



Sigur Center
for Asian Studies

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

ASIAN CONNECTIONS

NEWSLETTER OF THE

SIGUR CENTER FOR ASIAN STUDIES

JUNE 2026

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Dear friends,

Change is afoot in the Sigur Center. I became director in January 2026 when the previous director, Eric Schluessel, accepted a position at Oxford University. Before leaving, he put together a robust set of events for the spring so that I was not starting from scratch.

While the leadership of the Center changed, its mission did not. This is my third time as director, having previously served in 1998-2001 and 2013-2016. Along with other previous directors, I am committed to hosting impactful public events, supporting Asia-related research by faculty, research and language study by grad students, and welcoming visiting scholars.

These core elements of the Sigur Center's mission are only possible through the hard work and dedication of our full-time staff: Adam Bubanich, Sean Dolan, Richard Haddock, and Bobby Kincaid. They are the ones who design, promote, and stage our events, work with faculty and students to get reimbursed for research and travel expenses, and get the visiting scholars set up. They are truly the ones who make the Center run on a daily basis.

All is not well though. When the Trump administration cut the Department of Education's budget, the Sigur Center's funding as a National Resource Center for Asian Studies (held in collaboration with the GW Institute for Korean Studies) was eliminated. These funds provided generous fellowship for students and support for various community outreach programs. More importantly, the termination of funding for National Resource Centers at universities across the country signals the end of federal support for area studies when so many areas of the world are experiencing conflict and turmoil. This does not bode well for the future.

Another sad note is the retirement of Mike Mochizuki after more than 25 years at GW. During his time here, he served as Sigur Center director, co-director of the "Memory and Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific" research and policy project at the Sigur Center, associate dean for ESIA's academic programs, chaired several faculty search committees and the committee to re-accredit GW. He was an exemplary colleague, mentor, teacher, and administrator. He will be sorely missed in the years to come.

After a summer hiatus, we will be back in the fall with a new series of events covering the range of Asian studies, from current events to Asian humanities and religion. I hope you will join us.

Dr. Bruce Dickson

Director of the Sigur Center for Asian Studies
Professor of Political Science and International Affairs



Gaston Sigur Memorial Lecture: China's Reimagined Future

On April 13th, Hargrove Senior Fellow and Professor Elizabeth Economy delivered the Gaston Sigur Memorial Lecture and an insightful analysis of the future of China and U.S.-Chinese diplomatic relations. Throughout the lecture, Professor Economy discussed President Xi Jinping's plans for the future of China and China's place in the international system. She talked about the five distinct dimensions of Xi Jinping's plans: asserting control over territories believed to be part of China, replacing the United States as the main power of the Asia-Pacific region, becoming the leading technological and economic power on the world stage, ensuring other countries align their political, economic, and military interests with those of China, and changing the norms and values of international institutions to better suite China's interests. After Professor Economy's talk concluded, she received several questions from Elliott School's Asian Studies students, who inquired on several topics, such as the impact of Xi Jinping on modern China and what direction China is likely to move towards when Xi Jinping is no longer president. You can watch the recording of the lecture on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: https://youtu.be/TUmPfN_yJ_4?si=QiYSk5_Mu-S0ioG5.

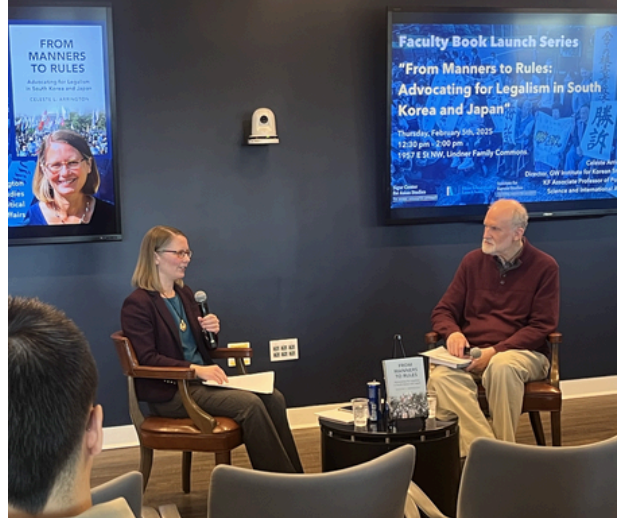
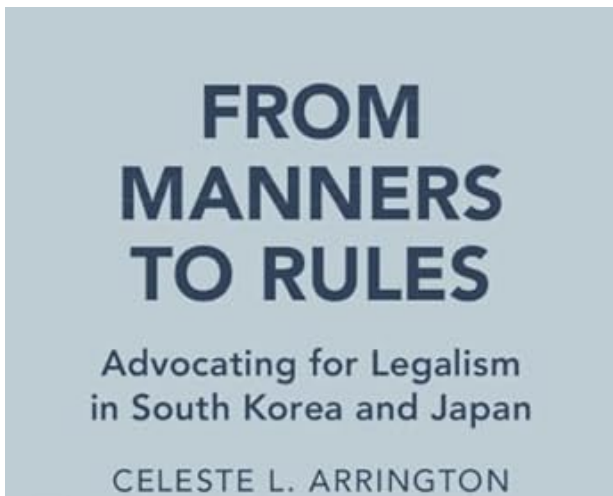


**Dean Alyssa Ayres, Professor Elizabeth Economy, and
Sigur Center Director Bruce Dickson**



Book Launch: *From Manners to Rules: Advocating for Legalism in South Korea and Japan*

Director of the GW Institute for Korean Studies Celeste L. Arrington's new book, *From Manners to Rules: Advocating for Legalism in South Korea and Japan* was launched this past February 5th. The Sigur Center for Asian Studies co-sponsored the event with the Elliott School's Book Launch series and the GW Institute for Korean Studies. Professor Arrington's book traces the emergence of legalistic governance in South Korea and Japan. While these countries were previously known for governance characterized by bureaucratic discretion and vague laws, activists and lawyers are pushing for a more legalistic regulatory style. *From Manners to Rules* documents bottom-up sources of institutional and social change as activists and lawyers advocate for and use more formal rules and procedures. You can watch the recording of the talk on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/IgUfKdJ9wE?si=ldmK30ZFXOWh-2aJ>.



