowledged in Chinese courts' written opinions.

More broadly, it was amazing to actually read cases in which I could see stodgier modes of Chinese law were "giving way" to new procedures guided by the spirit of the Rule of Law.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
I join every other China scholar in one resounding cry: Databases that are glitchy, broken, incomplete, or even biased. Throughout my research, I was constantly running into dead links, corrupted files, and missing records. I spent an enormous amount of my time verifying documents across databases and looking into missing holes to determine whether a record was simply mission or was deliberately omitted.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
Throughout my studies, Evelyn Ma, Yale Law School's China librarian, has guided me like a beacon of hope in a dark, stormy sea. She has connected me with countless resources and has taught me all sorts of tricks. As far as inanimate entities go, the @yale.edu email address was probably the single most helpful tool in my arsenal…using it meant that Chinese practitioners and government employees actually responded to my queries, and that the owners of proprietary databases gave me free access.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
Yes, I traveled to Asia twice (thrice if Russia counts as Asia). For the summer after Freshman year (2014), I got a Light Fellowship to attend Harvard Beijing Academy at Beijing Language and Culture University. I found the academic program to be extremely boring, but setting it aside gave me an opportunity to conduct an independent research project on perceptions of income inequality and to moonlight as a bartender in a Beijing nightclub (where I learned a lot of good Chinese).

During the next summer (2015), I was in St. Petersburg and Moscow, Russia on a Perlroth Prize Fellowship, studying Russian literature and culture at St. Petersburg State University and assisting LGBT refugees in their emigration process.
Last summer (2016), I was in San Francisco and Hong Kong as both a Liman Fellow and a Grand Strategy Fellow, doing U.S.-China judicial exchange work and diplomatic consulting on a variety of issues, ranging from girls in prison to espionage sentencing.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
My knowledge of Chinese was critical to this project (all of the BJIPC documents that I read were in Mandarin). I am especially grateful to my High School Chinese teacher, Xiaorong Li, without whom I would not know Mandarin. My college professor, Wei Su, was extremely dedicated to making sure that I was able to study legal Chinese, and without him I might have never begun studying Chinese Law. I am also indebted to my Fields partners, who helped me keep myself literate and are just finishing up their JSDs at Yale Law School!

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
Well, almost every day, I can be found on the lifting floor of Payne Whitney gym with my headphones in. If you listen closely, you'll hear me as I discordantly sing along to China's finest "Drool Music" (口水歌)—sappy love ballads.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
As early as possible before you "must" begin your thesis, take some time for "intellectual puttering"—wander serendipitously through the stacks, make use of Wikipedia's "random article" function, ask bizarre questions of your professors and peers. Eventually, something vaguely academic will come out and grab you—write about that!

What will you be doing after graduation?
This summer, I'm traveling and taking it easy. From August 2017 to June 2018, I'll be a Schwarzman Scholar at Tsinghua University in Beijing. After that, I'll be returning to Yale for law school.

Ryan Hintzman

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled *Chinese Wines and Foreign Urns: Making Objects of Lyric*
My thesis is a broadly humanistic project of literary criticism that aims to articulate and deploy a method of reading lyric poems from premodern East Asia with and against poems from the Romantic and post-Romantic lyrical tradition in English. I read poems from the Man'yōshū and English poems by Crane, Stevens, Keats, and Yeats. I argue that lyric poems are dependent on a toggle-switch between figurative and literal reading, between reading the lyric poem as a meaningful object that can stand in for the poet's voice, hand, or subjective experience and seeing the poem as a configuration of letters, ink, and paper fibers. A lyric poem is always a thing in the world, and I ask why and how we read lyrics as possessing depth and as being more than a material surface. This double possibility of endowing or charging objects with figurative meaning and of falling away from lyric's illusions and seeing the world in a prosaic, non-figurative manner, is, I argue, central to recent theoretical work on the lyric and a structure internal to lyric poetry itself. I read poems written on gravestones, on paintings, in water, and in manuscript form, and I argue that lyric cannot be read without close attention to the lyric as material object. My research seeks to contribute to an ongoing and timely conversation about the possibility and usefulness of lyric as a critical concept or tool, and to extend or disrupt the critical conversation on lyric by centering the material qualities of the lyric and by introducing premodern, non-Romantic, non-Western poems as central to my argument.

