

Seton Hall's Asian Voices

SPRING 2025

Dr. Diana Alvarez-Amell, Chair, Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures

Dr. Dongdong Chen, Director, Chinese Program

Dr. Shigeru Osuka, Undergraduate Advisor for Asian Studies Program & Japanese Program

Jessica Wilson, Director, Global Learning Center

Message from Outgoing Department Chair, Dr. Diana Alvarez-Amell



Me? Learn how to speak Chinese or Japanese? Really? Yes, and congratulations to all of you who have taken courageous and wise decisions to dedicate your time to mastering a new skill, which requires discipline and cultural understanding. Why do it? In today's world, when foreign languages are plummeting across American universities. True, you have a language requirement, but you understood. To immerse yourself in learning new linguistic rules, other sounds and another culture is a formidable challenge. However, as a student you understand that the acquisition of this skill also ultimately expands --possibly outside your comfort zone-- your understanding about the human condition. Bravo. You can count, as you already know, excellent and dedicated professors who are here at your side to assist you and open new worlds of understanding and experiences. I want to thank my colleagues Dr. Shigeru Osuka, and Dr. Dongdong Chen who direct the Japanese and Chinese programs, which have been expanding with new language courses for the professions such as for Health and Diplomacy. As we say at Seton Hall, "*Hazard Zet Forward.*"

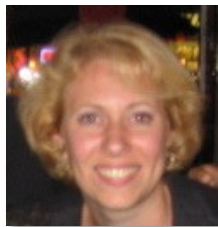
Message from Director of the Asian Studies Program, Dr. Shigeru Osuka

In 2024-2025, the Asian studies program had two important projects along with many excellent activities featured in this newsletter. First, Dr. Peter Shoemaker, the LLC faculty and PI, was awarded a two-year, \$188,538 grant from the U.S. Department of Education Title VI Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language (UISFL) Program in 2023-2025. In the final grant year, 2025, the professional certification programs in Chinese and Japanese were approved by the University Senate Academic Policy Committee (APC). The Chinese will offer a certificate for healthcare professionals, and the Japanese will offer a certificate for diplomacy and international relations in the coming years. Second, the Asian studies had the program review for accreditation in 2024-2025. In May 2025, Dr. Andrea Thomas, Loyola University Maryland, visited SHU as an external reviewer, and the Asian studies program completed the program review report in June 2025. In my concluding message, I would like to express sincere gratitude to Dr. Diana Alvarez-Amell who served as the LLC Department chair for two terms and six years. She is the person who exercises responsibility and cares for her colleagues. Diana, thank you so much for your enthusiastic energy and extra time for this large LLC department and the Asian studies program.



Message from Director of the Global Learning Center, Jessica Wilson

Having worked with the Asian Studies program under the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures for over three years now, I am ever delighted to assist with and attend the wonderful events and activities the program provides to our Seton Hall community. All the Asian Studies faculty are exceptional teachers, which is reflected by the outstanding accomplishments of their students. We are fortunate to have Professors Chen, Osuka, Gedacht, Fellows, Diab, and Liu—excellent, involved, and caring teachers whose students excel due to their high-level instruction. All the Asian Studies students should be very proud of themselves for what they are achieving here at the University in these courses; I hope you all profit well from the language skills and cultural knowledge you have gained in your time here. Your interest and dedication give me the utmost confidence that you will all continue to create greatness in the years to come. I wish all who are graduating the very best in their future pursuits, and I look forward to ongoing interactions with the students who will remain here for a while longer. I am excited to collaborate with Asian Studies on whatever exciting programming they have in mind for the future. exciting programming they plan in the future. I wish all who are graduating the very best in their future pursuits, and I look forward to continued interactions with the rest of the students. As always, my best to everyone in the program; I hope all who are interested in what Asian Studies offers will come and see for themselves what a wonderful program we have!





Across the World Page by Page

By David A Gomez

Lili Zeng is an author and PhD holder in Biophysics from McGill University who recently appeared at Seton Hall to discuss her new book *Dear Haider* (Baraka Books, 2024). Her talk, *Coming of Age in a Multicultural World*, took place on Wednesday October 9th in the Walsh Library. During her talk Zeng discussed how the story was interwoven with their



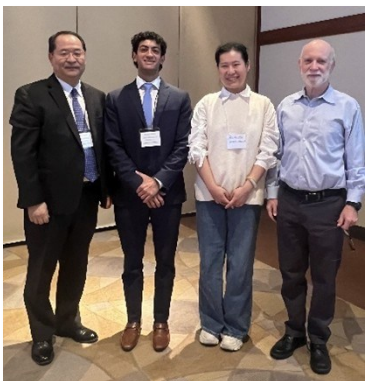
Lili Zeng speaks about her book and her experiences

own personal life. Touching on past romance, reconciliation of culture, and the struggles of mental health. Zeng has had much life beyond the page as well. Moving to Montreal, Canada, from her birthplace of Guangzhou, China. Zeng has also earned significant recognition for her skills as a pianist, winning multiple competitions for her talent. Zeng stated that this book came from a prominent place in her heart and carries marks of personal tragedy throughout the story's interesting letter writing style. The book follows Liz, a girl born in China, brought to Canada by family, and now traveling to Germany for a physics internship. During her stay she connects with the book's namesake Haider, and a gripping narrative of connection, the effects of taught