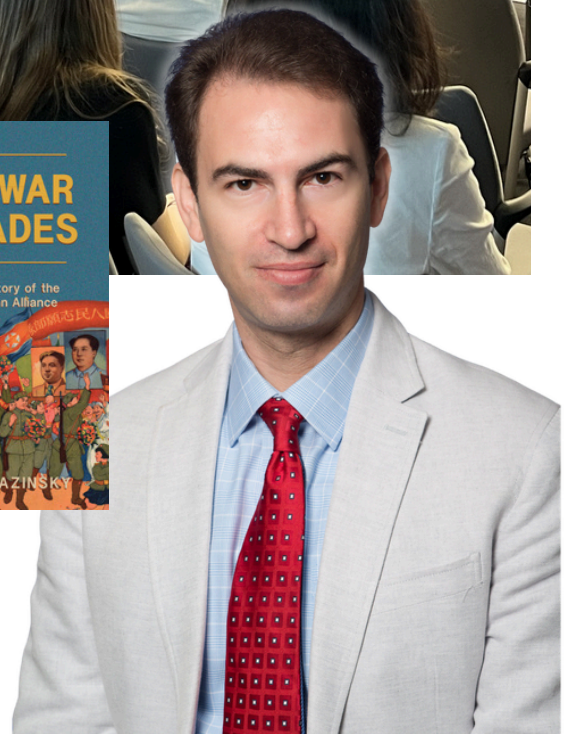
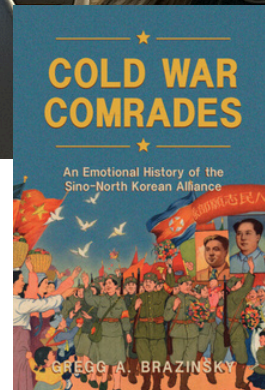
Professor Celeste L. Arrington

Book Launch: *Cold War Comrades: An Emotional History of the Sino-North Korean Alliance*

On April 24th, alongside the Elliott School and GW Institute for Korean Studies, the Sigur Center co-sponsored a book launch for Director of the Asian Studies MA Program and Professor of History & International Affairs Gregg A. Brazinsky's new book, *Cold War Comrades: An Emotional History of the Sino-North Korean Alliance*. Following a welcome from GWIKS Director Celeste Arrington and an introduction by Dean Alyssa Ayres, Professor Brazinsky began by introducing the story of Korean War hero Luo Shengjiao, a Chinese volunteer who saved a North Korean boy from a freezing river and was later immortalized in cultural works. He explained that the story represents a common nationalist spirit, a mutual working-class empathy, which was the alliance's crucial element.

After introducing the language of collaboration, Professor Brazinsky questioned existing material: Can propaganda still hold informational worth? Does existing alliance literature focus too much on leaders' disagreements? Also, with clear opposition, what else was supporting Sino-North Korean morale?

Detailing the book's chapters, Professor Brazinsky continued to trace the relationship's winding path, introducing political rhetoric and cultural products such as Yue opera productions as further evidence of shared emotions fostering a tighter legitimacy narrative than previously thought. You can watch the recording of the talk on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/s-DY90Ft3Hw?si=aPfv4Gc7TVPKv4WL>.



Professor Gregg A. Brazinsky

New Books in Asian Studies: Japan's Grand Strategy: Liminal Power in an Uncertain World

On March 20th, shortly after Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi visited Washington D.C., the University of Southern California's Saori N. Katada and Nanyang University of Technology's Kei Koga (ESIA '02) visited the Sigur Center to discuss their new book *Japan's Grand Strategy: Liminal Power in an Uncertain World*. Professors Mike Mochizuki and Kuniko Ashizawa served as discussant and moderator, respectively.

According to Professor Katada and Koga, Japan conceptualized the concept of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and has gained traction worldwide. Prime Minister Taikichi will use this as her roadmap when engaging with the world. They then move into the theoretical elements, defining Japan as straddling two worlds throughout its history: east vs. west and being a security power v. being an economic power. For a long time, Japan's power has been "limited" due to post-war recovery and additional factors and has faced an overall capability gap. External shocks and changes in the overall environment have triggered the shift in Japanese grand strategy. Today, the four main factors of Japan's Indo-Pacific are the new geographical specification, the pursuit of Japan's diplomatic, security, and economic interests, the packaging of multiple Cold War-era initiatives under one roof, and the building of comprehensive and inclusive coalitions.

In adapting its strategy, Japan has been active in creating alliances and being more involved in regional networks and global governance, such as engaging in ASEAN Plus 6 Dialogues and Japan's role in joining the TPP and creating the CPTPP. The nation has been trying to build up the rule-based order in the security and economic realms in the Indo-Pacific during the Trump 1.0 and 2.0 eras.

Professor Kei Koga

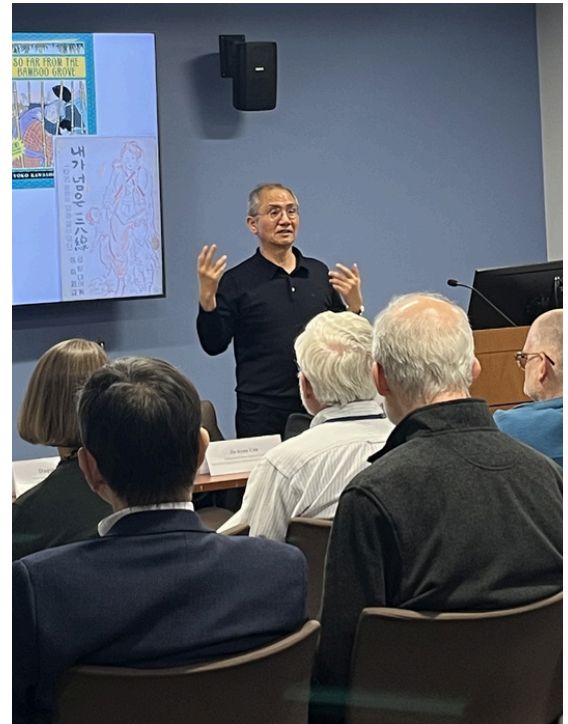
After the presentation, Japan-US Relations Associate Professor Mike Mochizuki (ret.) provided comments on the book. Professor Mochizuki praised the book's wide range of primary sources and the fact that it provides an in-depth analysis of Japan's evolving grand strategy in response to structural external factors. However, he criticized the book for failing to explore how earlier Japan-led Asian community-building experiments failed due to domestic political reasons and American fears of exclusion. Professor Mochizuki said that Japan isn't necessarily providing public goods, but it rather offers goods that benefit Japan's allies and partners. He also stated that Japan's Indo-Pacific strategy fails to account for the chaos of the second Trump administration. You can watch the recording of the talk on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: https://youtu.be/-rZ9ahwvH58?si=jQX5bAga_JrYKPU8.



