

Seton Hall's Asian Voices ∞ SPRING 2026

Dr. Peter Shoemaker ∞ *Chair, Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures*

Dr. Dongdong Chen ∞ *Director, Chinese Program*

Dr. Shigeru Osuka ∞ *Director, Asian Studies Program & Director, Japanese Program*

Jessica Wilson ∞ *Director, Global Learning Center*



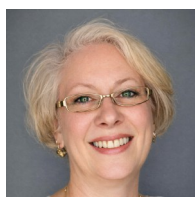
Message from New Department Chair, Dr. Peter Shoemaker

It is an honor and pleasure to address the Asian Studies community—faculty, students, alumni, and friends. Asian Studies has a distinguished history at Seton Hall, and I thank Drs. Shigeru Osuka and Dongdong Chen for continuing this remarkable legacy. Through their visionary leadership as scholars, teachers, and mentors, they have set a high bar for the entire Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, and indeed the entire university. I was fortunate enough to attend a number of events sponsored by the program this year, including Japan Week and the Chinese New Year, and I was impressed by the community that Drs. Osuka and Chen have built at Seton Hall, with the help of their colleague Dr. Anne Giblin Gedacht in the History Department and their dynamic team of part-time and affiliated faculty: Matthew Barros, Claire Diab, Cynthia Fellows, Michiko Masubuchi, Peter Savastano, and Chad Thralls. It is no surprise that the program has been recognized within New Jersey and beyond for its leadership in the field. I heartily congratulate them for another successful year and look forward to what comes next!

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



Welcome to the 2025–2026 Asian Studies Program Newsletter. It has been a productive and successful academic year, and I am pleased to share some of our recent accomplishments and future plans. First, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new LLC Department Chair, Dr. Peter Shoemaker. Dr. Shoemaker has been highly supportive of the Asian Studies Program, and we greatly appreciate his leadership, encouragement, and commitment to our students and faculty. This year, the Asian Studies Program successfully completed the Middle States accreditation program review as well as our program assessment process. These important achievements reflect our dedication to academic excellence, continuous improvement, and student success. Looking ahead, we are excited about the future of the program. In response to the growing importance of understanding the experiences of people living in the United States who are descendants of Asian heritage, we are planning to restructure the program over the next few years. The current Asian Studies Program will expand into the Asian Studies and Asian American Studies Program, creating new opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and research. We also welcome additional faculty members who are interested in contributing to our growing program. Together, we look forward to building an even stronger academic community and continuing to promote cross-cultural understanding in the years ahead. Finally, my tenure as Director of the Asian Studies Program will conclude in Spring 2026. It has been an honor and privilege to serve in this role and work alongside our dedicated faculty, staff, students, and community partners. I am pleased to announce that Dr. Dongdong Chen will assume the position of Director. I am confident that under her leadership, the program will continue to grow, expand its academic offerings, and strengthen its connections with local and global communities. Thank you for your continued support of the Asian Studies Program.



Message from Global Learning Center Director, Jessica Wilson

It is always a delight to work closely with the Asian Studies program and watch students receive some of the highest quality teaching one could ever encounter. The wonderful events the program holds are inspiring enough; the loyalty students show as they help their professors put these events together is heartwarming. From cultural celebrations and lectures to Japan Week to classes on monsters and calligraphy and more, the Asian Studies program reaches wide and pulls people in to enjoy and learn an engaging variety of valuable, focused topics. I am pleased to be able to participate in many of the events as well as the ceremonies celebrating our students' accomplishments. The Asian Studies students who have earned awards throughout the year should be very proud of themselves for what they have achieved. I am confident they will continue to harness the skills and knowledge they have gained from the programs for years to come. To all who graduated, the very best in whatever the future brings. I hope all who are interested in what Asian Studies offers will come and see for themselves what a wonderful program we have! To those who are continuing with us for a little longer, I look forward to seeing you all in the hallways and classrooms. It brightens my heart to get to know your faces and see how much you enjoy the courses and activities of this wonderful program within the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures. You embody the idea of global education and are ambassadors for cultural awareness and the celebration of languages, peoples, customs, art, and so much more.



Established Osuka Study Abroad Endowed Fund Supports Students Studying in Japan

Seton Hall University is pleased to announce the establishment of the Osuka Study Abroad Endowed Fund, a generous gift created by Dr. Maria Sicat-Fagel and Dr. Pantaleon Fagel to support undergraduate students participating in Seton Hall's Study Abroad Programs in Japan. Inspired by the legacy of Dr. Shigeru Osuka and a shared commitment to global education, the endowed fund is designed to expand access to transformative international learning experiences. By helping students overcome financial barriers, the fund encourages participants to immerse themselves in Japanese language, culture, and society while gaining valuable academic and intercultural perspectives beyond the traditional classroom. To be eligible, applicants must be full-time undergraduate students in good academic standing who have been accepted into a Seton Hall Study Abroad Program in Japan. Award amounts will vary based on available funding and student need. As part of the application process, students will be asked to

describe their academic, personal, and professional goals for studying abroad, as well as any plans to participate in community engagement or service projects during their time in Japan. The Osuka Study Abroad Endowed Fund reflects Seton Hall's ongoing commitment to preparing globally engaged leaders and providing students with meaningful opportunities to learn across cultures. For details, please see shu.academicworks.com/opportunities/6266.