prejudice, and what that prejudice says about us, carries the book forward. As Zeng spoke, a key overarching theme was the topic of mental health. Both in the book and in person Zeng discussed how isolation from loved ones, over suppression of emotions, and shattered relationships can take a toll. Bringing us down to the very depths of what we are, but not without the hope of building ourselves back up again. During her talk Zeng elaborated on her future as a writer. Although she will be continuing her work in Biophysics primarily, Zeng still writes as a passion. Being in the earliest stages of a new book, which time shall surely see in bloom. Overall, Zeng gave a compelling personal account of her own life, and how the process of writing acted as a form of self-healing. Reaching into the audience's hearts and taking them along for a painful but nonetheless passionate tale.

Three Undergraduate Students Presented Their Research Paper at the 52nd Annual MAR/AAS Conference at University of Delaware

The 52nd Annual Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies (MAR/AAS) Conference was held on November 2nd -3rd, 2024 at the University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware. Dr. Shigeru Osuka took his three students to present their research papers.



*Prof. Osuka and Michael Stone
with Nickolas Habib and Xiang Wei*

SESSION III, Panel C-1, Asian Religions and Impact on Contemporary American Society

3:15-3:25 p.m. Shigeru Osuka (Seton Hall University) Panel chair and Introduction

3:25-3:40 p.m. Sameer Desai (Seton Hall University), "Hinduism, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Technology, and the Purpose Within."

3:40-3:55 p.m. Max Sowers (Seton Hall University), "Daoism, the *Tao-Te-Ching* and Navigating the Digital Age."

3:55-4:15 p.m. Nickolas Habib, "Buddhist Meditation, the *Lankavatara Sutra*, and Curing Burnout in Healthcare professionals."

4:15-4:30 p.m. Discussant David Prejsnar (Community College of Philadelphia)

4:30-4:45 p.m. Open Q&A

There were many people in the audience, and they had good interaction with the attendees. It was also a great opportunity to meet former SHU students and staff, Xiang Wei, currently a Ph.D. student, Department of Religion at Temple University, and Michael Stone, 2024 program manager and advisory board member in the MAR/AAS.



JLPT2024 Held at Seton Hall University

The Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) 2024 was held at Seton Hall University on Sunday, December 1, 2014. In the United States, the JLPT is organized by the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ), and 18 test sites have been designated throughout the country.

Approximately 300 people registered for the test at Seton Hall University, and due to the increase in the number of test takers, the test was held in A&S Hall and Schwarz Hall with 35 test proctors, supported by the New Jersey Association of Teachers of Japanese (NJATJ). The JLPT is an authentic certification program of Japanese language for non-native speakers of Japanese, held in early December in 96 countries and regions around the world including Japan (2024). In principle, anyone who is not a native speaker of Japanese can take the test, regardless of whether they have Japanese nationality. The number of applicants in 2024 was the highest ever, at approximately 1.72 million, and approximately 37% of all levels passed. The 2025 test is scheduled to be held at Seton Hall University on Sunday, December 7th, and application opens from August 2025 and test will be held on Sunday, December 7, 2025. (<https://aatj.org/jlpt-us>)



The Cultural and Educational Importance of Chinese Calligraphy

By Aakash Rathee

During our Chinese New Year celebration, I had the opportunity to participate in a calligraphy workshop. We used traditional brushes and ink to write phrases like "Happy Chinese New Year!" (新年快乐) in Chinese. At first glance, it seemed like a fun and artistic activity, but as the session progressed, I began to understand how meaningful and powerful Chinese calligraphy truly is. It is not just an art form—it's a bridge to a rich culture, a tool for learning, and a deeply reflective practice that teaches patience, focus, and respect.



Cultural Significance: Chinese calligraphy has thousands of years of history. It is one of the highest forms of Chinese visual art and is deeply tied to the language, philosophy, and history of China. Each character is more than just a word—it carries stories, emotions, and cultural wisdom. Writing characters with a brush forces you to slow down and consider their structure, balance, and meaning. At the workshop, when I carefully painted each stroke of “福” (fu, meaning good fortune), I wasn't just copying a symbol—I was participating in a tradition that has been practiced for generations during the New Year. This cultural depth became clearer as the

instructor explained that certain characters are traditionally hung upside-down on doors, symbolizing that luck or happiness has “arrived” (because the word for “upside-down,” “倒,” sounds like “到,” which means “arrive”). These kinds of traditions gave me insight into how language, art, and customs are all connected in Chinese culture.

Educational Value: As a student learning Chinese, calligraphy was also an incredible educational experience. It helped me better understand the structure of Chinese characters. Unlike alphabet-based languages, Chinese is written with logograms—each character represents an idea and is made up of radicals and strokes that follow strict patterns. By practicing brush strokes, I became more aware of stroke order and character composition, which helps with both writing and reading. For example, when writing “年” (year), I had to focus on the top-to-bottom and left-to-right stroke order. This kind of awareness trains the brain to think in a new way and builds a deeper connection to the language. It also improved my handwriting and made me more confident when practicing Chinese outside of class.

