SOCIETY OF FELLOWS IN THE HUMANITIES

Introducing our 2017–2020 Fellows

Faculty of Arts
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Society of Fellows in the Humanities

The Society of Fellows in the Humanities is a prestigious new initiative that attracts exceptional, early-career, post-doctoral scholars from around the world to the University of Hong Kong. Located in one of the world’s most dynamic cities and on Mainland China’s doorstep, HKU offers unique opportunities to engage in cutting-edge research through its commitment to innovation and interdisciplinarity.

The 2017-2020 Fellows come from globally renowned institutions, including Sciences Po Paris in France, Harvard University and Stanford University in the USA, University College London in the UK and ETH Zurich in Switzerland. They will be contributing to a vibrant research community and interacting with acclaimed scholars from across all humanities disciplines.

Faculty of Arts

The Faculty of Arts is one of the University’s oldest and largest faculties and is consistently recognised as one of the best in Asia for the Arts and Humanities. The Faculty contributes to knowledge development through outstanding scholarship and education. It provides a comprehensive, humanistic, and liberal research environment, a highly internationalised academic staff, and a strong culture- and language-based curriculum.

The Faculty is a recognised centre of research excellence in fields that include Asian Cinema, China Studies, Chinese Philosophy, Fine Arts, History, Law and Literature, Linguistics, and Post-colonial Literatures, and is active in fostering partnerships globally and exploring new means of facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration.
Welcome from the Dean

I am delighted to welcome this year's inaugural cohort of young scholars to our Society of Fellows in the Humanities. Each fellow brings an exciting project and set of intellectual concerns to the Society. Each project is pushing forward the boundaries of our understanding of contemporary and historical cultural practices. We hope that each Fellow will benefit from the intellectual journey they will take here as members of the Society and our academic community. Likewise we hope they will benefit from deepening their first-hand knowledge and experience of the region. I wish them all the greatest success.

Professor Derek Collins
Dean
Faculty of Arts
On reading this, you bear witness to a new and exciting venture. The first initiative of its kind in East Asia, HKU’s Society of Fellows in the Humanities provides a new space for research and scholarly exchange free from formal requirements and disciplinary constraints. For its inaugural year, we have recruited from all over the world five among the best young scholars working in the arts & humanities today. As I write this, they are already busy laying out research plans and organising lecture series, symposia, or special events—all open to the public. Unfolding at a most propitious time for higher education in Hong Kong, the Society of Fellows in the Humanities consolidates the role of HKU’s Faculty of Arts as a global incubator of innovative research.

Dr Giorgio Biancorosso
Director, Society of Fellows in the Humanities
Associate Professor, School of Humanities
Nathanel Amar holds degrees from Sorbonne University, Paris 1 (BA, MA) in philosophy and Sciences Po, Paris (BA, MA, PhD) in political science. His PhD, defended in December 2015, focused on the making of a counter-cultural sphere in contemporary China, and made extensive use of ethnographic fieldwork among Chinese punk and independent filmmaker communities. His primary research areas include pop culture and cultural hegemony, and the relationship between Chinese counter-culture and mainstream culture and identity politics.

Amar taught Chinese sociology, cultural studies and international relations at Sciences Po Paris from 2015 to 2017, and worked as a research assistant in the Sino-French Center for social science at Tsinghua University (Beijing) from 2013 to 2015.

As a member of HKU’s Society of Fellows in the Humanities, Amar plans to work on popular music at China’s peripheries (mainly Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia). In the short to medium term, this postdoctoral research aims at understanding how ethnic minorities in China reinvent their musical traditions and use it as a tool to produce and negotiate their identities. Combined with his doctoral research on Chinese punks, the project will lead to a better understanding of Chinese popular culture and strategies of resistance against the State’s cultural hegemony.
John Gabriel is a musicologist who seeks to understand the role of music and sound in the cultural history of Central Europe and the United States from the fin-de-siècle to the early Cold War. His interests include the productive collisions of art and popular idioms, of old traditions and new technologies, and of competing socio-political ideologies.

As a fellow in the Society of Fellows in the Humanities at HKU, Gabriel’s primary research project is a book on the music theatre of the Neue Sachlichkeit (“New Objectivity”) in Weimar Republic Germany (1919-33). The composers of the Neue Sachlichkeit sought to create a new kind of avant-garde music that was accessible, relevant, and appealing to mass audiences without sacrificing artistic quality. A central tenant of their aesthetics was to create music that was of the “now.” How exactly music theater could be of the “now,” however, was up for debate. Gabriel analyses music, stagings, and discourse to show how the aesthetics of the “now” played out, from superficial representations of the present-day on stage, to structural reflections of the jarring experience of modern life in musical form and dramaturgy. His investigation spans multiple genres of music theater, including dance and marionette theater, opera, semi-staged oratorios and cantatas, and the radio music play.