Speech at Oh the Places You'll Go! Languages for Career and Personal Enrichment

By Tara Brannigan, Asian Studies '27

Hello, I am Tara Brannigan. I'm a sophomore majoring in Asian Studies. I became interested in Asian culture in middle school when I started to listen to K-pop music. I then began to teach myself Korean so that I could understand what the lyrics were about. When I entered high school, my high school offered Chinese as a language, so I decided to take it. My parents were worried, they thought it might be too hard for me. But I loved it! I thought Chinese characters were beautiful, I felt like I was writing art. I also thought that Chinese grammar was much easier than English grammar. I was also learning about the culture of China. Specifically, I learned about the food, Chinese holidays, and their education system. We took class trips to Chinatown in New York City so that we could converse in Mandarin with the locals and eat Chinese food. My interest in Chinese culture and language was growing every day so much so that I started to independently study a high level of the Mandarin language at home. I ended up skipping a level of Chinese at my high school and started honors Chinese III my sophomore year. During my last two years of high school, I traveled with my school to Japan at the end of my junior year and then traveled with the Chinese language program to Taiwan at the end of my senior year. On these trips, I got the opportunity to experience Asian culture and the language firsthand. I participated in cultural activities such as visiting shrines and trying the food. We visited a Chinese school for the day and learned about their school system and attended a class. During my senior year of high school, I earned the seal of biliteracy in Mandarin. Many people assume Chinese is a difficult language to learn but as long you put the effort into learning the language, not only will you pass the class, but you will find a real joy of learning a new culture and language. For me, English is my least favorite subject, but Chinese is my favorite subject. Right now, I am taking Chinese Modern Reading 1 Class at Seton Hall where we read stories about Chinese culture, in addition to learning the Chinese language at the same time. It is my favorite class! I find Asian culture and Chinese language to be fascinating and that is the reason why I decided to major in Asian Studies at Seton Hall. I aspire to maybe one day teach Mandarin or work for a company where I can use the Mandarin language. Thank you!



Welcome Luncheon Celebrates New Members of the Japanese Studies Community



On September 18, 2025, the Japanese Program hosted a Welcome Luncheon at Harusame Japanese Restaurant in South Orange to celebrate the arrival of two new members of our academic community. Faculty, staff, and students gathered for an enjoyable afternoon of conversation, networking, and warm hospitality. We were delighted to welcome Dr. David Calianese, Assistant Professor, and the Elizabeth A. Mount Endowed Professor in Molecular Biology. Before joining our university, Dr. Calianese spent two and a half years as a Specially Appointed Researcher (Postdoctoral Fellow) at the Immunology Frontier Research Center (IFReC) at Osaka University in Japan, where he conducted advanced research in immunology and cancer biology. His experience in Japan, combined with his distinguished research background, brings valuable international perspectives to our campus. We also welcomed Toko Kobayashi, a senior journalism major and undergraduate exchange student from Rikkyo (St. Paul's) University in Tokyo. Toko's participation further strengthens the long-standing academic and cultural relationship between our institutions and enriches the global learning environment for all students. The luncheon provided an excellent opportunity to introduce our new colleagues, strengthen friendships, and celebrate the diversity of

our academic community. We are delighted to have Dr. Calianese and Toko Kobayashi join our university and look forward to their many contributions to both the university and the Asian Studies Program.

Reflections on a Year of Introductory Chinese

By Leo Chu, '26. (Valedictorian at the 2026 Commencement ceremony)

Growing up a second-generation Chinese American in the San Francisco Bay Area, I had been immersed in a rich Asian/Chinese culture throughout my youth. Yet, despite several attempts to learn the Chinese language, Mandarin had always escaped me. With 2 class openings in my tight academic schedule, I gave Mandarin another chance in my last year of college with Introductory Chinese I & II (CHIN 1102/1103). Between studying for rigorous courses in the biological and social sciences, spending a little time every day to practice new vocabulary and Chinese writing became a welcome break in an otherwise busy schedule. The structured format in which we were taught new material was very conducive to learning and retaining productive beginner Chinese vocabulary and facilitated a broader understanding of the language. Beyond the material, the learning environment and support from the Chinese language faculty were beyond helpful. Chen Laoshi and Lee Laoshi were both endlessly supportive when it came to learning a new language. Between open office and tutoring hours and creative learning assignments, tackling a foreign language felt fun and exciting. A productive year came to a fruitful end. Thanks to the ceaseless mentorship of Chen Laoshi and Lee Laoshi, and a healthy handful of my own hard work, I was able to enjoy a family trip to China this June. What in previous visits had been to my eyes a jumble of foreign symbols during this trip revealed a deeper meaning to my heritage. Having now graduated from Seton Hall, I look forward to continuing my journey toward learning Mandarin Chinese. I am excited to continue expanding my vocabulary with the Chinese elders at the community clinic in San Francisco's Chinatown. I recently purchased a set of books for learning medical Chinese based on Chen Laoshi's recommendation, and I look forward to using them in my studies at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) School of Medicine when I return to California. Looking forward to what's to come!





Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) Held at Seton Hall University



On Sunday, December 7, 2025, Seton Hall University proudly served as one of 19 official test centers in the United States for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), welcoming approximately 500 examinees from across the region. Administered annually, the JLPT is one of the world's most widely recognized and reliable assessments of Japanese language proficiency. In the United States, the examination is sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ), with more than 7,000 candidates taking the test nationwide this year. The successful administration of the examination at Seton Hall University was made possible through the dedication of nearly 40 faculty members, high school teachers, and students proctors who worked throughout the day to ensure a smooth, secure, and welcoming testing environment. Their efforts helped provide examinees with a positive experience while maintaining the high standards required for this internationally recognized examination. Hosting the JLPT reflects

Seton Hall University's continued commitment to promoting Japanese language education and supporting learners from diverse backgrounds. The event also strengthens the University's role as an important regional center for Japanese studies and language learning, providing valuable opportunities for students and community members to demonstrate their proficiency and pursue academic and professional goals involving the Japanese language.