In navigating between pressing theoretical and ethical imperatives to make and test comparisons across languages and periods and the need to produce close, philologically-sensitive readings of poems, I develop and explore a comparative method of reading while practicing a practical criticism that discovers new openings in familiar poems and introduces careful readings of Japanese poems into a critical conversation about lyric in which non-Western poems have been largely absent. I leverage non-Romantic, non-Western poems in part to defend and refine notions of the lyric that have been most clearly articulated by critics working on Romantic and post-Romantic poetry. The lyric, I argue, is not simply a creation of the Romantic period or of professional literary criticism, but can be a useful concept for figuring out what poems do and how.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
My thesis grew out of three dominant strands of my coursework at Yale: premodern Japanese literature, Romantic and post-Romantic English poetry, and literary theory. The core of the thesis began in the spring of my junior year in a research seminar led by Professor Edward Kamens, and continued into the summer, when I did a few months of research on the poetry of the Man'yōshū (an eighth-century Japanese anthology). When I got back to Yale, the thesis gradually grew into a more comparative and theoretical project.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
I remember one summer afternoon in Kyoto: I was reading a particularly intricate essay on calligraphy, Daoism, and Ōtomo no Tabito, replete with quotations from classical Chinese and written in an opaque style, when I had

something of an "aha!" moment in which at least some of the pieces of the puzzle "clicked" and I figured out what the author was actually talking about. It seems minor, but I was so excited that I called a few of my friends back in the States to explain these very cool things I had just figured out. It must've been around midnight for them, but they were kind enough to listen.

I was also surprised at how often I would realize that I was missing the "big point," and my main argument must have changed ten or more times while writing. Sometimes I would wake up from a nap and think "oh, *that's* what this poem is really about." Living with and writing about a set of poems for a year or more was really a strange experience, and unlike any other writing I did during my undergraduate career.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
In the initial stages of my research, the most challenging thing was to find my way in the truly voluminous secondary literature on early Japanese poetry written in Japanese. Eventually I managed to get a feel for the major scholars and major trends in the field, and found a few interesting critics that I felt I could include in the larger conversation about lyric poetry that I was trying to stage in my essay. Later in the project, the main difficulty was to tie together the disparate arguments, readings, and texts into a coherent essay on lyric poetry.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
The Yale Library's extensive Japan collection rivaled the major research libraries I used during my time in Japan. Haruko Nakamura, the librarian for Japanese studies, helped to acquire a number of new titles from Japan that were crucial to my research. Just as important as the library, though, has been the vibrant community of scholars of premodern Japan at Yale, which has encouraged and enabled my work on Japanese poetry and given my work an attentive and critical audience for which I am very grateful.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
After my freshman year, I spent a summer learning classical Japanese at the Kyoto Center for Japanese Studies (KCJS). Last summer, I spent three months doing research in Kyoto, funded by the Robert Lyons Danly Memorial Fellowship and the Summer in Japan Fellowship. Just a couple of weeks after graduation, I'll be starting a Light Fellowship in Taiwan.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
At Yale, I took Japanese 171, which solidified my facility with classical Japanese. In my junior and senior years, I took a number of seminars with Professor Edward Kamens on topics in premodern Japanese literature. What was particularly valuable about my training at Yale was the opportunity to combine language study and literary study in these seminars.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
I am also a cellist, and most of my non-academic activities revolved around music performance. Many of my friends were, in one way or another, interested in East Asia, even if not in a scholarly sense.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
My final thesis—and the argument I made with it—only bears a slight resemblance to the first prospectus I submitted. I found it very useful to step back from my materials at regular intervals—maybe once a week— to synthesize and re-conceptualize the research I was doing. For me, writing a thesis was a balance between allowing large-scale concepts to guide and organize my research and allowing the little details of poems and the secondary literature to point toward new ways to approach the big topic—for me, lyric poetry.

