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State Theatre marquee announces arrival of the local film festival



Skype Q&A with *Alberta Legacy 2* film director Hossein Shamaghdari

Film Festival hits State College

By Kelly Diaz

From April 16th - 19th, the State Theatre in downtown State College, PA hosted the College Town Film Festival. This event was sponsored by a number of units across Penn State including the Center for Global Studies. The festival featured screenings of short films, full length films, and documentaries of all genres, many of which were followed by a Q&A session with an important contributor to the work such as a director, writer, or actor.

The festival kicked off with the screening of *Alberta Legacy 2*, a documentary centering on the issue of “brain drain” in Iran. The film highlighted the pros and cons of leaving Iran to pursue education and careers and included a variety of on-screen testimonies from Iranian students living outside of Iran. The screening was followed by a Skype Q&A session with director Hossein Shamaghdari.

Audience reaction was mixed. One audience member shared that she and many of her friends go years at a time without seeing their families and do not have plans to ever return home to Iran. They feel that the sacrifice is worth it when measured against the opportunities they are given abroad, either in the United States or in countries such as Switzerland, France, and Germany, as described in the documentary. Another audience member lamented that the documentary did not feature enough diverse opinions about the brain drain issue.

Professor Matt Jordan of Penn State’s Department of Film/Video and Media Studies commented on the goals of the Film Festival for the Penn State and State College communities, saying: “With the Festival, we hope to create an awareness amongst students – a demographic that is not going to see independent films – that such films can be just as good as the mainstream films that dominate the market. This is especially the case in relation to independent foreign films, where seeing films about women journalists in Syria or about tolerance in India can help make students aware of the richness of global culture. We hope that the discussions about the films with film makers will be enriching for all.”

Certainly, the screening of *Alberta Legacy 2* generated much discussion and in that regard, successfully launched the four day event.



Penn State Hosts German Day

By Ali Gatlin

German Day, an annual event hosted by the Germanic and Slavic Languages & Literatures Department, brings high school students and teachers to University Park for a day. It was an event that the German department first hosted in the 90's. Professor Carrie Jackson and then graduate student Janice McGregor brought it back in 2012, making this the third year of its "reincarnation." Ashley Roccamo, who became involved this year as a graduate student in the department, explained: "We do German Day to help get students excited about learning German and to encourage them to continue studying German in college. We also do it secondarily to promote our department-- if they continue studying German, it'd be great if they came here!"

For German Day, any student who is studying German is welcome to participate in a slew of contests and competitions. Students can take part in the poetry recitation competition, the spelling bee, the trivia game, or they can submit a poster or film to be judged in respective contests. Prizes are awarded to the winners of each competition. There is also an event-long tally of winners according to school. Students who are not particularly competitive are also welcome to visit German classes at Penn State, to attend a "sample class" on a topic dealing with German language, literature or culture, or take a campus tour.

To prepare for the event, organizers first recruited schools in the area to attend. This year there were 10 schools overall, contributing about 290 students. Over 85 volunteers acted as contest judges, sample class teachers, campus tour leaders, greeters, and registration table workers. Volunteers included faculty and graduate students in the German department, undergraduate students enrolled in more advanced German courses this semester, German club members, and German majors and minors, as well as students affiliated with related programs such as the Center for Global Studies.

In the State College area, there exists a modest population of Amish and Mennonite families, originally from Germany who still speak a dialect of German known as Pennsylvania German. Pennsylvania's huge history of German settlement may explain why so many students choose to study German, turning their interest about their heritage and where they came from into an asset in their education.

Renowned Scholar Visits PSU with New Ideas for China

Written by Katie Black; interview conducted by Katie Black and Annie Goodrich

Professor Tong Zhiwei of East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai is on a two-week tour of American universities to promote his ideas for the improvement of the political situation in China. Tong met with us after a long day of presenting at the School of International Affairs and told us a little more about his message and the current situation in China. He acknowledges the fact that he is doing this tour with the hope that once his ideas are spread to Westerners they will return to China with more interest. Commonly when thinking of China, Westerners only think about the economic side of things and the Communist Party, but Tong said that now is the time to focus on politics because they have been neglected for the past 30 years.