Celebrating Lunar New Year Through the Art of Chinese Paper Cutting

By Aaralyn C Poligadu

At the Chinese New Year event at Seton Hall University, students came together to celebrate the Lunar New Year through cultural activities, music, food, and traditional crafts. One of the most popular attractions was the paper cutting station, where participants learned about the history and significance of Chinese paper cutting. This traditional art form has been practiced in China for centuries and is often used during the Spring Festival to symbolize good fortune, happiness, and prosperity. Red paper is commonly used because the color represents luck and joy in Chinese culture. But the students were able to use any color paper they liked. I had the opportunity to run the paper cutting section by organizing supplies, teaching different folding and cutting techniques, and offering a variety of traditional designs. Some students created flowers and zodiac animals, while others made the Chinese character “春” (chūn), meaning “spring,” which represents new beginnings and the arrival of the Spring Festival. I also guided students step by step through the activity and explained how symmetry and careful folding are important techniques in paper cutting. The station encouraged creativity, cultural learning, and hands-on participation, allowing everyone to feel connected to the celebration and gain a deeper appreciation for Chinese traditions.



Interwoven Ties: Japan–U.S. Relations



Japan Week welcomed Makiko Ai, Deputy Consul General of Japan in New York and Director of the Japan Information Center (JIC), for a special presentation titled *Interwoven Ties: Japan–U.S. Relations* on Tuesday, March 24, from 2:00 to 3:15 p.m. in Fahy Hall 203. As the head of the Japan Information Center, the Consulate General of Japan's public relations and cultural division, Ms. Ai oversees cultural outreach, educational initiatives, and information services throughout the New York consular district. Drawing on her distinguished diplomatic career, she provided attendees with valuable insights into the responsibilities of a Japanese diplomat and the important role of public

diplomacy in strengthening international understanding. During her presentation, Ms. Ai explored the current state of Japan–U.S. relations, highlighting the longstanding partnership between the two nations in areas such as diplomacy, security, trade, education, and cultural exchange. She emphasized the importance of people-to-people connections, academic collaboration, and mutual respect in maintaining this enduring alliance. Students, faculty, and community members gained a deeper appreciation for the dynamic relationship between Japan and the United States while learning how diplomacy fosters cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world. The engaging lecture and discussion offered participants a unique opportunity to hear directly from a senior Japanese diplomat and to better understand the significance of international partnerships in today's global society.



Celebrating Culture and Legacy at Seton Hall's Lunar New Year Event

By Nadia Aboukaram

Seton Hall University welcomed the Year of the Horse with a vibrant Lunar New Year Celebration on February 13, 2026, in Bethany Hall. Organized by Professor Dongdong Chen in collaboration with the New Jersey Chinese Language Teachers Association, the event brought together approximately 300 students and educators from across New Jersey for a morning of cultural exchange, performance, and community building. The celebration featured more than 200 student performers representing ten schools, including River Dell High School, Newark School of Global Studies, Columbia High School, Bard High School Early College, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, Paramus High School, Union County TEAMS Charter School, Rutgers Preparatory School, and International High School, alongside Seton Hall students. Each participating school contributed approximately 25 students, showcasing traditional dances, music, and interactive cultural activities that highlighted the richness of Chinese heritage.

For Professor Chen, the event represented more than a celebration—it reflected Seton Hall's longstanding leadership in Chinese language education in the United States. The University's Chinese Program, now marking 75 years of impact, traces its roots to the founding of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies in 1951. Established during the Korean War, the institute played a vital role in promoting understanding of Asian cultures through courses in language, history, politics, and religion, and became one of the nation's earliest and most influential centers for Chinese Studies. Seton Hall's contributions to Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) have been transformative. Under the leadership of Dr. John B. Tsu, founding chair of the Department of Asian Studies in 1961, the University became a national leader in training Chinese language teachers. Through initiatives such as the National Defense Education Act Summer Chinese Language Institutes in the 1960s, Seton Hall helped prepare generations of educators, with nearly 95 percent of U.S. high school Chinese language teachers by 1970 graduating from programs at Seton Hall or San Francisco State University.

Beyond teacher preparation, Seton Hall faculty played a pioneering role in developing instructional materials and shaping the professional field. Influential textbooks by scholar John DeFrancis and bilingual dictionaries by Professor Fred Fang-yu Wang became widely used resources, while Seton Hall faculty helped establish the Chinese Language Teachers Association and its scholarly journal. These efforts helped elevate Chinese from a less commonly taught language to a mainstream academic discipline in the United States.

The Lunar New Year Celebration embodied this legacy by bringing together students and teachers from diverse backgrounds to experience Chinese culture firsthand. Through performances, interactive demonstrations, and shared traditions, the event fostered cultural understanding and inspired the next generation of language learners and educators. By hosting this statewide celebration, Seton Hall University reaffirmed its commitment to cultural exchange, global education, and community engagement. As the Chinese Program continues its decades-long tradition of excellence, events like this Lunar New Year celebration highlight the University's enduring role as a leader in language education and intercultural dialogue.