What will you be doing after graduation?
I will be studying Chinese in Taiwan with the support of a year-long Light Fellowship. After my time in Taiwan, I hope to enter a Ph.D. program in Comparative Literature or East Asian Languages and Literatures.

Claire Williamson

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled *A Coffee-Scented Space: Historical, Cultural, and Social Impacts of the Japanese Kissaten?*

My thesis is broadly divided into four sections. The first is a historic overview of *kissaten*, their development, and the social role they played in Japanese modernism. The second section is an in-depth analysis of three important aspects of the *kissaten*: its Master, its atmosphere, and its coffee. Next I analyze the various gendered stereotypes that occur both at the leadership and customer level. Finally, I use my demographic data to examine the generational gaps that occur between the customers at *kissaten* and other contemporary coffee shops.

Through interviews and questionnaires, combined with historic research, I discovered a demographic shift in the groups that visited particular types of coffee shops. Broadly speaking, Japan's coffee culture is moving away from the more "traditional" shops, known as *kissaten*, toward the bright, trendy, "Third Wave" specialty coffee shops. Generally, *kissaten* are small, dark, smoking-allowed establishments that often restrict their service to only coffee; their atmosphere is what I would describe as akin to a "coffee bar". Their customers were middle-aged men and women—people looking to smoke a cigarette and while away an afternoon over a cup of coffee. There is a strong relationship between regular customers and the Master, one that is cultivated over multiple visits. Within Japan, *kissaten* are viewed as historic and nostalgic spaces but generally considered unfashionable by the younger generations. They prefer to frequent modern, photogenic cafes and specialty coffee shops. I was able to make comparisons between the social desires of the older generations and the younger—the former came to coffee shops for social interactions with other regulars or the Master, while the latter wanted space to take time for themselves and relax away from the pressures of work and social obligation.

Although I was able to identify these generational demographic shifts and preferences, I hesitate to make any sweeping conclusions about the future of the *kissaten* in Japan. Certainly there is much international interest in *kissaten*, both in terms of their vintage style and meticulous attention to coffee. Too, Third Wave coffee shops have adapted traditional *kissaten* methods of brewing coffee, such as the Nel drip, and combined them with atmospheres that are more "in vogue," in effect creating a sort of modern-*kissaten*. Indeed, one major goal of many coffee shop Masters was to bring this quality coffee to the neighborhood level in order to ensure their brewing traditions would continue. In effect, this is how Japan's coffee shops are adapting to the needs of their customers by creating coffee shops with welcoming spaces and quality brews. Whether or not millennials will return to *kissaten*-esque spaces remains to be seen, but coffee shops fill a valuable, if differentiated, niche for men and women across generations.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?

When I was interning at the Hokkoku Newspaper in Kanazawa I occasionally had lunch with some of the senior reporters. Once, when I was eating with a male reporter at a cafe, he looked around the room and said "Claire, you suit this kind of space but I, on the other hand, am more suited to a bar." I was confused and intrigued by this statement because I had no idea why the thought that–because I was a woman or a foreigner I was suited to cafes? Because he was male he was suited to bars? From this somewhat random statement and my own confusion I decided to research Japanese coffee shops–their history and their demographic trends.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?

The first surprise I got was the Yale connection to Japan's coffee history. In brief, the first coffee house in Japan was opened in the late 1800s by a man named Tei Ei-Kei who studied at Yale for two years when he was just 16. After he returned to Japan by way of London he opened the first coffee house, a Western-style establishment called the "Kahiichakan." Although it didn't stay in business terribly long it was the beginning of Japan's deep connection to coffee. For me, the most interesting find of my research was how a *kissaten* Master consciously shaped the space of their shop to either reflect their ideal space or to craft a space that customers would feel welcome in. The level of detail that went into the furniture, decor, music, coffee, and other aesthetics was occasionally mind-boggling.

What was the most challenging part of your research?

The most challenging part of my research was learning how to ask good questions when talking to people. As a participant observer (meaning I both participated in the topic of my research and intensively observed others at the same time) you

have to figure out how to get people to warm up to you and talk at length, even when you haven't known them very long (or are essentially complete strangers). Learning how to listen and ask in such a way that people feel comfortable talking with you was a skill that took many weeks to develop (and that I still haven't perfected).