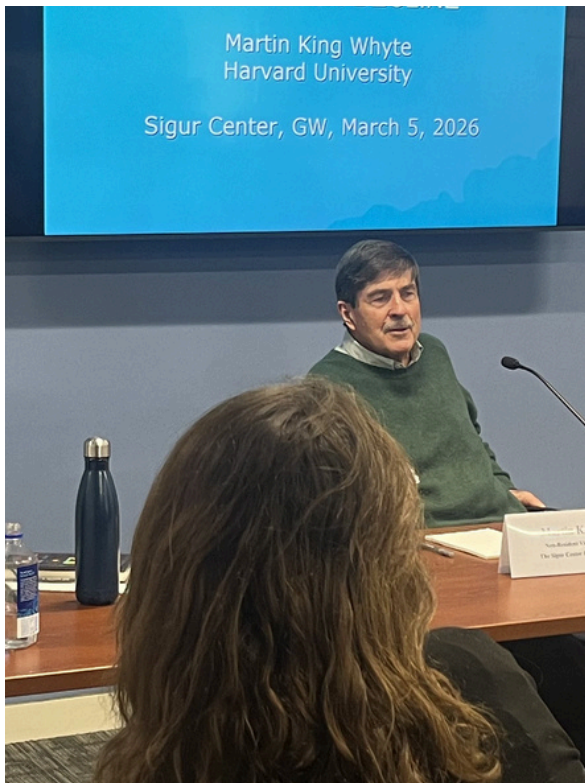
**Professor Saori
N. Katada**

Colonial Innocence and Victimhood Nationalism in Global Easts-On Postcolonial Eastern Europe

On April 2nd, the Sigur Center and the GW Institute for Korean Studies hosted Professor Jie-hyun Lim for a discussion surrounding the concept of “victimhood nationalism,” or how post-war nations will form competing memories of victimhood that divide national identity for generations into those of victims and victimizers. In his talk, Professor Lim explored how this concept has been explored through the histories of Poland, Germany, Israel, Japan, and Korea. Professor Lim was joined by Professors Hugh Agnew and Mike Mochizuki for a panel discussion and audience Q&A where questions discussed anti-Communist, Stalinist and Holocaust legacies, nationalism’s balance between domestic and international stages, the post Cold War memory space, and the current post-colonial victimhood narratives. You can watch the recording of the talk on the Sigur Center’s YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/iBmkwrP9BCo?si=laND50UI8oKDX4z0>.

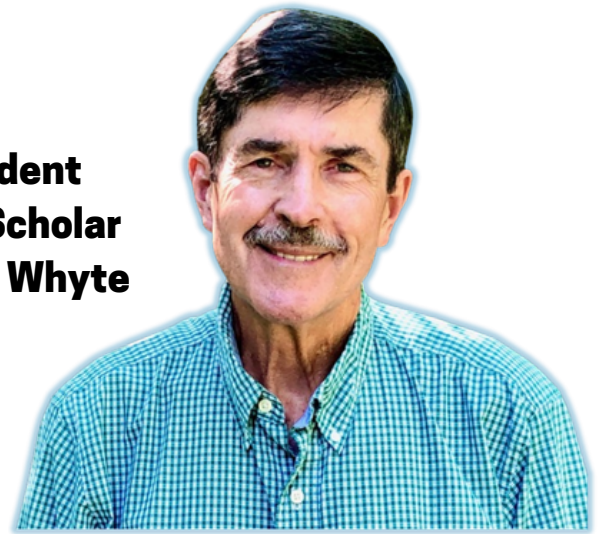


Professor Jie-hyun Lim



Be Careful What You Wish For: China Confronts Population Decline

**Non-Resident
Visiting Scholar
Martin K. Whyte**



On March 5th, Visiting Scholar Martin King Whyte hosted a talk on the modern impacts of China's well-known "one-child policy." Although the policy was an attempt to slow China's population growth, it actually worked too well. Now, even ten years after the formal end of the one-child policy, China's population is continuing to decline. Professor Whyte discussed the complete 180 that the Chinese government has taken since the one-child policy was disbanded, and how despite state-wide propaganda and incentives to have three or more children, China's birth rate is continuing to decline. Through his talk, Professor Whyte discussed the question: "Should China's success in slowing and then reversing population growth be regarded as an accomplishment, or as a looming national crisis?" You can watch the recording on the talk on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/jcql8K3xphE?si=FGjZ-liG6TEoAppK>.

The Doom Loop: Why the World Economic Order Is Spiraling into Disorder

On March 24th, the Sigur Center and the Institute for International Economic Policy (IIEP) co-sponsored an event, during which the renowned economist Professor Eswar Prasad discussed how globalization, long thought to be a stabilizing mechanism for the global economy, has actually worsened economic inequality, provoked political backlash, and prompted escalating trade wars.

Throughout the event, Professor Prasad outlined how the current economic state of the world is an ever-deepening spiral of our own making, and made it clear that old economic solutions cannot pull us out of this “Doom Loop”. Without radically new solutions to solve the world’s problems, this spiral will continue until it is too late.

The talk ended with an engaging audience Q&A from students and professors, where Prasad was able to elaborate on how the current administration is impacting the “Doom Loop,” and discuss how other global powers such as China and the EU are likely to fare economically in the coming decades. You can watch the recording of the event on the Institute for International Economic Policy’s YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/QvZ0gbkGKsg?si=uaQgcdxOQ-e3AG-A>.



Professor Eswar S. Prasad



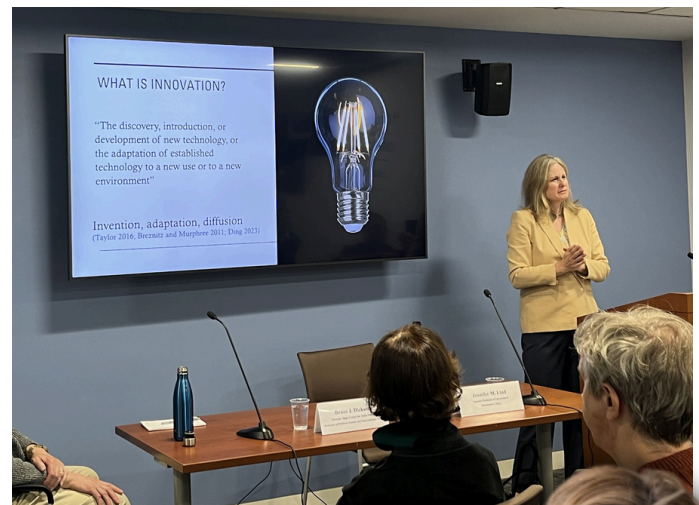
New Books in Asian Studies: *Autocracy 2.0: How China's Rise Reinvented Tyranny*

On April 21st, alongside the Institute for Security and Conflict Studies, the Sigur Center hosted a book talk with Professor Jennifer Lind of Dartmouth University about her new volume, *Autocracy 2.0: How China's Rise Reinvented Tyranny*. Professor Lind explained that her book started out exploring how China's rise would reinvent the balance of power, but gradually it evolved to be about how China's rise reshaped technology and innovation and if China can become a technological leader. Initially, specialists claimed that the gap between the US and China in capabilities meant that China could never close that gap and that China couldn't innovate.

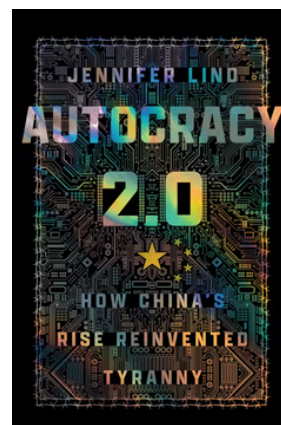
Professor Lind explained that, in order to innovate, countries need economic capital, human capital, stable macroeconomic conditions, property rights, the ability to reform, and networks of experts. Conventional wisdom says that authoritarian regimes usually lack these characteristics because they dampen growth due to the need for control. Professor Lind argues that the Chinese government has bypassed this dilemma and has become a highly innovative power. China has stepped up its research and development spending and applied for more patents and produced more research articles.