Chopstick Contest Celebrates Skill, Precision and Fun



As part of Japan Week 2026, the Japanese Program hosted its annual Chopstick Contest on Wednesday, March 25, from 2:00–3:00 p.m. in the University Center. The lively event invited students, faculty, and staff to test their chopstick skills while learning about an important aspect of Japanese dining culture. More than simple eating utensils, chopsticks represent centuries of tradition, precision, and etiquette. Participants competed in a series of fun challenges, including transferring beans using only chopsticks, demonstrating speed, accuracy, and fine motor control. For many Americans, mastering chopsticks is both a practical skill and an enjoyable cultural experience that reflects patience, coordination, and dexterity. The contest welcomed everyone, from first-time users to experienced chopstick experts, creating a friendly atmosphere filled with laughter, encouragement, and healthy competition. The event highlighted that learning about another culture can be both educational and entertaining. To recognize outstanding performances, the top ten contestants each received Starbucks gift cards as prizes. Congratulations to all of our winners and participants for making this year's Chopstick Contest a tremendous success. The event once again demonstrated how cultural activities can bring the campus

community together while celebrating Japanese traditions in a fun, interactive, and memorable way.

Personal Experience Learning Chinese

By Joseph A Ramos

This academic school year, I had the honor of taking Introduction to Chinese I and II courses which were rigorous in coursework, but it helped us familiarize ourselves with the Chinese language. Whether it was sitting down for tutoring with Professor Lee or actively communicating with Professor Chen, we all received help because learning a new language is never easy. The experience of learning a new language such as Mandarin is extremely rewarding because we are so accustomed to speaking only one language, so to be able to inherit a new language is a skill itself. I really appreciated the lengths that our professor went to enhance our understanding of the Chinese language, which showed just how magnificent and beautiful the Mandarin language is. One of my favorite experiences has been attending mini classes such as Chinese Calligraphy which really highlighted just how sophisticated the Mandarin language can be with the certain strokes that must be made to reproduce each character. Another one of my favorite experiences from learning Chinese were the oral works and the final project which allowed us to venture out of the class textbook and really learn unfamiliar words that may not have been covered. For me, I was able to learn a lot more about my majors, physics and civil engineering and really apply Mandarin when discussing those topics. I can now communicate with others in Mandarin without that doubt that I had at the start. I think that learning Chinese can be influential and beneficial to anyone thinking of learning a new language or even those who are venturing out into other places around the world such as engineers working overseas.



A Reflection on One Year of Elementary Chinese Learning

By Liam Kaplan



I am currently an undergraduate student majoring in Criminal Justice, planning on attending law school, and have completed one year of elementary Chinese studies. In my short year of studying Chinese at Seton Hall, I have begun to learn an incredible language far different from my mother tongue, as well as the small things that make formal Chinese different from the colloquial. I have even become proficient enough in the language to pass the HSK (Chinese Proficiency Exam) Mock Exam Level 1 with a perfect score in the listening section, and very high score in the reading section. I have truly begun to appreciate the Chinese language on a much deeper level and have come to a more complete understanding of just how useful it can be in life. Not only would it be useful if I were to ever travel to a predominately Chinese speaking nation, but also if I were ever to encounter a future client whose mother tongue was Chinese I would be able to communicate with them on a far deeper level. I greatly encourage anyone who is considering taking Chinese and may be hesitant to take the leap. Though it was no small challenge, with the teaching and

additional assistance from the Chinese professors and tutors it was not only possible but deeply enriching. With enough effort and perseverance, achieving great success is possible. The benefits that come from challenging oneself to learn such a complex language are immeasurable. My only regret is that I did not undertake this challenge sooner. Had I done so, I believe I most certainly would have been able to reach great levels of proficiency through the Chinese language program.

Study Abroad and Beyond

By Tyler Hummel

On Tuesday, March 24, 2026, three presenters—Matt Barros, Toko Kobayashi, and Angel Leonor—shared insights on studying abroad in Japan and participating in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. Each speaker offered a unique perspective, giving students a well-rounded understanding of opportunities to live and work in Japan. Matt Barros spoke about his experience teaching English in Japan and outlined several pathways for those interested in similar work. He explained the structure and benefits of the JET Program, as well as alternative options such as private dispatch companies and employment at Eikaiwa (English conversation) schools. His talk provided practical guidance for students considering teaching careers abroad. Next, Toko Kobayashi offered a personal perspective on studying in Japan. She introduced her home institution, Rikkyo (St. Paul's) University, and described what international students can expect from the academic and social environment. She also highlighted student life, explaining the differences between “circles,” which are more casual interest-based groups, and “Bukatsu,” which are formal, competitive clubs that require a higher level of commitment. Joining remotely from Japan via Zoom, finally, Angel Leonor shared his current experiences as a JET Program participant. He discussed daily life in Japanese schools, classroom responsibilities, and the rewards and challenges of teaching abroad, providing valuable real-time insight. The audience was highly engaged throughout the event, contributing to a lively and informative atmosphere. For students interested in studying or working in Japan, the presentation offered both practical advice and an inspiring glimpse into life abroad.





The Kendama Contest

by Matthew Basualdo, '27



On March 23, 2026, a Kendama Contest was held in the University Center to kick off Japan Week 2026. Students who participated had the opportunity to win a Starbucks gift card by successfully landing the ball on the spike at the top of the toy, and all participants received Pocky as a prize. Kendama is a traditional Japanese toy consisting of a handle (ken) with a spike, a crosspiece (sarado) with two cups, and a ball (tama) with a hole, all connected by a string. While simple in design, Kendama offers a wide range of challenges and is enjoyed by people of all ages. It promotes hand-eye coordination, concentration, and can even help relieve stress. Players can perform tricks ranging from basic catches to more advanced techniques involving balance, precision, and creativity. In recent years, Kendama has gained global popularity as a fun, screen-free activity that appeals not only to children but also to adults seeking engaging and mindful recreation. The Kendama Contest was a great success, with more than 100 students participating and enjoying this traditional yet timeless game. The event highlighted

how a classic Japanese toy continues to resonate in today's world, bringing people together through play and friendly competition.