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
The fellowships office and the East Asian librarians. Fellowships help you get funding for research, particularly research abroad, while the East Asian librarians are fantastic resources to help you navigate not only Yale's library but also libraries at other institutions with sources relevant to your research.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
The summer between my freshman and sophomore year I went on a Light Fellowship to Japan at the Princeton in Ishikawa (PII) program. The following summer I returned to Kanazawa (the city PII is located in) to intern as a reporter at the Hokkoku Newspaper (a regional newspaper for the prefectures of Ishikawa and Toyama). My final summer between junior and senior years I conducted six weeks of field research on a Bates fellowship, which I highly recommend for juniors looking to conduct intensive research for their projects.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
Essential. I conducted all of my fieldwork in Japanese—interviews, conducting surveys, reading books and magazine articles, etc.—and without a high level of fluency in Japanese this sort of in-person ethnographic research would not have been possible. Even if you're not doing on-the-ground research, without intensive language study you will be restricted to English language (or whatever your first language is) sources.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
I'm a member of the Yale Glee Club (YGC), the Yale Guild of Bookbinders, and work various jobs for my residential college (JE).

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
Pick a topic you'll like three months, six months, or even a year from when you begin research. If you aren't enthusiastic about your topic from the get go—aren't interested in constantly diving into research or working your writing over and over again—you're not going to enjoy writing your thesis.

What will you be doing after graduation?
I'll be moving to Japan to work for Nitori, likely in the Tokyo metro area. I'll be starting off in retail, along with all their new hires, and from there I'll be moved around within the company.

2015-2016 Williams Prize Award Winner

Frances Chan

May 31, 2016

Frances Chan (Timothy Dwight College, Class of 2016) was one of two winners of the 2016 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies for her essay submitted to the Department of History, *How Liberal Korean and Taiwanese Textbooks Portray their Countries' "Economic Miracles*." The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Frances shortly after graduation and she kindly answered a few of our questions about her essay.

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled How Liberal Korean and Taiwanese Textbooks Portray their Countries' "Economic Miracles"?

After World War II, both South Korea and Taiwan saw their economies take off under so-called "developmental dictatorships." In the past three decades, both countries also democratized, which divided their respective societies into a "conservative camp" and a "liberal camp." Conservatives see their camp as having led the country through decades of strong economic growth despite (or even owing to) their heavy-handed tactics. Liberals, on the other hand, who take inspiration from the democracy movements, see themselves as safeguards of democracy against their opponents' autocratic impulses. This study examines how liberal textbooks in both countries portray the crowning achievement of their conservative rivals–the economic miracles–through analyzing their pedagogical styles and their depictions of the state, private enterprise, the people, and foreign aid and trade.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?

This project began when I came across a sample dialogue in a Korean language textbook, in which an American student learning Korean expresses amazement at the Korean shipbuilding industry in Busan. His teacher responds by crediting former President Park Chung-hee for spurring on his country's economic growth. The student then expresses his admiration for the Korean government, at which point his teacher reminds him that it was ultimately the "Korean people who came together to rebuild their country." I was struck by this nationalistic narrative, which also ignored the role of foreign assistance. Was the author's omission of foreign aid indicative of a larger gap in collective memory? It made me wonder how foreign aid is portrayed to Korean students in their history classes. Knowing that Taiwan experienced a similar economic miracle after World War II, I became interested in studying how post-war economic growth was portrayed in both countries.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?

