

## TEACHING ABOUT ASIA

**ASIANetwork and *Education About Asia***

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Editor, *Education About Asia*

I'm delighted that the editors of the *ASIANetwork Exchange* invited me to contribute an essay on *Education About Asia* (EAA) for this issue. I've been honored to work with ASIANetwork for a decade. It is unlikely that EAA would be entering its eleventh year as a publication without the enthusiastic support of ASIANetwork. ASIANetwork members serve on our editorial boards, referee manuscripts, and, perhaps most importantly, consistently contribute stellar EAA articles. In what follows, I describe EAA, summarize the EAA vision, and discuss future EAA special sections in hopes that ASIANetwork members will continue to collaborate with us through their subscriptions and their contributions to each issue.

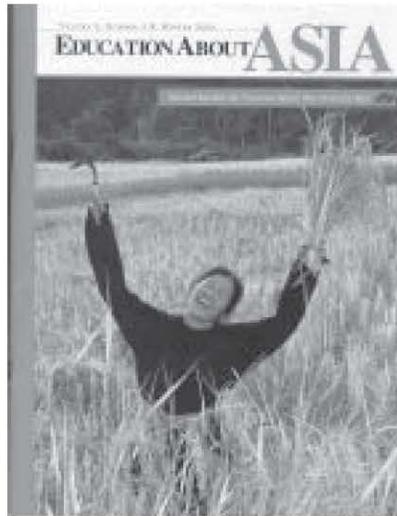
**The EAA Mission**

In 1995 the *Association for Asian Studies* approved the creation of a teaching journal intended for undergraduate and high school instructors, and our first issue was published in Spring 1996. EAA is a peer-reviewed journal with a circulation of more than 3,500 readers. Our readership primarily consists of undergraduate instructors who have a particular interest in teaching, and secondary school teachers with an interest in Asia. Our mission is to assist professors and teachers who are responsible for general survey history, humanities, and social science courses. Three issues of EAA are published each year, and annual subscription rates are \$15.00 for AAS members, \$25.00 for non-AAS members, and \$31.00 for organizations. For complete information about EAA, please visit our Web site, <http://www.aasianst.org/ea-toc.htm>, or email me at [Lucien-Ellington@utc.edu](mailto:Lucien-Ellington@utc.edu).

**The EAA Vision**

We determined early on that to succeed, EAA needed to be a hybrid publication with some characteristics

common to conventional scholarly journals and yet similar in other ways to publications for larger audiences such as *Harpers*, *The Economist*, or *The Atlantic Monthly*. To put it another way, to be useful to teachers of survey courses, EAA must have the scholarly integrity demanded by AAS yet at the same time serve as a medium for popularization of basic information about Asia to non-specialists, including all of us who teach about Asian countries other than the one that we primarily study.



We aspire to high standards of scholarship through utilization of a rigorous peer review process for all feature articles and many of the essays that are published. In any given issue, PhDs with expertise in the topic they address in EAA are responsible for approximately ninety percent of feature articles. However, we like to think that every successful contributor to EAA has demonstrated not only subject matter knowledge but the ability to lucidly communicate essential elements of that knowledge to a primarily non-specialist audience in a way that ultimately benefits students. We also try to make EAA appealing to our diverse subscribers by

including in every issue pieces on a variety of Asian cultures, differing perspectives on controversial issues, interviews with eminent scholars and policy makers, appealing and useful graphics, and reviews on a wide range of teaching materials including books, film, Web sites, and curriculum guides.

Two years ago we began publishing special sections devoted to a specific theme in every issue. Although each EAA issue includes significant material not related to the special section, we are particularly interested in our ASIANetwork colleagues learning about planned special sections to which they might contribute.

**Future EAA Special Sections***Fall 2006: Rethinking our Nations of "Asia"*

Authors of manuscripts for this special section are encouraged to challenge readers' traditional prior conceptions of "Asia." We are interested in manuscripts on such topics as: how new archeological discoveries challenge conceptualizations of early China; the incorporation of peasant narratives into the teaching of Asian history; and globalization's impact upon Asia's environment, economies, educational systems, and families. The deadline for initial receipt of manuscripts for this special section is the first week of May 2006.

*Winter 2006: Teaching About Asia Through Travelers' Tales*

In this special section we hope to publish articles that introduce teachers and students to fascinating historical and contemporary outsiders who have unique insights about Asia or who have impacted Asia or foreign perceptions of the region. The deadline for the initial receipt of manuscripts for this special section is the first week of September 2006.

