

**FROM THE DIRECTOR**

As was briefly mentioned in the last Asia Connections, with Arne Kalleberg in the Department of Sociology, the Carolina Asia Center was awarded an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar on the topic "Precarious Work in Asia." This seminar will be in place until May 2012 and involves seminars, reading and working groups for faculty and graduate students, public talks and partnering with country collaborators in nine countries.

The seminar was launched in January, and by late-March, the reading group had met eight times and two public lectures had been presented, including a well-attended lecture by Dr. Dae-Oup Chang of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The remainder of the semester will have an equally packed schedule. In July, with additional support from Korean sources, we will meet with our country partners for a workshop in Seoul.

For further information on the Seminar, go to our recently revamped website and click the link "Sawyer Seminar."

The Center has reached a milestone, with the first retirement from its small and dedicated staff. Peter Landstrom, who has been the Center's only business manager, recently retired.

We at the Center know that it was a tough decision for Peter as he had served since 2003, through some very difficult bouts of poor health. From managing the CAC in its early days, Peter was also there when the African Studies Center and the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations required administrative support. Managing three centers was work beyond the normal call of duty, and his efforts were sterling.

Peter's contribution to the development and growth of the CAC was remarkable, not least for helping us navigate the labyrinthine ways of finance and grant application and reporting. We will miss Peter and wish him a long and full retirement.

There have been other changes to personnel at the Center. We welcome Tracey Cave as the new Center Manager, Joe Bongiovi (Department of Sociology) as the first doctoral student and Dr. Dennis Arnold as the Postdoctoral Fellow with the Sawyer Seminar.

-Kevin Hewison, *Director*

I had the good fortune of spending some time in Asia between finishing my PhD in UNC's Department of Geography in July 2010, and starting a Postdoctoral Fellowship with the Carolina Asia Center in January 2011. I was in

Shortly after arriving in Phnom Penh my friends at CCAWDU informed me that minimum wage negotiations had broken down. Employers and the government were offering garment factory workers a \$5 increase, from

## WORKING FOR LABOR RIGHTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

By Dennis Arnold

four continental Southeast Asian countries—Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, where I was busy working with two organizations I've known for many years: the Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Unions (CCAWDU), and Oxfam-Solidarity Belgium.

\$56 to \$61 per month—with no chance of further wage negotiations until 2014, while CCAWDU were calling for an increase to \$91 per month and annual wage negotiations. Soon I found myself observing the largest strike in Cambodia's history, assisting with research and communication to the trade union's



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## 2011–2012 GRIER/WOODS PRESBYTERIAN FELLOWSHIPS IN CHINESE STUDIES

*Dr. Conghe Song and Dr. Yong Cai were awarded the 2011–2012 Grier/Woods Presbyterian Fellowships in Chinese Studies. Following are abstracts of the projects they will work on in the coming academic year as part of the fellowship.*



## “ONE CHILD IS ENOUGH” The Emergence of Low Fertility Norm in China in a Comparative Perspective

YONG CAI | Department of Sociology

While the world population is still growing fast at an annual rate of about 1.2% and is quickly approaching the historical mark of 7 billion, there is an equally important but less noticed demographic trend: a new norm of low fertility is emerging not only in the developed part of world, but also in many developing countries – half of world population living in countries where fertility is below replacement level. A substantial reduction in population size, concurrent with aging and migration, constitutes an unprecedented challenge to today’s social and political system established on a growth-based economic model. In Europe and East Asia, prolonged below replacement fertility has already set in motion a negative population growth momentum. Below replacement fertility forebodes a tectonic shift in world population with profound long-term social, economic and political implications.

China is a new member of this low-fertility club. China’s fertility has observed a remarkable reduction, from around 6 children per women 40 years ago to about 1.5 children today. The restrictive one-child policy is only one factor in China’s fertility transition; empirical research suggests that fundamental changes inside Chinese family associated with rapid economic and social transformation over the last few decades are critical in understanding China’s low fertility. In fact, new norm of low fertility has been driving the trend towards ever lower fertility in many countries—all China’s more developed neighbors are among those with the lowest fertility in the world.

