



SOUTHEAST ASIA



**HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ASIA CENTER**



Harvard University Asia Center Southeast Asia

Since its founding, the Asia Center has been committed to developing the study of Southeast Asia at Harvard and has consistently supported programming, faculty grants, and student grants dealing with the region. To coordinate these efforts more effectively, the Center recently formed a Southeast Asia Committee comprising faculty members from eight Harvard schools: the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard Business School, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard Graduate School of Design, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Law School, and Harvard Medical School. The fundamental goal of this committee is to build a critical mass of individuals, programming, and resources that will enable the study of Southeast Asia to thrive at Harvard.

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH AND STUDY

FACULTY SUPPORT

The Southeast Asia Committee is a subset of a growing number of Harvard faculty members working in whole or in part on Southeast Asian topics. Although committed and active, faculty members working on this region at Harvard are not yet as numerous as those working on other world regions, particularly East and South Asia. The Asia Center is playing a key role in nurturing and expanding the ranks of faculty members working on Southeast Asia.

At the most basic level, the Center is actively identifying faculty members at Harvard who may not work primarily on Southeast Asia but who have done research on or in the region and who have an interest in becoming part of the larger Southeast Asian community at the University. With the goal of adding to the number of permanent faculty members at Harvard working primarily on Southeast Asia, the Asia Center has been identifying gaps and leading efforts to raise funds for endowed professorships. In addition to the Chair in Thai Studies, the Center also played a central role in raising funds for the Jeffrey Cheah Professorship of South-East Asia Studies, held by Rema Hanna at the Harvard Kennedy School.

The Asia Center is likewise committed to supporting the research of current faculty members. In recent years, the Center has funded faculty projects such as “Apprentices and Artisans in a Bangkok Neighborhood,” “Reducing Traffic in Southeast Asia: What Drives Carpooling in Malaysia and Singapore?,” “Rights and Reconciliation in Myanmar,” “Water Scarcity and Local Collective Action in Vietnam,” “The Appearance of Filipina Nationalism: Embodying Nation and Empire,” and “Debating the State in East and Southeast Asia.”

STUDENT SUPPORT

The Asia Center funds students pursuing the study of Southeast Asia, ranging from those conducting advanced research to those making their first connections to the region. Grants are available to students across Harvard’s schools at all stages of their academic careers. The Center is particularly mindful of the importance of reaching out to and supporting master’s degree candidates in the professional schools, for whom funding opportunities are less plentiful than for Ph.D. students. Over the last two years the Asia Center has funded more than one-hundred undergraduate and graduate students pursuing research, language study, and service work in Southeast Asia.

STUDENT SUPPORT



Photo of Singapore by Clarence Chan '20.

Language grants are a special priority for the Asia Center. In particular, it is critical that graduate students studying Asia be proficient in multiple Asian languages; to engage deeply with and understand any one country in such an interconnected region, students often must gain fluency in more than one language. For this reason, the Asia Center is committed to ensuring that all graduate students learning a language essential to their course of study, including those working on Southeast Asia, have adequate funding to achieve a high level of proficiency in that language.

In addition to language study, the Asia Center continues to fund generous undergraduate and graduate **research grants** for students focusing on Southeast Asia. The Asia Center also offers grants to students **presenting papers at academic conferences** in the United States and abroad. These experiences are invaluable, providing students opportunities both to receive feedback from colleagues outside Harvard and to gain experience in public speaking, necessary regardless of whether they are pursuing an academic or a professional career.

A relatively new category of funding offered by the Asia Center supports **student group trips**. In recent years the Asia Center has funded the Harvard Philippine Forum Service Trip, which takes undergraduates to the Philippines during the winter break to work with homeless youth in partnership with local nonprofits; and the HVIET Summer Program in Vietnam, in which undergraduates create a liberal arts curriculum for Vietnamese high school students thinking of attending college in the United States. These trips are in many cases students' first experiences in a particular country, and they often return to campus with a new appreciation for that country and a desire to deepen their academic knowledge.

Student activities related to Asian Studies are not limited to term-time coursework or winter and summer research and study trips. There are also several **student organizations** focused on Southeast Asia at Harvard. These groups' activities include planning and hosting academic conferences, cultural events, and film screenings. A notable example was the Spring 2017 conference on the "Future of Health in Southeast Asia," organized by the Harvard Chan ASEAN Student Organization. The Asia Center offers funding and advising as well as logistical support to these groups, whose efforts are a valuable complement to the work done by the faculty. The Center continues to look for ways to expand and tap into this network and include students prominently as contributors and participants in the work of the Center.