I was most fascinated by the fact that the liberal Korean textbook flew the liberal flag much less apologetically than its Taiwanese counterpart. It also paid more attention to the bottom rungs of society than the Taiwanese one, which takes a more paternalistic stance, focusing on the agency of government and business leaders. The Korean textbook was also

much less positive about U.S. economic aid than the Taiwanese one. These were all surprising findings for me that made sense once I was able to map them onto the histories of liberalism in both countries.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
Figuring out the textbook approval processes in both countries. The government websites were not very easy to navigate, and I ended up relying on other studies to figure this out.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
My paper would not have been possible without the access to a wealth of books and papers on East Asia provided by the university library.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
Yes, I was in Japan for three summers (a Light fellowship, a World Fellows internship, and a corporate internship) and Korea for a year on a Light fellowship. I was also a founding member of Taiwan-America Student Conference, which allowed me to be in Taiwan for portions of two summers.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
Very important. It was through language study that I discovered this topic. I had wanted to write a thesis about something Taiwan-related, and studying Korean on a Light fellowship opened up a whole world of comparative topics I could pursue.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
I liked to play IM ping pong. I also liked to meet new people through meals. Since I was involved with many East Asia-related things at Yale (Taiwanese-American Society, Light Fellowship, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese classes) many of my friends ended up being people involved in the East Asia community here at Yale.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
I thought writing involved a two-step process: research and then writing. During my senior thesis process, I realized that these two steps were much more mutually inclusive than I thought. If I don't write, I cannot figure out what I don't know, so I don't know what research I need. My advice would be to start writing as early as possible, so you don't end up having to cram in a lot of research AND writing at the end.

What will you be doing after graduation?
I will be an English teaching assistant at a primary school somewhere in northeastern France. This is relevant to my career, as I want to help people learn languages. I am interested in language ed. tech, language ed. policy, and corporate language training, etc. Also, I want to eventually live in East Asia, but would like to explore a different part of the world before doing so and had been learning French on and off (definitely more off…) since middle school, so going to France made perfect sense.

2014-2015 Williams Prize Winner

Ruoxi Yu

May 26, 2015

Ruoxi Yu (Berkeley College, Class of 2015) was one of two winners of the 2015 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies for her essay submitted to the Department of Anthropology, "The Girl with the Peanut Necklace: Experiences of Infertility and in vitro Fertilization in China." The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Ruoxi shortly after graduation and she kindly answered a few of our questions about her essay.

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled *The Girl with the Peanut Necklace: Experiences of Infertility and in vitro Fertilization in China*?

This essay uses ethnographic research in the form of interviews and participant-observation over the course of 10 weeks at a fertility clinic to document a holistic account of the experience of IVF for infertile women in China. I interviewed both patients and their doctors about *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), an assisted reproductive technology that has become increasingly popular in China, and their perceptions of infertility. In particular, I use IVF as a lens to show how the stigma of infertility is closely tied to sociocultural, economic and political factors. The essay begins by introducing the "antinatlist-pronatalist dialectic" at work to influence women's reproduction in China today. With a pronatalist tradition (of filial piety) on one hand and the state's antinatalist One Child Policy on the other, women become pushed from both sides to meet a "one child quota". In the next chapters, I address the pressures infertile women face on the state, family and personal level. In the last chapter, I present the personal accounts of five women at the fertility clinic in detail before concluding with an overview. Within its current limitations in China, IVF allows women to address the stigma of infertility, but remains largely incapable of expanding understandings of kinship and family.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?

After taking "Intersectionality & Women's Health," an anthropology class taught by Professor Marcia Inhorn, my junior year, I knew I wanted to pursue research on the topic. I was particularly inspired to pursue this specific topic because of a close family friend, who had undergone IVF for many years but had recently given up because of continued failed attempts. I was able to see the visible toil and stress that infertility had caused her, and wanted to understand better the conditions that Chinese women were really facing in the IVF process.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
Actually, I would say the most interesting finding of my research was the strong and dynamic community that formed in the clinic as a result of long wait times. Although the amount of people coming into the clinic each morning made wait times unpredictable, sometimes incredibly long, women used this time to talk to each other about their medical conditions, their treatment, and share tips with each other. Although some of these tips did not have a lot of scientific grounding (i.e. not standing up for a day after the embryo transfer procedure for higher pregnancy success rates), it was a beautiful thing to see the women support each other in such a way and make the best out of their crowded situation.