Professor Lind argues that China has overcome previous assumptions about authoritarianism and innovation by building "smart authoritarianism." China has learned from the "developmental dictators" and loosened some controls, such as freedom of movement, to allow for innovation and capital inflows.

Smart authoritarianism allows for economic growth while still maintaining control. This concept is a dynamic model and can shift between more and less control. Professor Lind concludes China has utilized smart authoritarianism as a tool to make the nation a global innovation powerhouse. The spread of this model to countries such as Vietnam and Saudi Arabia suggests that countries see autocracy as a way to overcome their middle-income status. Overall, this innovation can catapult China to superpower status, and the spread of smart authoritarianism is bad news for democracy and the liberal international order. You can watch this book talk on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/kY2t5ljYPdA?si=aYMLsn9vzE115a2W>.



Professor Jennifer Lind





China Town Hall



Susan Thornton

Former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs



Sarah Beran

Former Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy in Beijing



Stephen Biegun

Former Deputy Secretary of State

On April 7th, the Sigur Center, the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, the US-China Education Trust, and Young China Watchers held a CHINA Town Hall, part of a nationwide program that provides a snapshot of the current U.S.-China relationship and examines how that relationship reverberates at the local level. During their discussion, they brought up the rise of AI, the relationship between President Trump and President Xi, and the impact of the Iranian War on U.S.-China relations. They received virtual questions from several universities, including George Washington, on a multitude of topics, including current shifts in United States foreign policy, China’s increasing aggression in the Indo-Pacific, and the shifting perspective of other nations on China and the United States. You can watch the discussion on the U.S.-China Education Trust’s YouTube channel here: https://youtu.be/qkAy9vmATHo?si=I3WW5jr_29Nn2cTH.



World War II at 80: War Generations, Society, and Memory in the Asia Pacific Conference



Carol Gluck

George Samson
Professor Emerita of
History, Columbia
University



**Irene
Hyangseon
Ahn**

Assistant Professor
of Justice, Law, &
Criminology,
American University



Mike Mochizuki

Japan-U.S. Relations
Associate Professor,
the George
Washington
University

In early September, the Sigur Center hosted a conference to discuss the 80th anniversary of World War II's end and what long-term impacts that the war, and the surviving generations have had on modern society across the Asia Pacific.

The first presentation, by keynote speaker Professor Carol Gluck of Columbia University, discussed the "Future of War Memory": As the generations that survived WWII pass away, to remember the war, the current generation only has stories. The second presentation, by American University's Professor Irene Hyangseon Ahn, examined the difference between Japanese and Chinese perspectives on the Japanese war orphans who were left behind in China after the conclusion of WWII. The third presentation, by Professor Lee K. Pennington of the U.S. Naval Academy, explored how disabled Japanese veterans of WWII became social pariahs in the newly anti-military state. The fourth presentation, by Towson University's Professor Erik Ropers, discussed Japanese media's unique perspective on WWII, and how national media like newspapers are integral to the social understanding of history. The final presentation, by Professor Emily Matson of George Washington University, covered the Manchurian scholars working to define China's involvement in WWII as beginning in 1931 instead of 1937, in order for the invasion of Manchuria to be considered the starting event of the war.

These presentations emphasized the importance of historical remembrance in a time when those who experienced WWII are becoming fewer and fewer.



Lee K. Pennington

Associate Professor
of History, U.S. Naval
Academy



Erik Ropers

Director, Asian
Studies Program and
International Studies
Program, Towson
University



Emily Matson,

Professorial Lecturer
the George
Washington
University



Daqing Yang

Associate Professor
of History and
International Affairs,
the George
Washington
University

Over 400 people joined us for

Lunar New Year 2026!

In January, the Sigur Center partnered with the GW Institute for Korean Studies, Chinese Arts and Humanities Initiative, and Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures to host a celebration of the Lunar New Year. Attendees in Kogan Plaza watched a lion dance and group dance performances set to music, played Korean games, and wrote Chinese calligraphy. Additionally, guests ate food from across East and Southeast Asia and learned more about GW's Asian Studies and Asian language programs at their tables.



Navigating Taiwan's AI Future: Policy, Innovation, and Governance

On December 8th, the Sigur Center hosted a conversation on Taiwan's place at the forefront of AI innovation. Most of the discussion was comprised of explaining how the island is placing AI as a prominent piece in domestic economic, governance, and social resilience agendas. Also, the discussion questioned what the impacts of these new AI initiatives will be in the long-term.

After their panel, speakers Director-General Cheng-Ming Wang, Associate Professor Hsin-Chung Liao, and Professor Aaronson answered pressing questions from the audience regarding Taiwan's attempts to regulate AI use, the effects of AI on democracies, and whether a government that heavily utilizes AI can ever be fully trusted by its citizens. You can watch the recording of the roundtable on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/hTq88N8eNEQ?si=tThDpS38I-1jj1qJ>.



Susan Aaronson

Research Professor and Director of the Digital Trade and Data Governance Hub, The George Washington University



Cheng-Ming Wang

Director-General of the Department of Digital Service, Ministry of Digital Affairs, Taiwan



Hsin-Chung Liao

Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Public Administration, National Chengchi University

Taiwan's Great Recall Revisited: Domestic and Foreign Policy Implications

The Sigur Center and a panel of experts examined Taiwan's Great Recall: which political factors caused those 31 government officials to face recall, whose efforts propagated the movement, and how opposition lawmakers responded. The panel discussed the causes and civic consequences of the recall vote. You can watch a recording of the roundtable on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: https://youtu.be/-XIFOA4ySz8?si=MoB7_Q7ddT4_aK8.

Elections, Political Upheavals, and Domestic Discourse in Taiwan

After a brief introduction from the Sigur Center's previous Director Eric Schluessel and Assistant Director Richard Haddock, speaker remarks were opened by Assistant Research Fellow Wei-ting Yen, who began by centering the Recall in its ground-up origins. In the early vote collection stage, KMT-dominated districts passed vote thresholds despite decentralized collection efforts. Dr. Yen attributed that feat to citizens dissatisfied with gridlock and nervous about internal forces. Despite the recall's eventual failure, the mobilization represented resilience that could translate into surviving a potential crisis, according to her. In summarizing her ideas, Dr. Yen marked the Recall as an example of civic strength, delineated between exclusively pro-Recall, pro-China, & pro-democracy narratives, and outlined potential implications.