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Calligraphy also reinforces memory. The physical act of writing characters slowly with a brush—and repeating helps them commit to memory more effectively than typing or quick pen writing. It combines kinesthetic and visual learning styles, which makes it a great tool for language learners.

Impact on Personal Growth: Beyond cultural and educational importance, Chinese calligraphy had a surprising personal impact on me. Writing with a brush was not easy. It took concentration, control, and patience. Even holding the brush correctly felt foreign at first. But through the process, I began to enjoy the slowness. I had to be present. Every brushstroke mattered, and small mistakes were part of the learning process. In that way, calligraphy reminded me of mindfulness practices. It helped me slow down and reflect. In our busy digital world, this kind of activity is rare. But spending even thirty minutes writing a few characters helped me feel more calm, focused, and appreciative of the moment.

Social and Community Experience: Another important part of the workshop was doing it with classmates and peers. Sharing our work, helping each other, and laughing over our mistakes made it a warm, collaborative experience. We weren't just learning art—we were celebrating culture together. The instructor encouraged us to talk about the phrases we were writing and to learn from each other. This communal element reminded me that learning a language isn't just about vocabulary and grammar, it's about connecting with people. The act of writing “新年快乐” alongside others made me feel like I was part of something bigger than just a school assignment—it felt like I was engaging with the Chinese-speaking world in a real, respectful, and joyful way.

The Chinese calligraphy workshop for Chinese New Year was a meaningful and unforgettable experience. It opened my eyes to the deep cultural roots of Chinese writing, strengthened my language learning, and gave me a space for reflection and creativity. It reminded me that language is not only a tool for communication but also a form of art and tradition. As I continue studying Chinese, I want to keep practicing calligraphy—not just to improve my writing, but to stay connected to the culture and history behind each character. Calligraphy is more than an art; it is a way of thinking, a way of seeing, and a way of learning. I'm grateful for the chance to try it, and I hope to keep growing through this beautiful and important tradition.

The Department of LLC Hosts Talk on the Transformative Power of Language Learning

By Halima Y Koroma



On March 20, 2025, Seton Hall University's Department of Languages, Literatures & Cultures hosted a compelling talk titled *"The Benefits of Learning a Foreign Language"* in Fahy Hall's Global Learning Center. The event featured Janis L. Aldridge, an Asian Studies alumna, accomplished author, and former UN Public Information Officer, who spoke on the enriching experiences that come from embracing new languages and cultures. Aldridge emphasized how studying a foreign language opens doors not only to communication but to deep cultural understanding. "When you study a language... your exchanges with the people of a different culture, custom, and faith add so much to your life," she noted, highlighting the personal and global significance of cross-cultural exchange. Through a series of quotes displayed throughout the event, Aldridge illustrated the profound impact of language learning from

enlightening interpersonal experiences to fostering global peace. She underscored that representing one's country while engaging with others encourages appreciation for diversity and the building of a more peaceful world. The event resonated with attendees, especially students exploring global careers or language study. Hosted through the university's UISFL grant, the talk underscored Seton Hall's commitment to intercultural education and global engagement.



NJATJ Annual Japanese Language and Cultural Studies Awards Ceremony

The New Jersey Japanese Teachers Association (NJATJ) 2025 Annual Japanese Language and Cultural Studies Awards Ceremony was held on March 28th, 2025, at Jubilee Hall auditorium. The Awards Ceremony was held as part of Seton Hall University's Japan Week event, and was attended by approximately 300 students, teachers, and parents. First, NJATJ President Catherine Fisco (Cranford High School) gave an opening speech, followed by a passionate performance of "Believe" by the Kearney High School Choir in Japanese, which excellent and inspired the audience. Next, 55 awardees, including 30 high school students and 25 university students studying Japanese in New Jersey and New York, gave short speeches in Japanese about "the good things about studying Japanese," and received certificates and commemorative gifts. Afterwards, as entertainment, the Cranford High School Japanese dance team performed the Soran Bushi dance, followed by a mini Soran Bushi dance workshop for all participants, who all enjoyed dancing the Soran Bushi dance. Finally, Sato Tomoe, Vice Consul at the Japan Information Center of the Consulate General of Japan in New York, gave a congratulatory speech, and Kawahara Reiko (Horace Mann High School), Vice President of the NJATJ, gave a closing remark. The award winners' eyes lit up as they spoke in Japanese about their future aspirations, such as wanting to work in a job that contributes to Japan-U.S. relations and to play a role as a bridge between communities, as well as their gratitude to their Japanese teachers. It was a wonderful opportunity for the award winners to present in Japanese, and we can look forward to their future success. The website of the NJATJ is (<https://sites.google.com/cranfordschools.org/njatj>). The website of Seton Hall University's Japan Week is (<https://www.shu.edu/languages-literatures-cultures/japan-week>).



Four Seton Hall Students Receive the NJATJ 2025 Japanese Language and Cultural Studies Award

New Jersey Association of Teacher of Japanese (NJATJ) awarded the following four SHU students for the NJATJ 2025 Japanese Language and Cultural Study Award. The ceremony was held at Seton Hall University on March 28, 2025. There were 55 students who received the award, and more than three hundred people attended the awards ceremony.