Another interesting fact I stumbled across was a belief surrounding the Year of the Sheep in the Chinese Zodiac calendar. In my first week at the clinic, when I remarked to the doctors how busy it was, they all responded that it was actually rather *unbusy*, compared to the weeks before, because women who would get pregnant in June or later in the summer of 2014 would have a child in the Year of the Sheep. Having a "sheep child", so to say, was believed to be incredibly inauspicious. The doctors told me that they saw a noticeable drop in the number of IVF patients that came into the clinic!

What was the most challenging part of your research?
The most challenging part of my research was, at first, trying to find ways to engage with the women who were in the clinic. I had gone into the research thinking that I could have my own private space to conduct interviews, but after arriving, I realized that was simply not possible. The waiting rooms were often very crowded, and space was definitely lacking. Luckily, I was able to use these long wait-times to my advantage and speak to women during this time. I am grateful to all of the women I spoke to who were willing to share their own stories, including their fears and hopes, with me.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
I am so grateful to the generous Yale grants and sources of funding that have allowed this project to happen. This include the Charles Kao Fund Research Grant from the Council of East Asian Studies, the Robert C. Bates Summer Traveling Scholarship and the Gohh Ouyang International Summer Award. I also cannot thank enough for my advisors, Dr. Brownell and Professor Marcia Inhorn, with whom I consulted on my project through its making. Michael Meng, the librarian for Chinese Studies, helped me considerably in literature search for my essay, as finding previous scholarship on the topic proved to be harder than expected.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
I was able to travel to China during my time at Yale in the summer after my freshman year and after my junior year. The former was not with any program, but I got a chance to shadow neurosurgeons at the same hospital where I did my senior thesis research. It allowed me to gain a better understanding of the Chinese healthcare system, and really fueled my interest to issues of health in China. The latter trip was towards research for my senior thesis, and was funded by the Charles Kao Fund Research Grant by the Council of East Asian Studies. I spent about 10 weeks at a fertility clinic in China, shadowing and interviewing doctors who worked on IVF as well as interviewing patients about their experiences with IVF.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
Although I did not take Chinese as my language here at Yale, I did get to take a class in East Asian Studies with Professor Deborah Davis that allowed me to practice my Chinese during section discussions we had. Chinese is also the primary language I speak at home. If I did not speak Chinese, I would not have been able to converse with the women whom I interviewed. I imagine learning Chinese medical terminology would have been even harder in that context. Without an understanding of Chinese culture, it would have been hard and difficult to interview my interlocutors.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
In my downtime, I spent a lot of time at the Yale Farm on campus. It reminded me a lot of my grandparents' garden back home and the vegetables we grew. In addition, I interned in the Cheese Shop at Caseus Fromagerie Bistro, a local restaurant/store. Interestingly enough, when I explained to my parents about the three common types of cheese (cow, goat and sheep), I realized I had trouble because the common Chinese word for goat is the same as sheep!
As a Freshman Counselor, I really enjoyed holding a lot of get-togethers for my freshmen. Once, during the Mid-Autumn Festival, I got a bunch of mooncakes and shared them with my freshmen to celebrate the holiday.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
To rising seniors, I say to find a topic you can see yourself spending hours and hours on early on. It doesn't have to be incredibly defined at first, but if you find yourself always talking about a certain topic with your friends, or gravitating towards a certain kind of news when you browse the internet, take notice of that. For me, it was a newspaper article that ultimately made me realize that infertility and IVF was something that I could write a senior thesis on. Once you find a topic, especially one that you really enjoy, I am confident that the rest of the steps will fall in line.

What will you be doing after graduation?
I plan to apply for medical school after graduation. This summer, I will be doing ethnographic research in London as a Global Food Fellow, funded by the Yale Sustainable Food Program. In the fall, I am working at the Chinati Foundation, a contemporary arts museum in Marfa, Texas, as one of their Education and Public Programs Interns.

2013-2014 Williams Prize Winner

Jenna Cook

June 6, 2014

Jenna Cook (Davenport College, Class of 2014) was one of two winners of the 2014 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies for her essay submitted to the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program, "Constructing Kinship: Longing, Loss, and the Politics of Reunion in China." The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Jenna over the summer and she kindly answered a few of our questions about her essay.