The Art of Mizuhiki Knots Workshop

By Jake Redila, '28

On Thursday, March 26, 2026, students had the unique opportunity to participate in a traditional Japanese craft workshop led by Sato Kobayashi and three assistants from New York City. The workshop introduced 35 students to the art of making Mizuhiki, decorative charms crafted from 3-4 colored, hardened, and twisted paper cords known as washi, woven using a technique called the Awaji knot. Mizuhiki are more than decorative items; they are deeply symbolic elements of Japanese culture dating back to the 7th century. The intricate weaving of the washi cords represents respect, gratitude, and prayer, while the act of tying the knots reflects human connection and intention. Each step of the process encourages mindfulness and careful attention, making the creation of a Mizuhiki both a meditative and meaningful experience. Participants embraced the challenge, learning how to shape and twist the cords into intricate knots. Even those with less-than-perfect motor skills found joy in the process, discovering the balance between the craft's simplicity and its intricate design. Many students expressed excitement at creating their own charms for the first time, marking a personal connection to this centuries-old tradition. For enthusiasts of cultural keepsakes, the workshop offered a chance not only to appreciate the beauty of Mizuhiki but also to create a tangible symbol of intention and connection. From start to finish, each knot tied was a reminder of patience, care, and creativity. Students left with their handmade charms, treasures to be cherished for years to come. The workshop highlighted how traditional crafts can bridge cultures, inviting participants to explore history, artistry, and personal expression in one hands-on experience.



What Actually Is Sushi? Exploring Japan's Most Iconic Cuisine

On Thursday, March 26, from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. in Fahy Hall 203, the Japan Week 2026 welcomed students, faculty, and staff to an engaging presentation, "What Actually Is Sushi?", hosted by Matthew K. Barros, Instructor of



Japanese and Asian studies programs. The program challenged one of the most common misconceptions about sushi—that it is simply "raw fish." Instead, participants learned that the defining element of sushi is its seasoned rice, not the seafood itself. The presentation traced sushi's fascinating history from its origins in Japan to its evolution into one of the world's most recognizable and widely enjoyed cuisines. Attendees also explored how sushi transformed from an unfamiliar delicacy into a global favorite, now found everywhere from high-end restaurants to neighborhood supermarkets. Professor Barros introduced participants to the many regional styles of sushi and explained the traditional etiquette for enjoying this iconic Japanese cuisine. The event concluded with a tasting of authentic sushi rice prepared using Akazu (red vinegar), a traditional ingredient prized for its rich aroma and depth of flavor. By incorporating this historic seasoning into a contemporary

preparation, Professor Barros demonstrated how traditional techniques continue to enhance modern sushi. Participants appreciated the opportunity to experience the distinctive taste of authentic sushi rice while gaining a deeper understanding of Japanese culinary culture.

Japan Week Hosts Annual "One Table, Endless Connections" Luncheon

By Vyan Patel, '28

On March 27, 2026, Japan Week hosted its annual luncheon, *One Table. Endless Connections.*, at Ariyoshi Japanese Restaurant in South Orange. The event brought together 20 participants, including both students and faculty, to share experiences and foster meaningful connections across the university community. The luncheon provided a unique opportunity for students and faculty to engage in open conversation about life at Seton Hall, covering topics such as campus activities, study abroad opportunities, and cultural immersion. Many students enthusiastically shared their experiences learning new languages and discussed the possibilities and benefits of studying abroad. Faculty members offered valuable guidance and practical advice to support students as they navigated academic and personal growth during their university journey. Beyond the enriching dialogue, attendees enjoyed a delicious Japanese food, which added a cultural dimension to the gathering. The combination of thoughtful conversation and culinary experience made the luncheon both enjoyable and educational. As a participant, I am truly grateful for the opportunity to attend the Japan 2026 Luncheon at Ariyoshi. The event strengthened my appreciation for Japanese culture and deepened my interest in pursuing future study abroad experiences. It also highlighted the importance of community, mentorship, and the sharing of experiences in shaping a meaningful university experience. Japan Week's annual luncheon continues to serve as a platform for connection, learning, and cultural appreciation, leaving participants inspired and better equipped for the opportunities ahead.





2026 SHU Japanese Language Study Awards

On Wednesday, March 25, 2026, the Japanese Program celebrated student achievement at the annual 2026 SHU Japanese Language Study Awards, held in Global Learning Center at Fahy Hall. The ceremony recognized outstanding students for their dedication to the study of the Japanese language and culture during the 2025–2026 academic year. The event featured award presentations by Dr. Jonathan Farina, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Christopher Kaiser, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Mary Balkun, Department of English and Japan Week Committee; Dr. Peter Shoemaker, Chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; Prof. Jessica Wilson, Director of the Global Learning Center; and Dr. Shigeru Osuka, Director of the Japanese Program. Seton Hall University has offered Japanese language instruction since the 1950s, establishing a distinguished tradition of excellence in Japanese language and cultural education. Today, the Japanese Program continues to provide a rigorous curriculum that develops language proficiency, cultural understanding, and global awareness. During the 2025–2026 academic year, more than 70 students studied Japanese at Seton Hall, demonstrating remarkable commitment, perseverance, and intellectual curiosity. The annual awards ceremony recognizes students whose academic excellence and enthusiasm exemplify the goals of the Japanese Program. Their accomplishments reflect not only their mastery of the language but also their commitment to intercultural understanding and global citizenship. The Japanese Program proudly congratulates the 2026 award recipients and celebrates their outstanding achievements.