Akira Bofinger, Freshman – *Business Administration*

Ava Lee, Junior – *Biology/P.T. Track*

Willem Akian, Junior – *Philosophy/Asian Studies*

Robert Villarin, Senior – *Diplomacy & International Relations*





2025 Japanese Language Study Awards Ceremony



The 2025 Japanese Language Study Awards Ceremony was held on Monday, March 31, 2025, Chancellor's Suite, University Center. Awards Presenters were Jonathan Farina, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Christopher Kaiser, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Mary Balkun, Department English/Japan Week Committee; Diana Alvarez-Amell, Chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; Jessica Wilson, Director of the Global Learning Center; Shigeru Osuka, Director of the Japanese Program. Seton Hall University has been offering Japanese Language since the 1950s. The Japanese Program is pleased to honor its motivated and hardworking Japanese language learners. In the

2024-2025, over 50 students are studying Japanese language and culture that entails demanding curriculum and one of the internationally well-known programs. In recognition of the students' hard work, dedication and further promises to the role in global community, the Japanese program honors the following 2025 Japanese language study awardees:

First Year Japanese

Christine Franco, Freshman – *Visual and Sound Media*
Giovanna Giancarlo, Senior – *Visual and Sound Media*
Victoria Matteson, Freshman – *Graphic Design*
Jacob Mudd, Sophomore – *Visual/ Sound Media & Creative Writing*

Kinsey Rogers, Senior – *Biology*
Jon Peter Salazar, Junior – *Physics*

Second Year Japanese

Joseph DeFazio, Senior – *Criminal Justice*
Erick Seibel, Junior – *Asian Studies*

Third Year Japanese

Laurn Hill, Senior – *Biology*
Tasiah Mayfield, Senior – *Music/ Asian Studies*
Brennan Ozkan, Junior – *Diplomacy & International Relations*

2025 Japanese Digital Storytelling Awards Ceremony

The 2025 Japanese Digital storytelling Awards Ceremony was held on Monday, March 31, 2025, Chancellor's Suite, University Center. The Japanese Program has integrated technology into its language curriculum and encourages to apply this technology whenever possible. Since 2009, the Japanese Program has emphasized the use of Digital Storytelling, which integrates essay writing and visual images into one movie. In recognition of students' hard work, dedication, and further commitment to their role in the global community, the Japanese Program honors to host the 2025 Japanese Digital Storytelling awardees. The showcase was held at Petersheim Academic Expeditions on April 22, 2025.



First Year Japanese

Deandra Diggs, Sophomore – *Theatre*
Avery Belle Estoque, Freshman – *Psychology*
Bryan Takeshita, Senior – *Financial Mathematics*
Kendall Waters, Freshman – *Visual and Sound Media*

Second Year Japanese

Mary Gabuya, Senior – *Social and Behavioral Sciences*
Jared Scharfstein, Junior – *Environmental Studies*

Third Year Japanese

Akira Bofinger, Freshman – *Business Administration*
Laurn Hill, Senior – *Biology*
Tasiah Mayfield, Senior – *Music/ Asian Studies*
Robert Villarin, Senior – *Diplomacy & International Relations*



Japanese National Honor Society - College Chapter at Seton Hall

The Japanese National Honor Society – College Chapter (JNHS–CC) recognizes and encourages scholastic achievement and excellence in the study of the Japanese language. Academic criteria for student membership in JNHS–CC are as follows: completion of five semester courses of Japanese language study (or their equivalent) at the college undergraduate level, a GPA of 3.5 in Japanese language courses; and an overall GPA of 3.0. The following nine Seton Hall University students are the JNHS College Chapter Inductees in 2025:



Willem Akian, Junior – *Philosophy/ Asian Studies*
 Oluwayinka Akindebe, Senior – *Diplomacy & International Relations*
 Wilnica Destine, Junior – *Diplomacy & International Relations*
 Zachary Edwards, Senior – *Diplomacy & International Relations*
 Lauryn Hill, Senior – *Biology*
 Kaylee Hoo, Senior – *English/ Asian Studies*
 Tasiah Mayfield, Senior – *Music/ Asian Studies*
 Brennan Ozkan, Junior – *Diplomacy & International Relations*
 Robert Villarin, Senior – *Diplomacy & International Relations*

Dr. Chris Kaiser Receives Japan Week 2025 Award

Dr. Christopher A. Kaiser is an Associate Dean for Undergraduate Student Services and Enrollment Management at the College of Arts and Sciences. Since 2006, Dr. Kaiser is serving the Japan Week committee member and participating the Japanese Language and Digital Storytelling awards ceremony as well as advising the Japan Week events coordination. Dr. Kaiser is also well known and respected by the university community by demonstrating his ability to mediate difficult situations for students and resolve issues. On March 31, 2025, the Japan Week committee proudly presented the Japan Week award plaque with Ohi tea bowl as a commemorative gift to Dr. Kaiser. Congratulations!



Dr. Paula Becker Alexander Receives Japan Week 2025 Award

Dr. Paula Becker Alexander teaches in the M.B.A. program, as well as the undergraduate business program, where she serves as Chair of the Department of Management. She published *Corporate Social Irresponsibility* by Routledge in 2015. She received M.A. degree in Asian studies in 2007 at Seton Hall University and hosted several Japan Week events. She is one of the faculty members who has always been positive and has worked in solidarity with the faculty and students of the Asian Studies Program, promoting campus projects and international exchange. The Japan Week Committee is truly indebted and would like to dedicate this award to Dr. Alexander. As a commemorative gift, the Japan Week presented her with a plaque and a Raku red tea bowl on April 3, 2025. Congratulations!