The Asia Center's new **Graduate Student Associate (GSA) Program** provides a forum for students from a range of disciplines and schools who are conducting intra- and inter-Asian research. Students not only receive feedback on their work but also gain experience presenting their research clearly and concisely to an audience that may not be familiar with their particular fields. This past academic year the program included three Associates working on Southeast Asia, whose topics ranged from "ASEAN Integration: Implications for Regional Health Governance" to "Alert and Transmission: Networks of Power and Contemporary Political Mobilization in West Papua" and "Global Outsourcing, Local Transformations: Business Process Outsourcing, Urban Restructuring and the Scrambling of Time in the Philippines."

AFFILIATES AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

The Asia Center's Affiliates and Postdoctoral Fellows programs include individuals working on Southeast Asia. In 2018-2019, the first year of its Postdoctoral Fellows program, the Asia Center will host a Postdoctoral Fellow working on the political culture of Southeast Asian sultanates, as well as a Visiting Scholar working on postwar ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, an Associate working on Vietnamese politics, economy, and society; and an Associate working on Thai transgendered women.

In order to develop an effective Southeast Asia community at Harvard, going forward the Southeast Asia Committee will be involved in expanding the Center's Affiliates program to include more Visiting Scholars and Fellows who work on Southeast Asia and who can become resources for our faculty and students. One significant goal is to establish a dedicated postdoctoral fellowship in the study of Southeast Asia.

EVENT PROGRAMMING

Over the years, and with increasing frequency, the Asia Center has directly organized or funded numerous talks, lectures, panels, and conferences dealing with countries in Southeast Asia, including their relationships with other countries in the region and beyond. Supplementing the Center's ongoing series on Southeast Asia—the Southeast Asia Seminar, the Thai Studies Seminar, the Thailand@Harvard Lecture, and the Stanley H. Tambiah Lecture—are talks on Southeast Asia that are part of the Asia Center's Asia Beyond the Headlines and Tsai Lecture series.

RECENT SOUTHEAST ASIA TALKS SUPPORTED OR ORGANIZED BY THE ASIA CENTER:

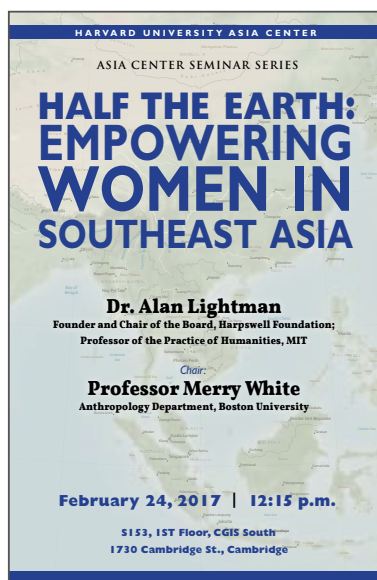
Half the Earth: Empowering
Women in Southeast Asia

Holding Governments and
Journalists Accountable: Rights
and Responsibilities of a Free
Press in Thailand

Responses to the Rohingya
Refugee Crisis

Singapore's Development Story:
Myths and Realities

Southeast Asia in a De-
Globalized World



In October 2017 the Asia Center organized, under the direction of the Southeast Asia Committee, a full-day conference commemorating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This multi-disciplinary conference featured Southeast Asia scholars and dignitaries and Harvard faculty members in various disciplines and was organized in two panels, one focusing on peace and prosperity and the other on aging populations and noncommunicable diseases. The conference complemented the Center's annual Tsai Lecture featuring the late Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, former Secretary-General of ASEAN, who spoke on past accomplishments and future opportunities for ASEAN.



The Asia Center celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations with its ASEAN@50 Conference in 2017.

The **Thai Studies Program** at the Asia Center was established in 2014 under the direction of Professor Michael Herzfeld of the Department of Anthropology. This program, now under the purview of the Southeast Asia Committee, led the fundraising for an endowed professorship in Thai Studies (expected to be filled in Fall 2018 in the Department of Anthropology) and Thai language instruction, which previously had not been offered at Harvard. The Program has organized numerous talks and seminars, including the Tambiah and Thailand@Harvard lectures and Thai Studies seminars.