Wei-ting Yen

Assistant Research Fellow
Academia Sinica



You-Hao Lai

Lawyer
Human Rights Committee
Taipei Bar Association



Raymond Kuo

Director
Taiwan Policy Initiative
RAND Corporation



Noting volunteer sacrifices, Mr. You-Hao Lai extensively detailed the Recall's political framework. Through civic pathways, citizens initiated the recall due to dysfunction, polarization and ongoing debate. Division made legislation more difficult, while bypassed civic processes and budget cuts caused greater voter concern. By comparing this with the United States' 1947 upswing in collective action, Mr. Lai pointed out that the Great Recall indicates split civic sentiment and a result of the national legislation's current iteration. For the future, he suggested stronger policy bases and constitutional reform to address systemic weakness.

Outlining presidential system pitfalls, Dr. Raymond Kuo stated that the rigidity of Taiwan's system actually incentivizes party allegiance and popular enthusiasm. Dr. Kuo continued with explaining the risk Taiwan's polarization poses for potential extremism and cross-cultural division, and finished by introducing the push for a garrison state. While the mechanisms of creating such a state weren't explained, Dr. Kuo emphasized that national support is a mechanism for helping broader national issues rise above partisanship and receive support.



Taiwan Trajectories in 2026: Domestic Debates and Foreign Policy Pivots

On February 20th, the Sigur Center hosted an all-day conference with multidisciplinary experts to explore how Taiwan's domestic political debates, security pressures, and diplomatic recalibrations are shaping its governance and strategic trajectory in 2026. You can watch the recording of the conference on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/RoLAtLbj4?si=5aS-AI8atvrDZWn5>.

Panel I: Domestic Politics & Contestation in Taiwan

In the morning session, Lucy Best connected Taiwanese institutional conflict to legislative dynamics and looked ahead to the impeachment campaign against President Lai Ching-Te, Taiwan's contentious local election candidates and intra-party friction. Associate Professor Yi-Ling Chen introduced the political consequences of Taiwan's housing market, centering her discussion between the 2010s Social Housing Movement and the recent 7/16 protests. Although slow, social housing construction alongside the recent Housing Acts revision represents an inroad against the social inequality causing frustration amongst voters. Rounding off the panel, Kistch Liao specified recent deterrence efforts, raised the concern of ambiguity in the language of US support, and specified the opportunities and threats for Taiwan's national defense.

Bonnie S Glaser

Managing Director of German Marshall Fund's Indo-Pacific program



John W. Tai

Professorial Lecturer
The George Washington University



Leland Lazarus

Founder and CEO, Lazarus Consulting



Lucy Best

Director in DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group's China Practice



Yi-Ling Chen

Associate Professor of International Studies & Geography, University of Wyoming



Kitsch Liao

Associate Director, Global China Hub, the Atlantic Council

Panel II: Taiwan's Foreign Relations & Policy Pivots

Bonnie Glaser started her discussion on EU-Taiwan relations with how 2020 chip shortages promoted awareness of the Taiwan Strait's global impact. Ms. Glaser discussed health and tech derisking efforts, so while Chinese commercial partnerships exist, the EU now closely regards Taiwan. Narrowing his focus to recent US-Taiwan relations, Professor Tai mentioned previous communications, the global supply chain's scale, and bipartisan commitment against China. As Trump's China summit loomed, Professor Tai finished by reiterating defense commitments. Leland Lazarus finished with a comprehensive dive into Latin America's Taiwan connections from ICDF efforts, Citizenship by Investment scandals, existing PRC efforts in the region, and countries' infrastructure partnerships with Taiwan.

Cross-Strait Stakes: Managing U.S.-Taiwan-China Triangular Relations in 2026

The Sigur Center and a panel of experts examined the major factors influencing triangular relations in the year of 2026. By looking across upcoming events, potential pressures, narratives, and social forces, the panel dissected the forces likely to continue influencing the three countries. You can watch a recording of the roundtable on the Sigur Center's YouTube channel here: https://youtu.be/xCOB8eAzJTg?si=_arjfS2XlzYJ4un.

Analyzing the Forces & Issues Related to Taiwan's Future

After a brief introduction from Assistant Director Richard Haddock, speaker remarks were opened by Professor Yan Chang-Bennett, who started by raising PLA modernization as a nexus issue. With Xi Jinping Thought codified in 2017, Dr. Chang-Bennett continued by describing the synthesis of PRC national rejuvenation methods against the "American dream." In concurrence with significant ambitions, Xi's monitoring of party loyalty, the recent military purges, dissatisfaction with war capabilities, and existing yearly benchmarks are all notable, in addition to the natural preventive defense factors for Taiwan.

Following that, Vincent W. Wang raised and introduced a three-player framework between China, Taiwan, and the United States that has been present since Taiwan democratized in 1996. Through the Ma Ying-jeou to Tsai Ing-wen eras, Dean Wang explained that agreement policies shifted and initiating actors also changed. Focusing on local politics, Wang explained that 2026's policies are much different from 18 years prior and the recall vote failure perhaps prefaces 2026 midterms or 2028 national level elections swinging towards the KMT. Stakes were high for Trump's May summit with Xi, and all of these messaging steps and policy decisions made by each administration will amount to larger changes in the future.

John Dotson

Director
Global Taiwan Institute



Vincent W. Wang

Dean of College of Arts & Sciences
Adelphi University



Yan Chang-Bennett

Professorial Lecturer
Elliott School of International Affairs



As the final speaker, John Dotson discussed how current president Lai Ching-te won with a plurality, not a majority, that he leads a divided government where two thirds of the Legislative Yuan are district seats and roughly one third are party list seats. In addition, economic dissatisfaction has driven the TPP's rise. Mr. Dotson finished by discussing current fears and reoccurring policy issues.



With support from a new grant provided by Taiwan's Ministry of Education, the Taiwan Education & Research Program (TERP) is taking Taiwan Studies at GW into novel and exciting directions. TERP introduced two new awards to support new scholarship in Taiwan affairs: the Course Development Award to foster the creation of new classes nationwide on Taiwan, and the Open Access Publication Award to help scholars make their research on Taiwan free and accessible to the general public. TERP also hosted author and journalist Chris Horton to discuss his new book *Ghost Nation: The Story of Taiwan and Its Struggle for Survival* in the inaugural Taiwan Studies Global Book Tour series. TERP also held its inaugural Digital Frontiers Conference in April 2026, in which TERP Co-Director Alexa Alice Joubin presented her research on the implications of AI development on Taiwan humanities scholarship.

TERP is cultivating future leaders in Taiwan policy through two new programs: the GW-Morehouse College East Asia Research Hub, and the Taiwan Policy Program. With the Hub, TERP is working closely with Morehouse College—a historically black private liberal arts college for men based in Atlanta, Georgia—to host virtual lectures on Taiwan affairs in Morehouse classrooms. Under the Hub, TERP also brings three Morehouse students and one faculty member to DC each year for a week of meetings and site visits with governmental, nonprofit, and research organizations that work on Taiwan issues. This February, TERP and Morehouse students and faculty visited organizations including the Congressional Research Service, the U.S.-China Economic & Security Review Commission, and the National Bureau of Asian Research. TERP also launched its new Taiwan Policy Program, a six-week seminar that brought together 15 civil servants, researchers, and graduate students for closed-door discussions with experts on contemporary politics, economics, and history of Taiwan.