First Year Japanese

Shawn Campbell, Junior – *Exercise Science*
Uriel Concepcion, Junior – *Biology*
Jonathan Felix, Sophomore – *Physics*
Kari Kaita, Sophomore – *Biology*
King Kamimura, Sophomore – *Philosophy*
Jahmai Le Blanc, Junior – *Physics*

Teresa Manlangit, Sophomore – *Biology*
Amara McCowan, Sophomore – *Psychology*
William Orr, Sophomore – *English*
JaeMi Son Cutler, Sophomore – *Psychology*
Adam Vigil, Sophomore – *Computer Science*

Second Year Japanese

Ryan Gordon, Freshman – *Political Science*
Jake Redila, Sophomore – *Asian Studies*

Third Year Japanese

Yianni Dedes, Sophomore –
Diplomacy & International Relations
Tyler Hummel, Junior –
Diplomacy & International Relations



2026 SHU Japanese Digital Storytelling Awards

The Japanese Program celebrated the achievements of its students during the 2026 SHU Japanese Digital Storytelling Awards, held on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, in Fahy Hall. The awards ceremony recognized students who demonstrated outstanding creativity, language proficiency, and digital communication skills through their Digital Storytelling projects. Since 2009, the Japanese Program has incorporated Digital Storytelling into its curriculum as an innovative approach to language learning. This project combines Japanese essay writing, visual images, and voice narration to create short multimedia presentations. Through this process, students strengthen their Japanese language proficiency while developing digital literacy, creativity, and intercultural communication skills. Digital Storytelling also encourages students to share personal experiences, cultural insights, and global perspectives in Japanese, fostering meaningful engagement beyond the classroom. The Japanese Program congratulates the recipients of the 2026 Japanese Digital Storytelling Awards and commends all participating students for their creativity, dedication, and commitment to global learning.



First Year Japanese

Santiago Avellaneda, Senior – *Biology*
 Therion (TJ) Epie-Alobwede, Sophomore –
Visual and Sound Media
 Shane Holden, Freshman –
Diplomacy and International Relations

King Kamimura, Sophomore – *Philosophy*
 Damian Ortiz, Sophomore – *Sports Media*
 Catherine Simpson, Sophomore – *English*
 Ashlee Yamzon, Sophomore – *Allied Health*

Second Year Japanese

Ryan Gordon, Freshman – *Political Science*
 Vyan Patel, Sophomore – *Finance*
 Jake Redila, Sophomore – *Asian Studies*

Advanced Japanese

Tyler Hummel, Junior –
Diplomacy & International Relations
 Erick Seibel, Junior – *Asian Studies*





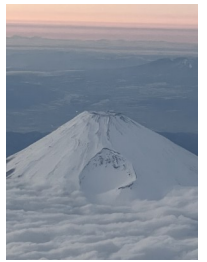
Ping Pong Diplomacy! Emmy Award Winning Director Presents New Documentary

By Richard Dressel

The Department of Languages, Literature and Cultures, on April 22nd, 2026, held a screening of Bill Einreinhofer's new documentary: *Your Serve or Mine*. The screening was attended by a large audience of students and professors. Each attendee was served delicious Chinese food, accompanied by a screening and an open Q&A with three-time Emmy Award winner Bill Einreinhofer. Einreinhofer has spent over 30 years making documentaries about China, and his newest project describes in detail the exciting lives of the athletes involved in "ping pong diplomacy", the moniker for the friendly 70s table tennis matches between China and the United States, which actually resulted in open diplomacy between the two countries for the first time in 20 years. The documentary itself is a fascinating retelling of the first Americans to be allowed into China since 1949, and the diplomatic relations that ensued shortly after. The documentary was, of course, shot and narrated by Einreinhofer himself, who was also kind enough to describe the production process at certain points throughout the screening. The entire evening was a very pleasant time, ending with an open Q&A with the prestigious producer himself. If you would like to learn more about Einreinhofer and his productions, visit: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1803124>.

Japanese Digital Storytelling Showcase Highlights Student Creativity

As part of the 30th Annual Petersheim Academic Exposition, themed "Share, Honor, Unite," the Japanese Program proudly participated in the University's week-long celebration of academic excellence on Tuesday, April 21, 2026. Organized by Shigeru Osuka, the 2026 Japanese Digital Storytelling Showcase was held in the Global Learning Center, Fahy Hall 203C, and featured outstanding student projects that combined language learning with digital media. Since 2009, the Japanese Program has integrated Digital Storytelling into its curriculum, encouraging students to create short films by combining original Japanese essays, visual images, music, and voice narration. This innovative approach enables students to strengthen their Japanese language proficiency while developing valuable digital literacy, communication, and creative skills. The showcase presented a diverse collection of student stories reflecting personal experiences, cross-cultural encounters, travel, family traditions, and global perspectives. Through these multimedia presentations, students demonstrated not only their growing command of the Japanese language but also their ability to communicate meaningful ideas with confidence and creativity. The event highlighted the Japanese Program's commitment to innovative teaching and experiential learning while celebrating students' academic achievements. Faculty, staff, and fellow students gathered to recognize the presenters' hard work and dedication, making the showcase a memorable contribution to this year's Petersheim Academic Exposition and to Seton Hall University's tradition of scholarly excellence.