In addition to Thai, the Asia Center also supports instruction in Bahasa Indonesia.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS

DISASTERS IN ASIA

In 2015, the Asia Center initiated the Disaster Response and Resilience Project, an interdisciplinary enterprise involving faculty members and researchers from across the University that addresses disaster response, risk, and resilience in the Philippines. Colleagues from the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health (HCSPH) and the Resilience concentration in the Department of Urban Planning and Design at the Harvard Graduate School of Design (HGSD) worked with the Asia Center to develop a multifaceted, interdisciplinary project that integrates on-site research with academic activities.

Building on the momentum of the Disaster Response and Resilience Project, the Asia Center has convened faculty members and researchers from across the University to address disasters in Southeast Asia and other regions of Asia more broadly. Drawn from a number of Harvard's professional schools as well as the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and offering a range of disciplinary expertise and experience, the group is working on a two-year program which will develop strategies that interconnect immediate disaster response with later socioeconomic and structural development of affected sites. As part of these efforts, in fall 2018 the Asia Center will host an international conference on "Disasters: The Transition from Humanitarian Response to Resilience and Recovery."



An image from Aubrey P. Graham's 2017 photo exhibition, *High Ground: Disaster Risk and Resilience in the Philippines*, co-sponsored by the Harvard Asia Center and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative.

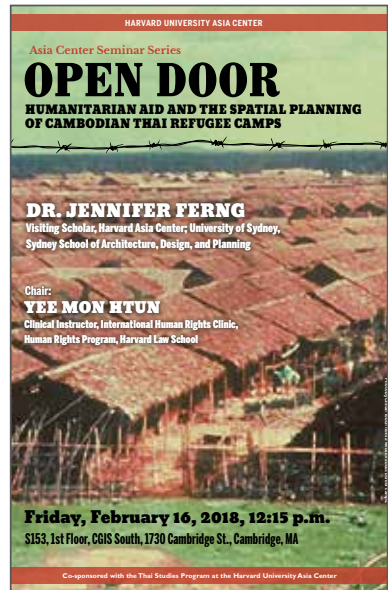
ADDRESSING REFUGEE CRISES

Refugee crises are affecting all regions of the world, and, whether caused by natural disasters or violent conflict, have become one of the most widespread and urgent humanitarian issues of our time. Harvard offers a wealth and range of intellectual resources, regional experience, and local networks that can be mobilized to better understand and address the critical needs of refugees.

Significant work on refugee crises is already underway by colleagues from across the University, particularly on the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh. In collaboration with these faculty members and researchers, the Asia Center is organizing a workshop for fall 2018 to develop more comprehensive understandings of the impact of displacement on refugee children and to lay the groundwork for further research. A subgroup of colleagues will also develop culturally-appropriate surveys to assess the current conditions in Rakhine state in Myanmar and explore how bridges can be built among groups, how violence can be prevented, and how anti-Rohingya sentiments can be de-escalated through social media.

The team is also looking at the need to develop viable alternatives to refugee camps. Beyond basic survival, refugees have the right to live in safe communities, with habitable structures that have been designed for the local climate.

Effective leadership is needed to harness the range of expertise from across Harvard's schools; the Asia Center is poised to take on this role, and we look forward to the opportunity to address these challenges with the support of dedicated partners.



The Asia Center has organized and supported several talks addressing refugees in Southeast Asia.

THE ASIA CENTER IS ORGANIZING A WORKSHOP FOR FALL 2018 TO DEVELOP MORE COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE IMPACT OF DISPLACEMENT ON REFUGEE CHILDREN AND TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.



GOALS

The Director of the Asia Center, together with the Chair of the Southeast Asia Committee, is currently developing a multiyear plan to place the study of Southeast Asia on equal footing in the Harvard landscape with other world regions, particularly with East and South Asia. Potential areas of activity include:

- Establishing a Southeast Asia Initiative within the Asia Center—a first step in founding a dedicated center.
- Creating a departmental presence either by establishing a Department of Southeast Asian Studies or incorporating the study of Southeast Asia into additional departments.
- Identifying potential faculty hires to strengthen the ranks of faculty members working on Southeast Asia.
- Creating new courses to increase the number of offerings at Harvard that deal exclusively or significantly with Southeast Asia.
- Enhancing the study of Southeast Asian languages
- Making Harvard a viable choice for graduate students pursuing a degree in the study of Southeast Asia.
- Developing a community of Southeast Asia scholars at Harvard by continuing to support faculty and student research, forging relationships with and among student organizations, and developing more diverse affiliates and postdoctoral programs.



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1730 Cambridge Street Cambridge MA 02138

617.496.6273 asiacenter@harvard.edu <http://asiacenter.harvard.edu>