

# Outstanding Educator Award Application

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## I. Teaching Impact in Brief (2010-present)

### A. International impact

- Published four peer-reviewed articles and two essays related to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).
- Published *Teaching Japanese Popular Culture* (2016, Association for Asian Studies Press, co-edited with Deborah Shamoon). Contributed a chapter on MOOCs and co-authored the Introduction.
- Coordinated a special issue of the *electronic journal of contemporary japanese studies* on teaching Japanese popular culture.
- Co-organized “Teaching Japanese Popular Culture” conference at NUS in 2012, which attracted over 40 global scholars and led to the above book and journal issue.
- Presented SoTL research at five international academic conferences.
- Reviewer for teaching/learning-focused journals: *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* and *Education About Asia*.

### B. University impact

- Received Annual Teaching Excellence Award and Faculty Teaching Excellence Award three consecutive years (for AY2011-12 to AY2013-14); named to Honor Roll (2016).
- Member, NUS Teaching Academy (2016-present).
- Member, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) Faculty Teaching Excellence Committee (2016-present).
- Member, FASS Graduate Student Teaching Award Committee (2014-present).
- Member, FASS Faculty Teaching Resources Committee, NUS (2016-present)
- Received the FASS Innovation Award (AY2011-12), for innovative and effective incorporation of technology in the classroom.
- Received 289 nominations for “Best Teaching” from students (2010-present).
- Taught eight unique modules, with a range in student enrolment from 2 to 454, while maintaining excellent student feedback scores (see Table 1, pp. 8-9).
- Gave 14 invited SoTL lectures/workshops to faculty and Teaching Assistants for CDTL and CIT (see Table 4, pp. 12-13).
- Developed a new General Education module under the revised curriculum – “Home.”
- Spearheaded research on the Gradeless First Semester. Awarded CDTL funding. Published results in peer-reviewed journal and shared results at conferences and with the Office of the Provost, which were forwarded to all Deans and Departments.

### C. Department impact

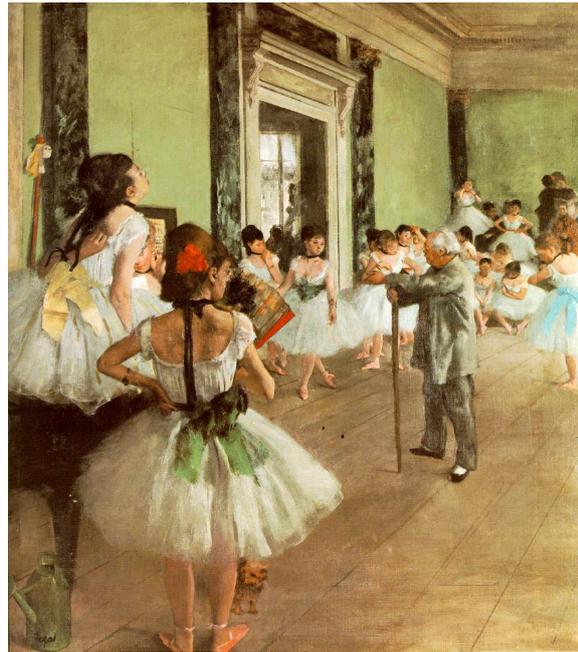
- Produced (coordinated, filmed, edited) a Department PR video, which featured testimonials from current and former Japanese Studies majors about their experiences. This video has been praised as a model among some departments in FASS.
- Developed “Field Studies in Japan,” the Department’s first field-based module, which was highlighted in our recent visiting committee’s final report. Secured over \$180,000 in funding to offset student costs of participation in the module, making it affordable (less than \$250 for all expenses for the 10-day trip) for all participants. As of May 2016, 63 students and four TAs have participated.
- Shared student research from Field Studies in Japan module outside the classroom, both at the Japan Creative Centre (2011-13; 2016) and the NUS Central Library (2014; 2016).
- Co-maintained Department Facebook page, thus maintaining contact with former students and providing a public face for the Department.

## II. Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy and desired learning outcomes of self-discovery, effective communication, and synthesis of knowledge are all illustrated in Edgar Degas' "La classe de danse" (The Dance Class, 1874).

At first glance we see an instructor in the center of the room, surrounded by pupils, seemingly embodying a wise lecturer in a gendered, power-laden encounter.

However, a closer look reveals complexity. I imagine class is about to begin, students are warming up, and the instructor is briefly setting the lesson goals and offering encouragement. He does not remain front and center. He soon steps aside and lets students fill the space. They practice individually and in groups, and most learning comes through self-practice and peer learning. Some students grasp theory more quickly than others. Some model good posture, while others perfect new steps. They know their strengths and weaknesses, and they look to each other for advice and inspiration. The teacher moves about the room, maximizing individual interaction, providing guidance when necessary, and setting new tasks that help students work through their difficulties.



For me, the beauty of this image, and the guiding principle behind my teaching philosophy, lies in recognizing students' raw talent, curiosity, and restlessness, then creating a learning environment that fosters self-discovery, effective communication, and synthesis of knowledge.