Sophia University Summer Session 2026

Six Seton Hall University students participated in the Sophia University Summer Session 2026, held from July 1–21, 2026 at Sophia University's Yotsuya Campus in Tokyo, Japan. Recognized as one of the world's premier summer programs in Japanese studies, the three-week program provides students with an immersive academic and cultural experience that deepens their understanding of Japan. Participants enrolled in courses covering a wide range of topics, including Japanese society, history, economics, literature, culture, and language. Through classroom instruction and firsthand experiences, students gained valuable insights into both traditional and contemporary aspects of Japanese life while interacting with classmates from around the world. Beyond the classroom, the program featured numerous cultural activities that brought Japan's rich heritage to life. Students participated in a traditional tea ceremony, visited historic temples and shrines, experienced the powerful rhythms of taiko drumming, and learned the art of sushi making. These hands-on activities complemented their academic studies and created lasting memories of their time in Japan. Seton Hall University has proudly participated in the Sophia University Summer Session since 1984, making it one of the University's longest-standing study abroad partnerships. The program continues to provide students with exceptional opportunities for academic growth, cross-cultural understanding, and global engagement.



University Leadership Strengthens Global Partnerships in Japan



Continuing Seton Hall University's long-standing commitment to global engagement and Catholic education, Monsignor Joseph R. Reilly, S.T.L., president of the University, and Mary Kate Naatus, Ph.D., associate provost for Partnerships and Global Initiatives, led a senior-level international delegation to Japan and South Korea from March 28 through April 6, 2026. The visit reaffirmed the University's dedication to expanding international partnerships, enhancing student mobility, and fostering meaningful academic collaboration across the globe. During their visit to Japan, the delegation met with administrators and faculty at partner institutions, including Rikkyo (St. Paul's) University in

Tokyo, to strengthen existing partnerships and explore new opportunities for academic and cultural exchange. A highlight of the visit was a personal meeting with three Seton Hall students currently studying at Rikkyo University: Wilnica Destine, Nicola Joseph de Flora, and Jazz Renee Slaughter. The students shared their experiences of living and studying in Tokyo, reflecting on the personal growth, intercultural understanding, and academic enrichment they have gained through their semester- and year-long study abroad programs. The visit underscored the importance of international education in preparing students to become compassionate global citizens. By maintaining close relationships with partner universities and supporting students abroad, Seton Hall continues to expand transformative educational opportunities that reflect its Catholic mission and commitment to global learning. For more details, see <https://www.shu.edu/international-programs/news/monsignor-reilly-leads-university-delegation-to-asia.html>.

The Importance of Documentation of History

By Ethan G Tien

Bill Einreinhofer is a documentary director who was recently at an event held by Seton Hall Professor Dongdong Chen in Fahy Hall. At the event, Bill Einreinhofer showed us a little bit of his 2025 documentary *Your Serve or Mine*. The documentary tells the story about the time in 1971 that a US college table tennis team was invited to compete in the 1971 World Table Tennis Championships in Japan tournament. Before the tournament one of the US players mistakenly got onto the Chinese team's bus. On the bus the one US player and the Chinese players got to know each other well enough to consider themselves friends. After that tournament the US players were all invited to China to play a few friendly matches against the Chinese team, which effectively made them the first Americans to have visited Communist China since its establishment as the main government. During the documentary we were able to get a better understanding of what it felt like for the college US table tennis team to be the first people to be in China in a very long time. We also got to learn more about how differently the sport of table tennis, or ping pong as it is more commonly referred to in China, is viewed by the surrounding public in both the US and China. Going more into depth about the documentary, while they were not able to interview the US player that got onto the wrong bus that started the entire discussion of what is known as "Ping Pong Diplomacy", we were able to hear stories of what was told to the other people at the event had seen or heard. After watching the documentary Bill Einreinhofer spoke to us for a while about how difficult it is to find documentation about many things that had to do with Asian countries in the Congress Library. This difficulty is what leads to the lack of documentaries being made in the US about Asian history. To reflect on Bill Einreinhofer's event, I think that documentaries like the one he made are very important. Without them things like "Ping Pong Diplomacy" would be a term that not many people outside of the diplomacy or international relations discipline would know of. The same goes for history involving Asian countries as the media that is kept of it in the Congress Library, if no one makes an effort to record their history then there wouldn't be much known about their important pasts.





18th Annual Chinese Cultural Project Contest Completes on April 18, 2026

By Dongdong Chen



For another year, the Asian Studies Program successfully hosted its annual Chinese Cultural Project Competition in the spring semester. Six finalist teams from different high schools in New Jersey presented their research findings on the question How the Development Paths of Artificial Intelligence in the U.S. and China Will Shape the Future of Youth. The contestants used a variety of creative formats to demonstrate their work, including short skits, news reports, oral presentations, and videos, delivered in either English or in Chinese, or a combination of both. Ultimately, the team from Columbia High School was crowned champion. The competition was co-organized by the Asian Studies Program in conjunction with the New Jersey Chinese Cultural Studies Foundation and the New Jersey Chinese Teachers Association, with Chinese Language Teachers Association of Greater New York serving as a sponsor.