This project examines the low fertility norm emerging in China in a comparative perspective. It aims to understand the underlying factors for such a new norm. A unique feature of China’s current low fertility is its uniformity: even with delays, marriage (especially for females) is essentially universal; even provided with opportunities, many choose to have only one child, or “one child is enough.” The project contrasts the social uniformity in China’s low fertility with the social diversity in low fertility observed in the Western societies. It presents a historical parallel in the evolution of family and reproductive institutions between China and the West. The project sets to demonstrate a strong cultural continuity in the social process of norm creation: structural changes are naturally incorporated in people’s reinterpretation of social norm passed down in generations.

## — Shenan Bradshaw | 2010 MAHATMA GANDHI FELLOW



When I first traveled to Nepal in the summer of 2009 I could never have imagined that I would return one year later and especially not with a team of dentists and dental students from the UNC-School of Dentistry...however that is exactly what I did.

My fascination with this small landlocked country, caught between neighboring giants India and China, began in the summer of 2009 when a friend and I volunteered to work with a non-profit organization providing dental and medical care to people in need. I had the opportunity to see first-hand the need for dental care that exists in Nepal with a meager 500 dentists to serve over 30 million people. With the support of professors, fellow students, and the Mahatma Gandhi Fellowship provided by Sangam, the South Asian Awareness Organization student group at UNC-Chapel

Hill, I was able to establish the UNC-Dentistry Nepal Project and returned to the country in the summer of 2010.

On July 18th a team of four students and two professors left North Carolina to spend 30 days providing dental education and care to the people of rural Nepal. We spent the first two weeks hiking to rural villages in the Everest region where we taught dental hygiene and distributed toothbrushes and toothpaste. Most of the people we met along the way, who live several days walk from the nearest road or town, had never seen a dentist before and more than once we saw an entire family sharing a single toothbrush.

For the second half of our trip the UNC team partnered with a local NGO to hold dental camps where we set up dental equipment in a local school and provided treatment to those in

## SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF CHINA'S "GRAIN FOR GREEN" REFORESTATION PROJECT

CONGHE SONG | Department of Geography



Forest ecosystem is the most complex terrestrial ecosystem on the Earth's land surface, providing vital goods and services upon which the society depends. Unfortunately, forests are declining in most of the developing countries according to the 2010 forest resources assessment by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The declining of forest resources is partly due to increased demand for forest products (e.g. timber and fuel) as a result of increase in population, and partly due to lack of proper management. Management of forest resources, often treated as common pool resources, plays a key role in rise and fall of the resource stock. China, as a notable exception, managed to increase its forest cover steadily through strong government programs. "Grain for Green" has been a key program that was implemented since 2001. The program offered free grain compensation in addition to some modest cash subsidies to farmers who convert less productive croplands to forests or grasses that are located on steep slopes (>25°). The Chinese government invested \$USD ~34 billion by 2010 on the program, and China's forest cover was increased by three percentage points as a result. This study is aimed at addressing the following questions: (1) How did the "Grain for Green" program influence the farmers' livelihood? (2) Is the current management plan for the new forests created on the degraded croplands sustainable? (3) Is there a feedback between the farmer's wellbeing and the forest ecosystem health? Answers to these questions will be extremely valuable to forest resource managers in China and those in other developing countries as well as international environmental policy makers. Forests have been targeted as major potential carbon sinks to mitigate anthropogenic carbon emission. The PI intends to adopt an integrated approach using household surveys and geospatial technologies of geographic information systems, remote sensing as well as global positioning systems to link human activities to the environment. The ultimate goal of the project is to understand the roles of institutions and individuals in sustainable common pool resources management.



need from the surrounding villages. Every day we were amazed by the number of people who showed up for our camps, whether to receive treatment or out of curiosity to watch. With seven providers there was never a dull moment and in the end we provided extractions, fillings, and fluoride treatments to over 400 children and adults.