**Self-discovery:** Observe the girl seated on the piano in the foreground; she scratches her back in boredom, anxious to get started. When creating a syllabus, planning lessons, developing activities, and advising students, I often return to Degas' masterpiece and think about this girl. Her boredom pushes me to pare back lectures, devise active learning projects that will help students learn a new idea or skill on their own, and teach research methods that empower students to explore their own questions.

**Effective communication:** Like dancers, it is only through experience and repetition that students gradually gain the confidence and skills to effectively communicate ideas and beliefs to others. Each of my modules involves pair work, small-group discussion, large-group discussion, presentations, and/or peer review in order to develop communication skills. I also use reflective notebooks, Wiki articles, author meets critics exercises, and public presentations of student work to provide alternative avenues of communication for students.

**Synthesis of knowledge:** Dance is learned one step at a time, with the eventual goal of combining those steps into a flowing whole. The same process occurs in and across modules. Whether in introductory or honor's modules, I aim to write lectures that connect ideas across time and space. More importantly, I create exercises, like role-play, Wiki assignments, and on-the-ground research opportunities, that enable students to make connections on their own.

### III. Teaching Approaches

In line with my Teaching Philosophy, I aim to create opportunities for self-discovery, effective communication, and synthesis of knowledge in every module. The following are examples of the incorporation of my teaching philosophy in specific modules in AY2013/14 to AY2015/16, along with student feedback scores of my overall effectiveness, on a 5-point scale.

#### A. JS1101E/GEK1002 Intro to Japanese Studies (454 students in AY2014-15; score: 4.355)

- This module introduces the history and geography of Japan. It is a foundation for Japanese Studies majors and a General Education module.
- I utilize classroom response systems (“clickers”) and QSMS for immediate feedback regarding content and to stimulate communication and synthesis of knowledge through peer-learning. Students cite the devices for helping them check their understanding, synthesize knowledge, practice communicating their knowledge to others (through pair-share and small group discussion in lecture), and relieving exam anxiety.
- Self-discovery comes from a 750-word post in IVLE Discussion Forum about a topic of their choice. I developed this based on feedback from students who wanted more opportunity to demonstrate individual learning. This assignment was showcased by Ms. Kiruthika Ragupathi at a CDTL workshop in July 2016.
- Weekly tutorials foster regular communication via group discussion.
- Students conduct a group research project, which enables them to follow their passions and discover more about any topic that interests them. It also requires effective communication both within the group and in a final essay.

#### B. JS2101 Approaches to Japanese Studies (17 students in 2013-14; score: 4.924)

- This module provides students with a practical skill base for further studies of Japan, as well as a critical overview of the Anthropology of Japan. Students learn to recognize gaps in scholarship and conceptualize ways to fill those gaps through appropriate methods. Through an individual research project on a topic of their choice, students enjoy self-discovery of the major themes and controversies associated with their topic.
- The module builds research skills week-by-week, including mind maps of topics, literature reviews, detailed outlines, multiple drafts, peer review, and a final paper and presentation. These steps allow students to synthesize strands of knowledge and to constantly develop their communication skills through different techniques.
- In order to develop skills at managing ideas and research materials in a searchable, paperless way, in 2013, I received a grant that provided an iPad for each student. During class students shared their reading and note-taking practices by projecting their iPads wirelessly for all to see (through AppleTV), thereby revealing the “guts” of learning and opening up the research process to continual peer review.

#### C. JS3226 Japan: the Green Nation? (24 students in AY2014-15; score: 4.837)

- Japan has a heavily forested landscape, a long, beautiful coastline, and a rich history of celebrating nature in religion, the arts, and literature. However, Japan also has a history of repeated deforestation, industrial pollution, and indiscriminate abuse of the environment. Amid these contradictions, how “green” is Japan? What representations of nature, uses of natural resources, forms of energy production, types of consumer behavior, and waste disposal practices can be called green? Is Japan a green nation, and what lessons can we learn from Japan’s successes and failures? This module explores these questions and more from a variety of perspectives, including popular culture, tourism, political economy, geography, history, and daily practice, through a focus on four themes: nature, waste, energy, and disaster.

- I utilize a role-play exercise on the politics of forestry in the Tokugawa period, in which students use readings and lecture to discover more about their assigned role, synthesize information from various sources, and communicate the needs of their role in the instance of an environmental crisis encountered during class.
- Beginning in AY2013-14, I began a module blog, to which students post weekly news related to Japan and “green” issues. They comment on the news with respect to the ideas covered in class. Again, I stress discovery of relevant material, synthesis of ideas from various sources (news and course materials), and communication to a non-academic audience: <http://blog.nus.edu.sg/greenjapan/>

D. JS3229 Field Studies in Japan (10 students in AY2015-16; score: 5.000)

- How is heritage defined? Who decides what is preserved and remembered? How is heritage packaged for tourist consumption? What controversies and possibilities surround the future of heritage in Japan? In this module students investigate the interface of heritage and tourism in Japan, analyzing how heritage attracts visitors and what role heritage plays in the construction of local and regional identity.
- This module, which I proposed, developed, and have run for six years, begins with four days of intensive pre-departure orientation (6 hours per day), followed by ten days of fieldwork in Japan.
- In orientation, students are assigned to a group in charge of a location we will visit. Through thematic readings and primary sources (in Japanese) that students find and translate collaboratively, they communicate knowledge about a place with peers.
- In Japan we visit sites and attend lectures and walking tours by government officials, businesspeople, citizens, and NPOs. Students also research and produce their own walking tours and do other activities. They utilize a daily debrief session and a field notebook to practice self-discovery, effective communication, and synthesis of knowledge.
- The module ends with public presentation of student findings, through lecture, such as at the Japan Creative Centre and Kyushu University, articles posted on the Department of Japanese Studies Facebook page, or a photo essay at the NUS Central Library. This lets students synthesize knowledge and communicate what they learned to a broad audience of students and faculty.