Now that the Chinese economy is growing so rapidly, citizens will be materially satisfied and will start looking for their individual political rights, which are not currently being respected, according to Tong. He also stated that even today the Chinese government focuses too much on economic progress as opposed to political reform. Since China does not operate transparently, it is hard for Professor Tong to predict future policy although he remains optimistic about China's future.

Tong is considered to be a Socialist Constitutionalist, meaning that he believes the Chinese Constitution is good and that the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) should be replaced by a multiparty system and operate within the constitutional limits. However, he stated the transition will be a process and the CCP will never be completely removed from Chinese politics or way of life. Tong says that the constitution does layout individual rights for citizens but that courts do not protect them. This is one of the major misconceptions about the Chinese political system because people's rights are written down but the government does not respect them. The judicial system is one of the primary institutions Tong takes issue with in the current political situation in China because they are instruments of the local government. Some of the large improvements Tong proposes are implementing judicial review and increasing judicial independence.

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UC Professor Robinson lectures on Global Capitalism

By Annie Goodrich

On April 9th the CGS co-sponsored a lecture by Dr. William Robinson titled, "Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity." Dr. Robinson is a sociology professor at the University of California-Santa Barbara and is also affiliated with the Latin American and Iberian Studies Program and the Global and International Studies Program at UCSB. Dr. Robinson began thinking about global capitalism after the onset of the global economic crisis in 2008. In his presentation he stated that there are four novel dimensions that are distinct to this most recent economic crisis: transnational capital and a globalized sector; the rise of a new social class called "transnationalists;" a transnational state apparatus for this new ruling class; and more apparent differences in North/South inequalities.

He also emphasized the role the media plays in citizens' knowledge of important events; an event that take place on one side of the world is often portrayed much differently in another country. This has obvious negative consequences because citizens are misinformed about issues and events. What makes capitalism unique is, according to Dr. Robinson, "If capitalism stops expanding, it collapses." However, capitalism in its current state has created the most inequality in history. In addition, surplus



CGS Director Sophia McClennen introduces speaker William Robinson

"Robinson on Global Capitalism" continued

populations have established themselves on the periphery of large urban centers creating mega-slums that are often at the center of political resistance.

The next part of Dr. Robinson's talk focused on how social and political forces have responded to the economic crisis. The first response was reform from above in order to stabilize the system from itself. Ultimately this was unable to prevail over transnational financial capital. The second response was popular, grassroots resistance from below, which initiated a global revolt.

The last response was 21st century fascism, which organized historically wealthy groups who had been experiencing downward mobility. In search of a scapegoat and in response to the crisis, 21st century fascism glamorizes violence in countries like Haiti and Colombia. Overall, Dr. Robinson's talk was enlightening because he looked at the global economic crisis from a different perspective and presented questions and theories based on his findings.

"Professor Tong Zhiwei" continued from page 2

When asked what he wanted American students to take away from his talks, he hopes they now understand the function of the National People's Congress. It is quite unlike the United States Congress in that the two other branches of government do not serve as checks and balances. The courts are beneath the control of the legislature and so that is where all of the power lies.

Professor Tong was very candid in speaking with us about the governmental systems in China and it was easy to see that he is a good teacher. We asked him how he viewed American universities and he mentioned how impressed he is with the successful individuals that they cultivate. Tong said that in contrast with Chinese universities, American students are taught to use critical thinking and innovation. Those looking to work or study in China should know that tremendous opportunities for Westerners exist because foreigners are often favored and receive preferential treatment.

Our Mission

The Center for Global Studies (CGS) has been designated a Title VI National Resource Center by the Department of Education. Working in collaboration with Penn State's many excellent international initiatives, faculty and students from multiple disciplines, and K-12 schools in the region, the CGS is dedicated to the growth and support of global studies.

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