Japan Week Kendama Contest

by Kaylee Hoo

On Wednesday, April 2, 2025, the Kendama Contest was hosted in the University Center. Kendama is a traditional Japanese skill toy that consists of a handle (ken), a pair of cups (sarado), and a ball (tama) that are all connected together by a string. Participants attempted to land the ball on either of the cups or on the spike, winning different prizes depending on their rate of success. Overall, ten students won Starbucks gift certificates for landing the ball on the spike, and over fifty students won prizes for landing the ball on the cups. As someone who has found joy in playing with the Kendama in my youth, I had a wonderful time sharing this part of Japanese culture with my fellow students at the university. I hope that this will also encourage others to explore more of Japanese culture!

Interned in Wartime Japan: Diary of a Young British National

Prof. Kei Sakayama, Northern Valley Regional High School at Demarest, FDU, and Ramapo College (Retired) presented her recent published book, *Interned in Wartime Japan: Diary of a Young British National* on April 1 at Chancellor's Suite, University Center. The fact that there were internment camps for enemy civilians in wartime Japan is not well known. Born in Japan to a Japanese mother, Sydenham Duer, a physician at Jikei Medical School, is troubled by his own identity. He was arrested and interned by the Totsuka Police Department's Special Higher Police on December 8, 1941. His diary from 1944-1945, during his period of internment, vividly describes the conditions at the Uchiyama Internment Camp in Kanagawa Prefecture. One day in his diary, he wrote, "Japan treats me as an enemy, but as for me, I love Japan...." Kei Sakayama, the first daughter of Sydenham, shared the diary which her father kept during the harsh days of WWII. The bilingual book, *Interned in Wartime Japan: Diary of a Young British National*, was published in 2021 by Ronsō-sya publishing company in Tokyo, Japan.



It's Raining Pikachu: Pokémon as a Window to Nostalgia, Consumerism, and Globalization

Dr. Anne GIBLIN Gedacht, Associate Professor of History, delivered the Japan Week lecture on *It's Raining Pikachu: Pokémon as a Window to Nostalgia, Consumerism, and Globalization* on April 3, 2025 at Chancellor's Suite in the University Center. When Pokémon came to America in 1996, hundreds of stuffed Pikachu fell to earth in Topeka, Kansas (renamed To Pikachu for the day). Her lecture explored the humble beginnings of a game that merged a popular pastime (bug collecting) with traditions from Shinto and Daoist folklore. She looked at how the Pokémon Corporation then went globally, forging an empire of product lines, movies, tv shows, books, manga, and even themed cafés. Finally, Prof. Gedacht clearly explained how Pokémon encapsulated not just "pocket monsters" in their "Poké Balls," but also captured and commercialized childhood nostalgia. The chancellor's suite was full of audiences.



Prof. Hiroko Ishikawa Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

by Shigeru Osuka

Professor Hiroko Ishikawa enrolled in the MA program in Asian studies in the spring semester of 2001 at Seton Hall University. She served as a teaching assistant (TA) for Japanese language and culture and took a Japanese teaching methodology course. She wrote her MA thesis, *Evolution of Labor in Japan: A Comparative Study of Labor Exportation to the Dominican Republic in the 1950s and Remigration of Nikkeijin from Latin America in the 1990s*. This thesis was well written and accessed more than 130 times by the public. (<https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/1215/>). Professor Ishikawa had study abroad experience in the Dominican Republic, and she has proficiency in Spanish and pursued research about a relationship between Japan and the Dominican Republic.

After obtaining her MA degree from Seton Hall University, Professor Ishikawa continued teaching Japanese at Seton Hall University as an adjunct professor until 2006, when she married and gave birth. Professor Ishikawa also attended a graduate program in Japanese Pedagogy at Columbia University and obtained her second MA degree in 2010. Then, Professor Ishikawa returned to teaching Japanese at Seton Hall University as an adjunct professor in 2013 and continues in the position until today.

The following three areas — teaching, activities, and personality — are reasons why Professor Ishikawa was selected to be a recipient of Japan Week 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award. First, Professor Ishikawa has prepared well for her teaching materials and PowerPoint presentation. For her 25 years of Japanese teaching experience, he created her teaching materials based on the required textbook and structured her excellent teaching and classroom management with her full confidence. In this way, she could engage in positive learning experiences with her students, resulting in quality of instruction. Professor Ishikawa's student evaluations rated high points each semester that demonstrated a well-betrothed teacher. Professor Ishikawa exceeded our expectations in all areas of her Japanese teaching.



Second, Professor Ishikawa has a master license in Japanese calligraphy and introduced cultural activities in her classroom as well as in public. She also has superior skills in origami and Japanese foods. During Japan Week activities at Seton Hall University, Professor Ishikawa participated in a calligraphy workshop and an origami workshop and well deserved the performance by the participants. Recently, Professor Ishikawa organized the Japanese Digital Storytelling Showcase at the Annual Peter Shome Academic Exposition. The Japanese Program incorporated digital humanities into the curriculum, and all students made their masterpieces of Japanese essay, music, reading, and image/movie into a digital storytelling. She organized and executed the activities in April 2025. She impressed us very much with her leadership skills by exhibiting responsibility for activities at Seton Hall University.