By the end of our month long project we provided treatment to hundreds of people but more importantly we distributed over 600 toothbrushes and toothpaste in villages, government schools, and orphanages where we had taught basic dental hygiene. In a country where most people are unaware of basic dental hygiene knowledge, such as sugary foods are bad for your teeth or that you should brush your teeth twice a day, the best way to really make a difference in disease incidence is to teach people how to prevent it. This project was a great success but we barely scratched the surface of the need that exists in Nepal so the UNC-Dentistry Nepal Project will continue to operate annually with a new group of students and professors continuing the mission of this project in hopes of making a long term change.

*Shenan Bradshaw is a third year student in the Doctor of Dental Surgery program at the UNC School of Dentistry.*

*Labor Rights, continued from page 1*

international partners. After three days of some 100,000+ workers taking to the streets the government intervened and called for a new round of negotiations, which are still in progress. Regardless of the final outcome, it may prove to be a turning point in Cambodia's labor and social movement history.

In November and December I conducted a consultancy for Oxfam-Belgium, the project looked at labor issues in the four previously mentioned Asian countries. In particular, my task, along with colleague Soe Lin Aung, was to conduct research and write a roughly 50 page discussion paper that assists Oxfam's efforts to conceptualize and describe many of the challenges workers in the 'informal economy' face in these countries. The informal economy is generally considered all remunerative work that is not recognized, regulated or protected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks, and non-remunerative work undertaken in an income-producing enterprise.

The project proved to be both challenging and interesting. The scope is daunting—between 70-85% of the labor force in those countries is categorized as part of the informal economy. And, it was a challenge to combine my dissertation-oriented state of mind with the task at hand—offering quite practical recommendations to NGOs and trade unions working with different sets of realities on a day-to-day basis.

*Dennis Arnold is currently the Postdoctoral Fellow for the Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar "Precarious Work in Asia" at the Carolina Asia Center.*

A correction from the Fall 2010 Newsletter – we welcomed new Asian studies faculty and misquoted Dr. Jiang Zhuang as being in Performance Studies when in fact she is *Assistant Professor in the Department of Dramatic Art*.

## PETER LANDSTROM RETIRES

Peter Landstrom retired from UNC-Chapel Hill in November 2010. He served as Business Manager for the Carolina Asia Center since 2003 and took on extra responsibilities as Business Manager for the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations and the African Studies Center in recent years. Peter also worked at WUNC and the Student Stores during his 16 years working with the University of North Carolina. We thank him for his many years of service and wish him a happy, healthy retirement.



## UPCOMING WORKSHOP ON SOUTH ASIA

*"Visual Culture and Identity-Narratives in the Making of Modern India"*

A workshop co-organized by faculty at NCSU and UNC is scheduled for April 29-30, 2011, from 9:00-5:00. The first day of the workshop, hosted by UNC, will be in Room 4003 at the FedEx Global Education Center, and the second day, hosted by NCSU, at Withers 140. This international, interdisciplinary workshop, which is open to the public, will feature presentations by a cohort of scholars who have been engaged in a sustained collaborative project to scrutinize processes of meaning-making imbricated with various types of visual culture relating to images, objects, and performance. The goal of the workshop is to engage dialogue on the inter-connectedness of seemingly diverse media and forms in South Asia which together work to shape identity— both individually and collectively, and to explore changing circumstances and processes within which S.A. visual culture is commodified and consumed. This workshop is sponsored by the North Carolina Center for South Asian Studies, NCSU Department of History, NCSU Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, UNC Department of Asian Studies, UNC Carolina Asia Center, UNC Global Studies Initiative, and Duke-UNC Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies.

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