Dr. Peter Shoemaker, Chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, made the opening remarks. He encouraged students to step out of their comfort zones, broaden their research horizons, understand connections between different cultures, and view technological and cultural achievements through a global lens—thereby cultivating the capacity to become “global citizens.” Dr. Pak-Wah Leung, Professor Emeritus of Asian Studies, was also in attendance to offer his support. He noted that the competition aims to promote Chinese culture through educational and cultural activities and to foster East-West cultural exchange and integration. Notably, Mr. Jason Bing, superintendent of the South Orange and Maplewood School District, attended alongside the Columbia High School team and expressed his deep appreciation for the dedication shown by the teachers, students, and parents involved. He highlighted the district's distinctive multicultural character, noting that students embark on a journey of “cultural apprenticeship” from the very moment they enroll, and he extended his gratitude to the various community partners for their role in ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage. The team's faculty advisor, Liping Meng, an Asian Studies alumna, remarked that during the four-month preparation period, the students devoted significant time to research, data collection and analysis, report writing, and presentation practice. She expressed her gratitude to the organizers for providing a platform where students could showcase their achievements and engage in meaningful exchange.

The Pingry School and Jose Marti STEM Academy participated in this contest for the first time. Nevertheless, both schools advanced two teams to the final round. Their perspectives of examining the question were interesting and insightful. For example, one team from Pingry School looked at the impact of artificial intelligence on education, social interaction, and employment, analyzing the differing developmental trajectories of AI in the United States and China and their profound implications for the future of youth. Impressively, this team made their entire presentation in Chinese. The other team from the same School explored potential hidden concerns surrounding AI's impact on adolescent mental health, using case studies to encourage reflection on the ethical dimensions of technology. Addressing differences between China and the United States in their approaches to AI and its impact on youth, one team from Jose Marti STEM Academy observed that in China, the government plays the dominant role in regulating and controlling AI, resulting in reduced privacy and limited freedom. In contrast, in the United States, corporations largely drive AI development. As a result, with their stronger focus on profit, higher levels of user engagement are encouraged, leading to more freedom. The students further pointed out that both China and the U.S. collect vast amounts of data, thereby shaping behavior and influencing individual freedom in different ways. The faculty advisors from the two schools remarked that the project led to significant improvements in the students' Chinese language proficiency as well as their critical thinking skills and presentation skills.

The Asian Studies Program is extremely grateful to everyone whose hard work made this event a success. In particular, we are deeply indebted to Chinese Language Teachers Association of Greater New York for its steadfast financial support of the program over the years, and the panel of judges for their commitment and expertise. We sincerely hope that this highly meaningful event will continue to be held for many years to come.



Taking Chinese Class Blossomed Me about Myself and My Family

By Paul F Mastroserio



The expectation for a language course with a name like Readings in Modern Chinese is often one reminiscent of middle school English. Reading passages generically gathered in a textbook, reading comprehension questions, devoid of any genuine creative expression. If you're lucky, language courses sometimes briefly survey some of the cultural aspects of its origin culture. As a student at Seton Hall, I'm glad to say my education broke the medium. The common core expected of students here places a great deal of emphasis on not just comparative cultural fluency, but cross-cultural communication. I have seen cross-cultural themes in my courses as a diplomacy major, in my religious studies, and even in my economics courses. However, I always expected to focus on learning Chinese and Chinese

culture when in my language courses, where the course rigor is already steep. I was surprised, and later delighted to find that this fall, cross-cultural analysis was cleverly a platform to enhance my grasp of the Chinese language.

Professor Dongdong Chen, my professor in this course, has been at work on this unique pedagogy for quite some time. In the early 2000s, she read *The Chopsticks-Fork Principle*, a memoir by Chinese American Academic Cathy Bao Bean, on her life experiences between Chinese and American culture, and approached her with the idea of adapting it into a textbook to teach language. As we navigated the lived tensions of the Chinese-American experience through the text, we would be translating, practicing the vocabulary written into her account, and the exercises made by my Chen Laoshi. In late October, Cathy Bao Bean visited our class to speak about the book; it was a delight being able to personally ask her questions about her life based on the specific chapters we were studying. Professor Chen was able to help us cross the gap between the classroom and the human reality of migration.

To inhabit the stories of those we grow to care about helps us develop interest in our studies. Not only did we learn the story of Cathy Bao Bean, but as a final presentation, we were asked to recreate the opening of the book, a synopsis of Cathy's life and accomplishments, and deliver them to a person of choice in the form of an oral presentation. This ended up being one of the most fulfilling experiences of my college career. Spiritually tasked with creating an analog of the author's life, I interviewed my great aunt about her journey as a first-generation Italian immigrant during the same period as Cathy. While not Chinese, her story was extremely relevant to the course's theme of immigration, women in the late 20th century, and cross-cultural experience. Most surprisingly though, the experience of interviewing my great aunt and performing a deep dive on her helped me honor her life's work, and deepen my relationship with her, which adhered to filial piety, and the Confucian values we were dissecting in class.

As a college educated white man who isn't the best language learner, I'm not ready to dissect Chinese literature in full novel form like a high schooler would in an AP class, but I'm certainly a lot more aware and intricate in my analysis than a middle schooler who is reading short stories about nothing and is proving they could understand what they read. Professor Chen solves my conundrum, taking an intellectually stimulating topic for adults, and building the materials to teach it to those still learning to read and write. As an undergrad, I was given the chance to immerse myself in the fruits of decades of hard work preparing a curriculum that lived and breathed in front of me. I could not ask for more during my time learning Chinese, and I recommend the combined departments at SHU to continue to dedicate themselves to cultural enrichment across the disciplines, as something the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures clearly embodies.