Third, Professor Ishikawa has a strong sense of responsibility for her students, work, and public. She is also very punctual for her work obligation. She has never missed her classes in the past 12 years. We have no complaints about her teaching, behavior, and personality. Rather, we have so many positive comments about Professor Ishikawa, such as very kind, caring, respectful, open-minded, easily related, and so on. Overall, Professor Ishikawa has emotional and social maturity, strong motivation, easy adaptability, and cooperation with her colleagues. She exemplifies her patience, politeness, open-mindedness, and ability to work well within a group and can easily relate to others. Professor Ishikawa helped her students from the bottom of her heart, and her colleagues respected her very much. Thank you very much for your 25 years dedication to Seton Hall University and congratulations on the award and commemorative gift of the Black Raku Tea Bowl.





Japanese-style Curry: Strengthening Nutrition, Military, and Identity of Japan

by Brennan Ozkan



On April 3, 2025, the second event of the day was held, a presentation describing the history and cultural impact of Japanese curry. Presented by Dr. Shigeru Osuka, the event detailed the origins of Japanese curry in the late nineteenth century by British sailors, and how the dish has adapted over time to become so substantially different from the various other ways in which curry is prepared internationally. Common preparation and cultural norms were also described to attendees. Following the presentation, attendees were invited to three tables in which they could opt to try either a sweet curry, a semi-spicy curry, or a spicy curry. The event was an absolute success, seeing dozens of students and staff being given the opportunity to experience a substantial culinary element of Japanese culture. Students and faculty alike were able to experience Japan and enjoy each other's company over a bowl of hot curry. I was incredibly grateful to be given the opportunity to both attend and support this event and assist in providing this humble yet important experience to the Seton Hall community.

Japan Week 2025 Luncheon Held at South Orange Restaurant

Japan Week 2025 luncheon was held at BayLeaf Redefined Indian Cuisine in South Orange, NJ on Friday, April 4, 2025. There were 30 people who joined this year's luncheon including guests: Dr. Jonathan V Farina (Dean of College of Arts and Sciences), Dr. Mary Kate Naatus (Dean of Continuing Education & Professional Studies and Assistant Provost), Dr. Diana Álvarez Amell (LLC Department Chair), Dr. Mary Balkun (Director of Faculty Development/English), Anne Giblin Gedacht (History), Dr. Xue-Ming Bao (Electronic Resources Librarian), Prof. Kate Sierra (TLTC), Prof. Johanna Pan-Carr (Director of International Student Services, OIP), Prof. Claire Diab (Asian Studies), and Prof. Robert Diab (Law School). All students introduced

themselves and spoke about the most memorable moment at Seton Hall campus life. Many students expressed their study abroad as a valuable experience and faculty and staff support. All participants enjoyed delicious foods and chatted with each other and appreciated this year's cherry blossom season and a moment of sharing same foods.



Mana Yamamoto, Exchange Student (2024-2025) from Sophia University Receives Community Service Award

Mana Yamamoto, Exchange Student (2024-2025) from Sophia University, Tokyo, received a Japan Week 2025 community service award at the Japan Week Luncheon on April 4, 2025. Mana was a very positive student who was willing to take on any challenges and issues. She had lived in Germany as a child and was well adapted to living in New Jersey. At SHU, Mana served Japanese tutor, and even on weekends she carefully taught students how to write essays, practiced conversation, and explained grammar. She also worked as an assistant at the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), sorting test questions and making signs at the venue. The Japan Week Committee presented her with the Community Service Award, hoping that her memories at Seton Hall University were good learning experiences. We hope that Mana stays healthy and enjoys her studies and life after returning to Japan. Congratulations on the Community Service Award!



Chinese Language at the Petersheim Exposition

By David A Gomez



The Petersheim Exposition at Seton Hall is a celebration of accomplishments across all of the school's undergraduate, graduate, and faculty disciplines. For 29 years it has been a platform for classes of all varieties to share the great materials they engage with. One such class that was presented on Thursday, April 24th was the Introduction to Mandarin Course taught by Professor Dongdong Chen. Six students, Jadira Cardona, Elizabeth Denton, David Gomez, Liam Knotek, Eri Nathalia Reaux, and Micayla Tarby, worked jointly on a presentation meant to demonstrate their growing comprehension of Mandarin. A slideshow, where each student created a podcast in the Fall of 2024, telling who they were, and some fun facts about them. Liam Knotek used the opportunity to talk about his eldest brother, while Micayla Tarby spoke about the friends she made on Seton Hall campus, both spoke entirely in Mandarin. Following that recording, each student would discuss what their experience learning Mandarin had been like for them. Expanding on the ups & downs, the long nights studying, and the general camaraderie of the class.