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled *Constructing Kinship: Longing, Loss, and the Politics of Reunion in China*?
This senior project is an interview study of 50 Chinese birth families that each abandoned one daughter on the roadside in Wuhan, China in 1992. In 2012, the families were interviewed while in the process of searching for their missing daughter. Families abandoned their daughters in 1992 primarily because of the strict One Child Policy and the need for a son. Twenty years later, families felt guilty about this decision, and birth mothers' narrations showed evidence of trauma. Families claimed that they left their daughter on the street with the intention of finding her later, and used the special notes and clothes they left with her in 1992 as clues in their search. When asked why they wanted to find their daughter, families replied that they worried about her and wanted to set their hearts at ease. This paper concludes with a discussion of the affective commonalities between the testimonies of Chinese birth parents and those of birth parents from the U.S. and South Korea, and also proposes directions for future research regarding birth parents in China.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
In the fall of my sophomore year I enrolled in an incredible class entitled "Adoption Narratives." It was cross-listed in English, WGSS, and ER&M, and taught by Margaret Homans. This course inspired me to pursue adoption studies, and my senior essay is an extension of my coursework in this class.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
Birth parents in the Chinese media and in American popular culture are often vilified. I was struck by the amount of intention and forethought that the birth families put into leaving their daughters on the street. Even though over two decades had passed, they remembered everything from the specific location they had placed her to what she was wearing

at that time. I was surprised by the various ways that parents attempted to mark their daughter in the hopes of providing a way to reunite with her later in life.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
The most challenging part of my research was the emotional intensity of the interviews. I had never witnessed such intense pain, trauma, and grief. At times it was really overwhelming. Experiencing the interviews in real time was one thing, but re-watching them over and over again while in the process of analysis was even more of a challenge.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
This research would not have been possible without the support of many Yale grants, including: the Kingsley Trust Association Summer Travel Fellowship, the Yale College Dean's Research Fellowship in the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Yale College Public Service Fellowship, the Yale Richter Fellowship, and the Bruce L. Cohen Fund for Undergraduate Research.

I utilized multiple libraries at Yale including the East Asia Library and the Film Studies Center. I also consulted with about a dozen faculty members in various departments about the project. Their suggestions and input were essential in helping me to narrow my research question and identify analytical themes.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
I traveled to China every summer while enrolled at Yale. The summer after freshman year, I studied Mandarin at CET-Harbin through the Richard U. Light Fellowship. The summer after sophomore year, I conducted 44 of the 50 interviews in Wuhan, China and also visited the national adoption headquarters in Beijing. The summer after junior year, I returned to Wuhan to conduct an additional 6 interviews and follow up with some of the participants. I will be returning to China shortly after graduation.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
It would have been extremely difficult for me to complete this project without the seven terms of Chinese language training that I received while at Yale and also the summer in Harbin through the Light Fellowship. Since the birth families spoke a regional dialect, I worked closely on the ground with a team of local journalists who helped translate the dialect into standard Chinese. If I could not speak standard Chinese, the interview process would have been even slower and it would have been difficult to actively participate in the interview process. Furthermore, Chinese comprehension and a sense of cultural and historical context were essential in the transcription and translation of the interview footage. I am grateful to my Chinese classmates and instructors at Yale who engaged with me in thoughtful conversations about the most precise way to translate a phrase or the important nuances between two words. My understanding of the Chinese language allowed me to participate in these conversations as well.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
In my spare time (and when I have spare money!), I like to eat at local New Haven Chinese restaurants. My favorite snacks are Gua Bao at *Chao Chao*, Dan Dan Mian at *Taste of China*, and Xia Jiao at *Great Wall* weekend dim sum.

When I'm not studying, I'm usually mentoring Asian American freshmen through the Peer Liaison program, leading the student organization Adopted Yalies, and spending time with my suitemates. I also enjoy sending daily pictures and silly stickers to my friends in China through Weixin.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
I would recommend working backwards from the deadline to make a research plan/writing schedule and trying your best to stick with it. I printed out a big calendar and every day that I spent at least 30 minutes working on my thesis, I crossed an "X" over that day. My goal was to try not to break the chain. Since the senior essay does not have weekly (or daily) deadlines like other lecture, seminar, or language courses, it can be tempting to keep putting the work off, but starting early and working regularly will save you stress in the end.