Before coming to HKU, Gabriel was a visiting faculty member at the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. He completed his PhD in Historical Musicology with a secondary field in Germanic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University in 2016.
Before joining HKU’s Society of Fellows in the Humanities, Robert Kramm was a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, University of Konstanz. In 2015, he earned his PhD in history at ETH Zurich with a thesis entitled Sanitized Sex: Regulating Prostitution, Venereal Disease and Intimacy in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952, published as a monograph with University of California Press (2017).

At HKU Robert Kramm is working on his second book project tentatively called Radical Utopian Communities: A Global History from the Margins, c. 1890-1950. The book will examine communes in Jamaica, Japan, South Africa, and Switzerland, ranging from religious sects to secular socio-political communes from the radical left to the far right. Communes are significant hubs for the meeting of people across national and imperial boundaries. The selection of cases deliberately encompasses spatially and ideologically separated people and movements in different cultural, political and social contexts. The project’s aim is to stress the interplay of diversity, difference, and similarity in the modern world. Radical utopian communities offer an ideal opportunity to analyze the range and limits of actors of globalization and the circulation of knowledge. And they afford a new vantage point from which to narrate a decentered, non-Eurocentric global history of the early twentieth century from the margins of the geographical, political and social spectrum.
Harriet Hulme holds a BA Hons in English and French from the University of Leeds (2007) and both an MA (2010) and a PhD (2016) in Comparative Literature from University College London. During her doctorate, she spent three months as a fully-funded Visiting Assistant in Research at Yale University. Her PhD research focused upon the ethical theories of translation offered by Benjamin, Deleuze, Derrida and Ricoeur as part of an interrogation of ethical as well as political thought within the work of three bilingual European authors; the monograph arising from her thesis, entitled *Ethics and Aesthetics of Translation: Exploring the Work of Atxaga, Kundera and Semprún*, is due to be published by UCL Press in 2018. Her work has also appeared in the peer-reviewed journal *Comparative Critical Studies* and in two edited volumes.

Harriet’s research project at HKU is entitled *On the Threshold: Locating an Ethics of Hospitality Between Home and Homelessness*. Inspired by her academic interest in issues of cultural and linguistic exchange and by her 16,000 km cycle trip across Europe and Asia, this is a strongly interdisciplinary project, focusing upon a range of twentieth and twenty-first century texts from a variety of cultures and languages. Taking a geoliterary approach, which maps questions of physical location and movement onto questions of textual location and movement, her research explores the ways in which the tension between home and homelessness informs our contemporary response towards hospitality. The project is conceived as a three-year venture, during which Harriet expects to produce three articles and prepare a second monograph for publication.
(Emma) Yu Zhang's research interests include modern and contemporary Chinese literature and culture, the Chinese diaspora, socialism and postsocialism as well as the intersection of technology and modern culture. As a fellow in the Society of Fellows in the Humanities at HKU, she is working on a project focusing on the cultural practices and representations of “going to the countryside” in China (1915-1965). This spatial move refers to the ways in which intellectuals, reformers, revolutionaries, and idealistic youth crossed an urban-rural divide, geographically and culturally. With the increasing gap between the city and the countryside, “going to the countryside” brought new experiences of space and time, initiated new ways of human communication and interaction, generated new forms of cultural production, and ultimately created a new cultural, social, and political landscape. While at HKU, Zhang is also developing a new project examining the flows of overseas literature, intellectual writings, films, and TV dramas from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore into mainland China (late 1970s–early 1990s).

Yu Zhang received her PhD from the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Stanford University. Her essays have appeared in such journals as Modern Chinese Literature and Culture, Twentieth-Century China, and Journal of Chinese Cinemas. Her research has been supported by a junior scholar grant from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation and other fellowships.
The first cohort of five Fellows will take up residence in Run Run Shaw Heritage House with effect from September 1, 2017.

The building was constructed in 1923-24 and was originally used as Senior Staff Quarters for the site managers of Elliot Pumping Station and Filters, Water Supplies Department. In 2009 it was listed as a Grade II Historic Building by the Antiquities and Monuments Office.