When asked why they had chosen to present in a mixed English & Mandarin dialogue, students said it was meant to improve and test their ability to comprehend and create interesting, and complex sentences using Mandarin. The presentation also utilized portions of an exam that the students had completed prior in the year. Demonstrating a practical application for their newly developed language skills. Elizabeth Denton represented the student's eagerness to learn more, saying in her presentation, "I hope to be able to make this project again..." The process of learning a new language can open students up to unexplored areas of personal and professional growth. The Seton Hall Community can only hope that in the coming years more language classes will participate with the Petersheim Exposition. Letting students pave the way to better understanding in education both at home and abroad one class at a time.

Reflecting on a Year of Conference Presentations and Invited Talks

Dr. Dongdong Chen, Professor of Chinese and Asian Studies, gave several presentations this year.

Over the past year, I had the privilege of sharing my research at regional, national, and international conferences, serving in different roles. Highlights included a plenary talk at the *International Chinese Language Education from the Perspective of Digital Humanities* conference, organizing and chairing a project-based language learning panel at the CLTA conference with colleagues from Yale and MIT, and contributing to the annual ACTFL meeting.

One memorable presentation was at the 3rd *International Conference on the History of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language* in Geneva, where I explored the legacy of the "three Johns" at Seton Hall University. Starting in the 1950s, John C. H. Wu, a jurist and diplomat, helped create the Institute of Far Eastern Studies while teaching as the founding professor of law. John B. Tsu later joined the Institute and founded the Department of Asian Studies. He then invited John C. H. Wu to teach Chinese philosophy and literature in the new department and recruited John DeFrancis to write Chinese textbooks that transformed Chinese language teaching. Together, these three Johns shaped the growth of Chinese language education in the United States. In addition to conference presentations, I gave invited talks on my recent book, online and offline, engaging with educators in both Chinese and English language fields. These experiences reinforced my belief in collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches to advancing language education, and I look forward to continuing this work in the coming year.





17th Annual Chinese Cultural Contest Successfully Completes on April 26, 2025

by Dongdong Chen

The Asian Studies Program, in conjunction with New Jersey Chinese Cultural Studies Foundation, recently held the 17th Annual Chinese Cultural Project Contest Presentation Finals in Bethany Hall. The theme was “The Impact of Chinese and American Idols on Their Respective Cultures.” Students compared idols from China and the U.S. in fields such as



sports, entertainment, medicine, and science, showcasing their influence. Five high schools made it to the finals, and students presented their work through dialogues between historical and modern figures, costume performances, and other creative methods, leaving a strong impression.

Dr. Diana Alvarez-Amell, Chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Seton Hall University, welcomed participants, and encouraged students in her speech to carefully study cultural differences and work toward integration. Professor Dongdong Chen expressed delight at seeing many new participants each year and welcomed students to apply to Seton Hall to further their study.

The contest is team-based and research-oriented. Participants submit a research project in a format of their own choice, followed by a final round consisting of live presentations and a Q&A session. Five experts in the field of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language served as judges. The judging criteria included five categories worth 10 points each—flow, structure, content, analysis, and creativity—and four categories worth 5 points each: grammar, readability, relevance of visuals, and use of references.

The first prize winner is the team from Columbia High School. They presented entirely in Chinese. Their four-part skit included dialogues between Edison and Mark Zuckerberg, an Oprah Winfrey interview with Bruce Lee, Nobel Prize winner Tu Youyou in a lab setting, and a fan meeting with Zhou Shen to introduce idols from both cultures. The Bridgewater-Raritan High School team won second place. The two students opened their presentation with a self-made cartoon introduction and wore formal costumes to portray idols such as Taylor Swift, Morgan Wallen, Jackie Chan, and Zhou Shen. They discussed the idols’ achievements, charitable work, and scandals, and explored the potential future impact of virtual idols.

Languages for Healthcare Professionals: Discussions, Presentations, and New Course Offerings

Dr. Esther Williamson, PT, DPT

On April 29, 2025, Mr. Nan Hong, a Seton Hall alumnus of the College of Nursing (class of 2014) and the School of Health and Medical Sciences (Master of Health Administration, class of 2018), shared with students and faculty the importance of multilingualism in healthcare. During this presentation and discussion, he shared his own experience as a nurse case manager fluent in English, Mandarin Chinese, and Cantonese working with patients with limited English proficiency and encouraged those in attendance to broaden their perspective by reflecting on the vulnerability of those seeking care across a language barrier. Mr. Hong highlighted the value that speaking a person’s native language brings to the quality of their healthcare experience, especially in clearly explaining medical information, advocating for each person’s individual needs, and making the patient feel heard and understood. This event was part of a series of co-curriculum hosted by the Department of Languages, Literatures & Cultures through the UISFL grant project in developing career-specific language education. The other event in this series was a presentation to Dr. José Prieto’s *Spanish for Healthcare Providers* class on the value of language learning in healthcare given in



March 2025 by Esther Williamson, a Seton Hall Doctor of Physical Therapy student (class of 2025) and College of Arts & Sciences alumna (class of 2023). Through this bilingual presentation in English and Spanish, Williamson shared her personal experiences of studying Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, utilizing language skills in clinical settings, and the importance of cultural competence in providing optimal patient care. The students in the course also participated in active discussion during the presentation through asking questions and sharing their own related experiences. In addition to these events, the Department of Languages, Literatures & Cultures has also put forth some exciting course offerings for the upcoming Fall 2025 semester, including *Spanish for Healthcare Providers* and a new course titled *Introductory Chinese for Healthcare Providers I*, which give students with an interest in healthcare professions the opportunity to learn relevant language skills no matter their prior experience.