In addition to the new activities highlighted above, TERP continues to expand Taiwan Studies at GW. TERP provided \$24,000 in scholarship funds to students, provided over \$18,000 in travel funds to GW faculty and students conducting research in Taiwan, and supported graduate and undergraduate coursework related to Taiwan Studies, such as the “Women in Asia” seminar. TERP is hosting its fifth consecutive GW Strait Talk Symposium in 2026, where policymakers, international affairs practitioners, and graduate students will address cross-Strait issues through interactive conflict engagement and analysis. Taken altogether, these activities affirm the central roll that TERP plays in cultivating a thriving Taiwan Studies ecosystem in the greater DC region.

TAIWAN STUDIES RESEARCH FELLOWS

Each academic year, TERP selects a group of graduate and undergraduate students across the University to be Taiwan Studies Research Fellows. Fellows work with a faculty mentor to produce an original research contribution on any aspect of Taiwan Studies. Fellows present their respective research topics to GW faculty, staff, and students in an interactive roundtable discussion.

The 2025–2026 Taiwan Studies Research Fellows are:



Nataliya Bystrova

Research Project: “Development, Diplomacy, and Strategic Competition: The Impact and Trajectory of Taiwan’s Diplomatic Allies Prosperity Project in Latin America”

Faculty Advisor: Professor Gregg Brazinsky



John Lee

Research Project: “The future of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company during the time of the Chip War”

Faculty Advisor: Professor Peter Moody



Jasmine Hernandez

Research Project: “Taiwan’s Security Diplomacy in Latin America: Navigating Recognition and U.S.–China Competition”

Faculty Advisor: Professor Robert Sutter



Sylvia Ngo

Research Project: “Do (living) cultures belong in museums?: Intersections of indigenous cultural revitalization, museums, cultural promotion, and cultural “DIY” experiences in Taiwan”

Faculty Advisor: Professor Alex Dent

Haruka Satake, MA '24

ALUMNI: Haruka Satake

SPOTLIGHT

Originally from Tokyo, Japan, Haruka Satake had a longstanding interest in international affairs. During her final year of undergraduate studies, Haruka was trying to decide whether or not to go abroad for graduate school or find full-time work in Tokyo. To explore new opportunities, she obtained an online internship with a small-scale think tank in DC called Asia Policy Point. This opportunity changed her life, and from that moment on, Haruka knew she wanted to study in DC. Even though she didn't know anyone in DC, she was drawn to the strong Asian Studies program at the Elliott School. Specifically, Haruka wanted to work with Professor Mike Mochizuki, who is famous for his expertise in Asian security. Motivated by her mixed Korean and Japanese heritage, Haruka wanted to learn more about the comfort woman issue. GW's proximity to major institutions was the final motivator to come to the Elliott School.

As a student at GW, Haruka immersed herself in student life. She became the Japanese Director of the Organization of Asian Studies, where she crafted three academic events geared towards discussing Japanese politics. For one event, she worked closely with the Japanese embassy to bring students to embassy and allow students and diplomats to exchange ideas. Overall, Haruka particularly enjoyed the diverse environment of ESIA, with particular highlights being the diversity in viewpoints and academic opportunities with financial support, including fellowships about Taiwan. While some issues facing international students, such as those involving visas, were some of the hardest challenges to overcome, they were tempered by the environment of DC and the ability to network and make connections to help her future career.

After graduating, Haruka fulfilled her dream of working in international affairs. Today, she is a journalist at *Nikkei Asia*, one of the largest news outlets in Japan. She specifically writes about economic and foreign policy issues in Asia, the Middle East, Oceania, and Africa, and has reported extensively on recent conflicts. Haruka has also found success outside of her day to day job. She is currently wrapping up a stint as a 38 North Emerging Scholars Fellow with the Stimson Center, where she researched and wrote about the role of women leaders in North Korea. Haruka is also a Young Leader of the Pacific Forum.

For prospective and current students, Haruka recommends thinking long term about career goals because time is limited and try to be realistic. Try your best to connect with people and get to know them. Even though Haruka was new to the country, and knew no one, she was able to get jobs and internships through networking. There are plenty of fellowships, scholarships, and opportunities for early career people, so just apply. You won't get everything because it is competitive, but it is still a good experience and gets your name out there.



Interview with Gitter Prize Winner Shelby Xu, MA '26

What drew you after undergrad to the GW Asian Studies program?

During undergrad, I developed a strong interest in international affairs. At the time, I was focused on Middle Eastern Studies, but after graduating, I started thinking more intentionally about my own background. As someone who is ethnically Chinese, I realized I wanted to connect my academic interests with my personal identity and focus more on US-China relations. I also saw this as an opportunity to bridge the US-China gap in a meaningful way. I liked how George Washington University was located in DC, and its really strong connections to policy institutions. The Elliott School offered exactly the kind of environment I wanted, where I could gain practical experience through internships or work during the day and then apply that to my studies at night.

What has been the biggest challenge that you faced?

The biggest challenge has been balancing work and graduate school at the same time. Managing a full academic workload while working in the day can be really demanding, especially keeping up with readings and writing assignments. There were definitely times throughout the years that I've faced where it was overwhelming and I had to manage my time more intentionally and stay disciplined with my schedule, even though I thought I knew what time management was before coming in. But while it has been challenging, it has also helped me become more organized and resilient, and better prepared for the kind of workload I expect to see in my future career.

You're being interviewed because you have been selected as the David Gitter Fellow for advanced Chinese language study. What motivated you to apply for the Gitter Fellowship?

I wanted to significantly improve my Chinese to be at a professional working level. As a heritage speaker, I'm pretty comfortable with speaking and listening in terms of everyday conversational Chinese, but I've realized that my reading ability, especially for policy and academic materials, is not exactly where I want it to be.



And since my academic and professional focus is on US-China relations, being able to engage directly with Chinese language sources is really important. I'm hoping that this fellowship will give me the opportunity to dedicate focused time to improving my Chinese without having school or work. The International Chinese Language Program at National Taiwan University, which I am using this fellowship to attend, is known to be very rigorous and immersive in the training environment.

What is your favorite memory from your time at GW?

GW gave me the ability to study abroad in Shanghai, China. I wanted to understand the Chinese point of view of international relations and US-China relations. It made what we were learning in the US feel much more real and tangible. I also really value being in class with people from such diverse academic and professional backgrounds as well. It's not often that you're in a room with individuals who have such different experiences and perspectives, and those conversations really shaped how I thought about international issues.

Do you have any advice for prospective GW Asian Studies students?