What will you be doing after graduation?
After graduation I will be in China on a Fulbright Fellowship. After returning from China, I plan to apply to PhD programs in anthropology.

2012-2013 Williams Prize Winner

Trevor Davis

June 18, 2013

Trevor Davis (Saybrook College, Class of 2013) was one of two winners of the 2013 Williams Prize in East Asian Studies for his essay submitted to the History Department, "Pure Land and the Social Order in Twelfth-Century China: An Investigation of Longshu's Treatise on Pure Land." The Council on East Asian Studies had a chance to catch up with Trevor over the summer and he kindly answered a few of our questions about his essay.

To begin, could you please provide an abstract or brief summary of your essay entitled *Pure Land and the Social Order in Twelfth-Century China*?
During the Song dynasty, the secular elite increasingly took an interest in proselytizing Buddhism. In this essay, I look at one of these proselytizers, Wang Rixiu, and consider how he felt social status should influence the way people practice their faith. In a text that seeks to attract people of all strata in a communal effort to practice Pure Land Buddhism, Wang Rixiu is also concerned with promoting a sense of order in society. And although he proclaims the transcendence of worldly distinctions upon death, it seems that the social order he envisions in this life involves the careful maintenance of such distinctions.

How did you first get interested in your topic of research?
I was inspired to pursue this project after attending a talk by Professor Daniel Getz on the *Longshu jingtu wen,* the treatise that would form the focus of my study. Even before this, I knew I wanted study lay Buddhism, but over the course of the presentation, I realized that this was the text I was looking for. I found myself drawn toward Wang's mundane, humanistic concerns and his intricate depiction of society.

What would you say was the most interesting finding of your research? Were there any surprises?
There is a tendency to emphasize the egalitarian sensibilities of Pure Land proselytism movements, be it in Song China or in Kamakura Japan. But in his treatise on Pure Land, Wang Rixiu frames adherence to social hierarchies as a way in which people can attain salvation. Clearly, this is a very different perspective.

What was the most challenging part of your research?
The age-old historian's dilemma is the scarcity of source material. Wang Rixiu wrote several others texts, but unfortunately they are no longer extant.

What resources at Yale were the most helpful for your research?
I would not have been able to complete this project without the guidance of my professors, and in particular my advisor, Valerie Hansen. Her feedback was helpful at every step. Furthermore, Pauline Lin's Sinological Methods course helped me develop my research skills and better utilize Yale's vast library resources. Koichi Shinohara and Kang-i Sun Chang have further inspired my passion for Buddhism and Chinese culture. And, lastly, the lectures and conferences hosted by the East Asian Studies Council and the Religious Studies department were other important forums for developing my interests in these subjects.

Were you able to travel to Asia during your time at Yale? If so, where and when, and what type of program? Did you go on a Light Fellowship?
I received a Light Fellowship to study Chinese at Harvard in Beijing and Japanese at the Hokkaido International Foundation. I also interned in Shanghai last summer with the International Bulldogs program. These experiences were integral to my studies at Yale.

How important would you say your language study at Yale was to your research?
This project required extensive reading in Classical Chinese, as the text has never been translated into English. Wang Rixiu wrote in a relatively simple style given his interest in reaching out to the common people. Nevertheless, his frequent use of Buddhist terminology took some time to get used to. Five semesters of Classical Chinese aided me greatly, as did my classes in Buddhism. I also used secondary sources and reference materials in Japanese.

When you had some downtime on campus, what did you like to do for fun? Any particular interests or hobbies related to East Asia?
I love watching old Japanese movies, especially those of Ozu Yasujiro.

What advice would you offer to rising seniors about how to tackle their senior theses?
Don't be afraid to modify your plans. By all means have a direction, but don't feel locked in.

What will you be doing after graduation?
I received a Parker Huang Fellowship to attend the Inter-University Program in Beijing.