Chinese Language Student Shines in 2025 'Chinese Bridge' Competition Eastern U.S. Finals

by Eva Cheng Lee



Liam Knotek, a student in the Chinese Program, competed in the final round of the 2025 annual "Chinese Bridge" Competition for elementary, secondary, and college students in the Eastern U.S. region. The event was held at the China Institute in Manhattan, on May 17, 2025. Liam was one of 31 finalists in this year's competition. Representing the College Group, he delivered a three-minute speech on a self-selected topic related to the theme *"One World, One Family."* He also answered questions from a panel of three judges and performed Tai Chi, a traditional Chinese martial art.

This year's competition attracted over 80 students from across the region. After intense competition, Liam won third place in the College Group. Other finalists in this group included students from Columbia University, Montclair University, and Alfred University. Liam has studied Chinese for only nine months. Despite being a beginner, he gave a well-structured speech and responded to the judges' questions with confidence and clarity.

This past spring semester, Liam interned in Washington, D.C. Although he was away from campus, he continued studying Chinese online with his professors and also attended a weekend class at a local Chinese school in D.C. His strong performance in the competition is a remarkable achievement and a testament to his dedication to learning the language. This is not the first time that students from Seton Hall University have excelled in the "Chinese Bridge" competition. Previous winners from Seton Hall have received scholarships and had the opportunity to study in China.

The Chinese Program in the [Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures](#) offers four levels of Chinese language courses, including Introductory, Intermediate, and Advanced Chinese, as well as fourth-year Modern Chinese Readings. In the upcoming fall semester, a new course—*Introductory Chinese for Healthcare Providers I*—will be offered for students interested in careers in healthcare.

Chinese is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, serving as a working language for many international organizations, including the United Nations. It is also one of the oldest and richest languages in the world, embodying the profound Chinese civilization and wisdom. Learning Chinese language and culture not only helps American youth broaden their international perspectives and enhance cross-cultural understanding but also builds a bridge of mutual understanding between China and the U.S., laying the foundation for a better future.





Students to Participate in the 2025-2026 Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program

Angel Leonor

It is my pleasure to announce that I have been accepted as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) for the JET Program! I will be working in Takasaki City in Gunma Prefecture from August 2025. I believe that



the hard work of both Osuka-sensei and Ishikawa-sensei have prepared me to take this challenge head on! To anyone who is just getting into studying Japanese, STICK WITH IT!

You never know what direction life will take you in, I certainly didn't think I would be where I am now when started studying

Japanese. I find my placement in Takasaki fitting, as it is the birthplace of the Daruma doll. It is designed to right itself when knocked over and is a symbol of perseverance. It is often associated with the saying 七転び八起き ("fall down seven times, get up eight"). I intend on bringing this motto with me throughout my travels, and I hope you approach not just your studies, but your life as a whole with this mindset.



Zenén Rivera

I am happy to share that I have been accepted into the JET Program as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) for this upcoming year 2025. I am fortunate and thankful to have the opportunity to live, work, and study in Japan. I will be teaching in Ichinomiya-machi, Chiba-ken, a small beach town around two hours away from Tokyo by train. I am profoundly grateful to my many instructors, mentors, and peers at Seton Hall University for providing me with the resources and skills to pursue the JET program. Osuka-sensei and Ishikawa-sensei were extremely kind, patient, and encouraging instructors. I would also be remiss not to mention the positive influence Dr. Gedacht had on me throughout my undergraduate degree. She pushed me and many other English students to pursue Asian Studies with a burning passion and an open mind. And to the English professors who've guided me throughout the years – too many to name here – thank you for believing in me, pushing me, and supporting me as I worked to combine my love for Japan and Asian Studies with the English curriculum (even when it didn't always work out). To anyone interested in the Asian Studies program, learning Japanese, or living and working in Japan, my advice would be to be flexible, engaged, and eager to learn. Take advantage of the resources Seton Hall has to offer, from study abroad opportunities, to on and off-campus activities, and the wealth of knowledge from your professors. And when things inevitably go awry, give yourself permission to fail and to fail *forward*. Never let hiccups slow you down for long. Things always have a funny way of working out!



Advanced Japanese Learners Accepted into Law Schools

When a child tells their parents that they want to study Asian Studies at college, the parents always ask the child what kind of career they can get by studying Asian Studies. Students who studied Asian Studies at Seton Hall University often go on to graduate school, professional school, corporates, and study abroad. In professional schools, they enter programs such as MBA, DJ, and Health Care programs. In 2024-2025, 10 students took advanced Japanese, JAPN 3215-3216 Japanese for Diplomacy and International Relations I-II. Two of them were recommended by Dr. Shigeru Osuka and were accepted into the Law Schools and will be entering the JD programs in the fall semester of 2025. Kaylee Hoo is a double major in English and Asian Studies and plans to attend the William S. Boyd School of Law at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas and specialize in Immigration Law. Robert Villarini is majoring in Diplomacy and International Relations and Asian Studies and plans to specialize in Sport Law at the University of Buffalo Law School. Kaylee and Bob, Congratulations on your achievement and looking forward to your successful career!