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- Under Mao the literacy rate increased from 15 to 80 percent.
- It was Mao who in the late 1950s insisted on departing from the centralized, Soviet model of development and began to decentralize the economy.
- Chinese industrial output increased thirtyfold from 1949 to 1976. Even during the Cultural Revolution, the country had almost no inflation and an industrial growth rate of between 8 and 10 percent, respectable by any standards.
- Legitimate questions remain about the human costs of the economic expansion achieved under Mao, as well as disputes over exact numbers. But the assertion that the Chinese economy stagnated under Mao and did not begin to grow until his successors imported Western economic methods is sheer malarkey.
- Western writers have usually credited Mao's successors with ending China's period of isolation, but in 1971, when the Nixon administration reversed America's China policy, Mao was in charge and was eagerly receptive.

My goal is to put Mao in perspective as a canny revolutionary who shaped China's history.

### **How did you go about publicizing the film and getting it ready to market?**

I went to film festivals and film markets and talked to any distributor, publicist, or agent who would listen to me. I came up with a provocative title, which I knew would get a lot of attention. It got a little more than I had bargained for when it got picked up by some vicious hate groups and put on a white supremacist website. But far and away the best source of publicity has been my fellow Asian scholars. As soon as I started telling them about the movie, the word got out lickety-split.

### **Do you have any advice for others who might want to get into film production?**

Watch out for the sharks and look beyond the usual sources. When people hear that a movie is being made, they see dollar signs. I was shocked at the prices Americans and Europeans wanted to

charge for sound, for footage, for everything.

Make sure you either have good camera skills or that you bring along a good camera-person. I bought a decent camera and did most of the filming myself. This gave me maximum flexibility and meant I didn't have to hire fancy crews. But the learning curve was greater than I had expected.

Keep control of the process. I was the producer, writer, and director. I had my hands in everything. It was a lot to do, and I'm not sure other people would want to take on that much. But I found that as soon as things got out of my hands, they started going in directions I didn't always like. When I finally got some professional editors in to help me, they carted away my footage to their own studios. Often they would put in things that didn't belong there or that I hadn't intended. To this day, I'm not sure I caught everything they changed.

Learn to be flexible. For instance there is a section in the movie that discusses Mao's activism on woman's issues in 1919. The problem was that I didn't really have anything to represent this. My editor stuck in a picture of woman activists some 25 years later. At first I was livid. He finally convinced me that since we were trying to represent the idea, and didn't have pictures of the actual historical event, it would do. Making movies is different from writing books.

### **How do you envision this film being utilized in the classroom or in other teaching situations?**

I'm hoping this movie will get at least a limited theatrical release before it gets to the classrooms. Ultimately the film can be used in both basic modern Chinese history classes and in more specialized classes on Mao.

I haven't yet made the round of educational distributors. With the major distributors I have so far contacted, the film has been viewed first by a junior person in the organization. Many have called me back to say they loved it and were recommending it to their boss. Each time, they mentioned how much they had learned from it. Unfortunately, this didactic message hasn't carried much water with the bosses so far, but I think it says something about how well it may ultimately work in the classroom.

*EAA (continued from page 12)  
Spring 2007: Asia in World History:  
1450-1770*

This is the third in a series of planned special sections that will eventually include all eras encompassed in the National World History Standards. Authors of manuscripts for this special section are encouraged to focus on transnational flows of people, products, ideas and practices. The deadline for initial receipt of manuscripts for this special section is mid-December 2006.

*Fall 2007: Natural Disasters in Asia:  
Geography and Environment*

In this special section, it is hoped that articles will be published where authors address how the people of Southeast and other parts of Asia have responded to natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, and threats of epidemics and pandemics. We intend this section to be particularly useful for geography teachers. The deadline for initial receipt of manuscripts for this special section is the first week of May 2007.

*Winter 2007: Teaching about Asian  
Governments and Legal Systems*

There are many mistaken Western stereotypes about the function of law in Asian politics and societies. This special section should better enable instructors to inform students about the role of legal systems in various Asian cultural and political contexts. The deadline for initial receipt of manuscripts for this special section is early September 2007.

*Spring 2008: Marriage and Family in  
Asia*

The institutions of marriage and family are common to all societies. Prospective authors writing for this special section should develop manuscripts that will enable teachers and students to both better understand marriage and family practices in Asia, and more intelligently reflect on the role of these institutions in their own societies. The deadline for initial receipt of manuscripts for this special section is early December 2007.

We look forward to years of collaboration between ASIANetwork and EAA. If you have any questions whatsoever about EAA please don't hesitate to contact me.