Take advantage of being in DC, because there's so many events and networking opportunities available. I would really encourage students to push themselves to go to the events that really interest them, and through those events, especially the ones that are held by the Sigur Center, you get to build relationships with the professors that come to the Elliott School to listen to them, as well as connect with peers. And those connections can really shape your academic experience and then open up future opportunities in ways that you may not expect, like the Gitter Fellowship.

Anika Kanitkar, BA '26

What drew you to GW?

The biggest thing that drew me to GW was probably the DC location, being able to be so close to so many places causing change around the world. I also really liked the Elliott School curriculum. I loved how interdisciplinary it was and that I would be able to draw from different fields.

What made you want to study Asia and focus on South Asia?

My family is originally from India, which is probably the biggest reason I started. Last fall, I took a class called International Relations of South Asia with Professor Deepa Ollapally that was more of a poli sci focused discussion. Then I took a class with Professor Ashwini Tambe that was about the history of South Asia and realized that was my niche. I've always been interested in questions of gender, power, and social justice, and I really saw different ways that they were playing out in the Indian subcontinent that I found deeply personal.

Are there any special memories from your experiences that you would like to share?

I loved presenting at the GW Research Conference. I got to present on the connections between Black feminist thought and Indian radical feminist thought, which I thought was something new, putting two things in conversation with each other and building on a very new intellectual legacy that sort of started in the 2010s. Getting to talk about my research to a wider audience was really special to me. Extracurriculars-wise, I'm also on a dance team at GW, called GW Garmi, which is a Bollywood fusion team, so it's another way to experience my Asian culture and surround myself with art. We did a performance at Punker Blowout the first week of April. That memory is special to me because it was the first performance I got to captain and see my choreography come to life.



What drew you to your research topic?

I took a class last semester called Sex and Colonialism with Dr Tambe, and came across this edited volume that she recommended called *Writing Caste and Writing Gender*, and I was really thinking about issues of caste and colonialism. The most familiar context to me is always going to be the American context because I've grown up here, so I was immediately thinking about Black radical feminism and drawing a relational comparison between caste and race, how they operate in both the United States and India in similar fashions to keep people in similar social hierarchies.

What is your favorite memory from your time at GW?

My favorite memory is probably my induction into the Eta Society for Global Affairs, which is a professional organization for women and marginalized genders, because Initiation Day is just really special. Being able to surround myself with a community that has let me express my interests in such amazing ways, I've been able to talk about my research to everyone in the organization and I've gotten mentored and been able to mentor different people. Initiation is the most special moment that I can pinpoint, but my time overall has been the most fulfilling.

Do you have any advice for incoming or prospective students?

I think my number one piece of advice is plan. Stuff gets lost in the margins, you get excited about taking a lot of classes and you realize that "Oh no, I didn't take this 1000-level class that I was supposed to and now I messed up." Planning is a learned skill and something that's essential, but I would say also take classes that sound interesting, not just classes you think would help you professionally. You're here to learn, not here only to build your career, so take the fun class that your parents might call useless. It could actually teach you more than you know.



Adam Bubanich, MA '26

How did you come to GW in the first place?

I came to GW through an employment path. After I graduated from Northeastern University in Boston with my B.A., I was trying to look for jobs that would let me engage with China and Asian Studies, and I wasn't sure how to do that. I actually came across a job at GW on LinkedIn for the Program Coordinator for the East Asia National Resource Center at GW, cold applied, and got the job. A year later, I became the Program Coordinator for the Sigur Center. After I worked for a few years, got a bit more settled, and learned more about the tuition remission policy, I decided to become a student while working full-time.

What is the biggest challenge of juggling full-time work and part-time school?

The biggest challenge is time. I want to do really well and work and have an obligation to my boss and my colleagues. But I also need to complete all of my assignments for class. I want to also have a social life. So I talked to some co-workers, and they said it's important to build in time when you aren't working or studying, but you are just relaxing and taking time for yourself at least once a week. But in general, I'm pretty good at time management.

As a student, what is your favorite memory at GW?

It's hard to isolate a specific memory, but in general, GW does a good job of having teachers who are a mix of academics and practitioners and are very knowledgeable. My specific area is China, and we have a wide range of professors who know a lot about China, and who you can talk to about not only content, but about career paths. They are very accessible outside of class, so you can sit down and talk to them about your career.



What have you enjoyed the most about your time at GW?

The Asian Studies cohort is typically no more than 20 people per class, so you get to know each other really well, and meet people who have the same career goals, and get to know them not only as classmates, but as people. They may have interesting perspectives you may not have thought of before. The same can be said about working here full-time. I work in a smaller office, so you get that same feeling of camaraderie, and get to know each other really well. I can ask them for professional advice, like how to properly do grant budgets, but you're also learning more from the scholars and academics around you.

What are your goals now?

In terms of my job, I want to improve my budgetary and grant-related skills. I also want to improve my networking. Networking is not something that comes naturally, and has always felt stiff and uncomfortable. So I've been trying to be more intentional about reaching out to people, keeping my network active, and asking people about their career paths.

Do you have any advice for incoming or prospective students?

Get involved and look for opportunities like internships, because employers really want those skills that you can put on your resume, and that also helps you build your network. But you want to also make sure that you are managing your time very well, because that's the hardest thing for people in school to do. So make sure you set up a routine, or you're very self-disciplined. And my final piece of advice is to talk to your professors and classmates. Students get really caught up in other things, and don't talk to their professors. They are experts in their field, and are also part of your network and can help you with opportunities. Your classmates are also part of your network, and have a deep well of knowledge that they can draw from and can help you find new opportunities.



Holly Pappano, MA '26

From her first study abroad experience to China when she was just in high school, to teaching English to Masters students at Seoul National University, Asian Studies has always been an integral part of Holly's life that she wanted to expand upon through GW's Asian Studies program. Through balancing a full-time job and full-time studies, she has learned just how important time management and utilizing your resources are.

What drew you after undergrad to GW's Asian Studies Program?

I think GW is so accessible for people who are working. I've been doing school full-time and work full-time, which has definitely been a testament to time management. But I knew I wanted to stay in DC because I wanted to stay at my full-time role at the time at the UN Foundation. So I was looking for programs where I could have the best of both worlds and continue that job, but also study. And the Elliott School is so accommodating in terms of having all the grad classes start after 5 p.m, and it's really built for working professionals, whether they're interning or working part time or whatever, and that was by far the most appealing aspect of it. And also the professional expertise. Every professor I've had has had professional experience in their field. And you're learning from the best here. So I think it's a combination of those two - both the hours and the accommodation for wanting you to be able to work full time and pursue opportunities in addition to school in tandem with the staff and the faculty.

Do you have any advice for any prospective GW Asian Studies students?

The network here is incredible. The staff at GW and the Asian Studies Program, everyone just has so much knowledge and is so willing to talk to you. If you just want to talk about anything, that's what your professors are there for.

These classes tend to be later in the evenings, and I was hesitant at first because I felt like I would be imposing to try and stay after class to talk, but all the professors are so supportive and willing to meet you at different times. You could just get a coffee and chat and ask them about their experience. And I just think that's such a good way to also learn more about what kind of careers are out there, because, you know, a lot of them have had a non-traditional path to becoming a professor or becoming faculty, and some have had a very traditional path and can like speak to the positives of that as well. So I just think talking to as many people as you can, your peers as well, is so important because we're all here to learn and you're with some of the best and the brightest. I really think taking advantage of all those relationships is important.

Anything else you'd like to share?

I think studying a second language is so important, because it allows you to dive headfirst into understanding a different culture. And the Asian Studies Program is great because it fosters a really specific kind of perspective and that really shows in the classes and in the people you're speaking to. I'm incredibly grateful to be here and I recommend it to everyone.

CHINA POLICY PROGRAM (CPP)

The China Policy Program was created to build upon the Elliott School's longstanding expertise and involvement in US-China relations and contemporary Chinese affairs. It primarily serves as an outreach program to the policy community in Washington, officials, and China specialists around the world, the media, and the public.

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RISING POWERS INITIATIVE (RPI)

The Rising Powers Initiative is a multi-year, cross-national research effort that examines the role of domestic identities and foreign policy debates of aspiring powers in Asia. The RPI brings together an internationally recognized team of scholars from both the United States and across the globe to analyze and compare the foreign policy thinking in today's rising powers.

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UYGHUR STUDIES INITIATIVE (USI)

The Uyghur Studies Initiative began in 2010 at IERES. In 2024, it received a \$1 million endowment and moved to Sigur. The USI supports humanities teaching and research on the Uyghur homeland and diaspora. It funds Uyghur language classes at multiple levels, graduate student research support, and public events.

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TAIWAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH PROGRAM (TERP)

The Taiwan Education and Research Program was established in 2004 to promote and support academic and policy-related study and research on the history, international relations, and contemporary political, economic, and social development of Taiwan. TERP created and supports the Taiwan Resource Center at GW's Gelman Library.

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TIBET GOVERNANCE PROJECT

The Tibet Governance Project advances scholarship, research, and new perspectives around key issues related to governance and public policy in contemporary Tibet. Research initiatives and activities produce fresh insights, analyses, and approaches towards understanding the social, economic, and institutional challenges faced by Tibetans in the region.

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MEMORY AND RECONCILIATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC (MRIAP)

The Memory and Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific (MRIAP) program promotes the study of ongoing "memory wars" as well as reconciliation efforts. MRIAP's cataloging of official statements, scholarly works, and news articles on the subject make it easier for people to become aware of conflict resolution and confidence-building efforts in the region.

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Professor Ronald H. Spector, Professor Emeritus of History

Professor Ronald H. Spector, Professor Emeritus of History and foremost Vietnam War historian, passed away on March 26th at his home in Annandale, Virginia. He was 83.

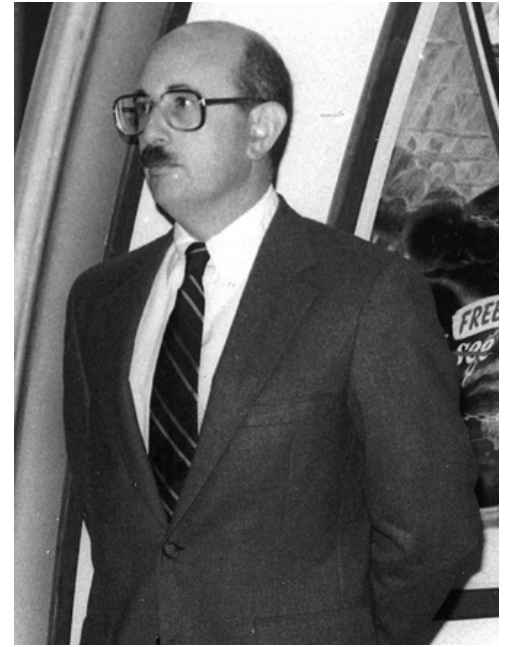
Professor Spector attended Johns Hopkins University for his Bachelor's in History and Yale University for his Doctorate in the same subject. He was then drafted into the Marine Corps and served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969.

In South Vietnam, Professor Spector worked as a combat historian. The experience gained there led directly into his illustrious academic career. Helping pioneer more holistic works of modern military history, his first book *Advice and Support: The Early Years of the U.S. Army in Vietnam, 1941-1960* pivoted from exclusively leader-focused explanations of the initial conflict period to a more balanced account of influential forces. Across his career, he wrote a total of nine books on military history as well as numerous other publications on the topic.

In addition to his illustrious career as an author, Professor Spector was also an educator. He held appointments at the National War College, Army War College, other military history centers, Louisiana State University, and the University of Alabama. His thirty years as a professor at George Washington University allowed him to reach innumerable students and spread his wealth of knowledge. He greatly enriched the GWU academic community and the field at large.

Professor Ronald H. Spector, Professor Emeritus of History

Shawn McHale remembers him as a “fabulous colleague”: “Although Ron is probably most famous for *Eagle Against the Sun: the American War with Japan* (1985), he and I shared, of course, a common interest in Vietnam. He welcomed me to the department, and in fact he and his wife Dianne held a reception at his home to introduce me to other people in the area who were interested in the country. What was noteworthy about him as an academic was that he was always open to new perspectives. He was well-read in modern Southeast Asian history. This may seem trite to say, but he completely broke my stereotype of the military historian. He was part of the generation that brought a social history approach into the writing of conflict. And while much military history can seem one-sided, Ron was always interested in the other side of a conflict. Ron had a wry sense of humor. To me, he was a model colleague: despite being, perhaps, the best-known member of the history department, he was never full of himself. I will miss him greatly.”



Daqing Yang also has fond memories of Ron. “Not long after I joined GW, Ron and I started talking about joining forces in teaching the undergraduate course on the Pacific War, a class he had been teaching regularly. I first guest lectured in his class, then we co-taught it (what a wonderful arrangement that we can only dream of now!) and then I took it over completely. While I expanded it from ‘The Pacific War in Japanese and American History’ to ‘WWII in Asia in History and Memory,’ his monumental work *Eagle against the Sun* remains a constant on the syllabus. He has remained a constant source of advice.” He remembers Ron as “a great storyteller, [who] brings history alive with his engaging prose, attention to voices of historical actors, not to mention a sense of humor.”

Professor Spector is survived by his wife, two sons, two siblings, and four grandchildren. He is missed dearly by his colleagues in the Sigur Center, History Department, and wider GW community. More detailed obituaries can be found in the [*New York Times*](#) and the [*GW Hatchet*](#).



ACHIEVEMENTS

Areas where Sigur Summer Faculty Grant Awardees Conducted Research:
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GW Study Abroad Programs in IPR*



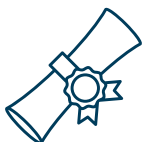
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Elliott School Partnerships in IPR



10

Total Countries in GW-IPR Exchanges



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120

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1,235

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