E. JS4227 Japanese Political Economy (6 students in AY2014-15; score: 4.892)

- This course concentrates on the political economy of postwar Japan. Standard discourses of this era describe an economic miracle, the bubble bursting, and the “lost decades” that brings us to today. This course avoids studying Japan merely as an economic machine, and instead asks what constitutes the economic and how the Japanese political economy operates at different geographic scales, from the global to the household and the individual.
- Students run at least one class session. In order to facilitate this activity, I utilize an NUS Wiki ([wiki.nus.edu.sg/display/JPE2012/Home](http://wiki.nus.edu.sg/display/JPE2012/Home)), where students post preparatory and follow-up documents.
- The exercise develops planning and communication skills, as well as the self-discovery of how to use a technology that may help them in a future career.

#### IV. Teaching History and Student Feedback Summary

Table 1: Teaching history and student feedback at NUS, 2010-present.

Academic Year	Sem	Module				Effectiveness Rating (/5)		Best Teaching Noms.
		Code	Title	Type	Size	McMorran	Faculty Avg.	
2015-16	3	JS3229	Field Studies in Japan	Seminar	10	5.000	5.000	5
	2	GEM1046 GET1003	Home	Lecture	115	GEM: 4.414 GET: 4.501	4.210	13
				Tutorial	51	GEM: 4.516 GET: 4.685	4.159	
		JS2101	Approaches to Jpns Studies	Seminar	23	4.820	4.341	9
		JS4227	Jpns Political Economy	Seminar	6	4.467	4.341	1
1	JS1101E GEK1002	Introduction to Jpns Studies	Lecture	432	JS: 4.386 GEK: 4.435	4.179	42	
2014-15	3	JS3229	Field Studies in Japan	Seminar	10	4.586	4.586	1
	2	GEM1046	Home	Lecture	98	4.507	4.121	10
				Tutorial	35	4.660	4.167	
		JS4227	Japanese Political Economy	Seminar	6	4.892	4.326	1
	1	JS1101E GEK1002	Introduction to Japanese Studies	Lecture	454	JS: 4.355 GEK: 4.395	4.130	39
Tutorial				97	JS: 4.545 GEK: 4.554			
	JS3226	Japan: the Green Nation?	Seminar	24	4.837	4.545	5	
2013-14	3	JS3229	Field Studies in Japan	Seminar	10	4.927	4.927	3
	2	JS2101	Approaches to Jpns Studies	Seminar	17	4.924	4.351	6
		JS4227	Jpns Political Economy	Seminar	2	N/A too few students	--	--
	1	JS1101E GEK1002	Introduction to Japanese Studies	Lecture	420	JS: 4.459 GEK: 4.360	4.104	67
Tutorial				91	JS: 4.724 GEK: 4.544			
	JS3226	Japan: the Green Nation?	Seminar	19	4.832	4.287	3	
2012-13	3	JS3229	Field Studies in Japan	Seminar	10	4.875	4.526	4
	2	JS2101	Approaches to Jpns Studies	Seminar	24	4.789	4.349	4
	1	JS1101E GEK1002	Introduction to Japanese Studies	Lecture	448	JS: 4.456 GEK: 4.245	4.034	41
				Tutorial	114	JS: 4.592 GEK: 4.652		
	JS3226	Japan: the Green Nation?	Seminar	16	4.714	4.198	1	

Table 1 (continued): Teaching history and student feedback at NUS, 2010-present.

Academic Year	Sem	Module				Effectiveness Rating (/5)		Best Teaching Noms.
		Code	Title	Type	Size	McMorran	Faculty Avg.	
2011-12	3	JS3229	Field Studies in Japan	Seminar	13	4.692	4.606	6
	2	JS1101E GEK1002	Introduction to Japanese Studies	Lecture	204	JS: 4.282 GEK: 4.200	4.035	18
				Tutorial	42	JS: 4.647 GEK: 4.634	4.131	
		JS4227	Jpns Political Economy	Seminar	5	5.000	4.329	1
	1	JS1101E GEK1002	Introduction to Japanese Studies	Tutorial	25	JS: 4.500 GEK: 4.000	4.116	--
JS3226				Japan: the Green Nation?	Seminar	14	4.556	4.180
2010-11	3	JS3229	Field Studies in Japan	Seminar	8	4.200	4.208	1
	2	JS2214	Ideas & Images in Jpns Culture	Seminar	20	4.385	4.004	1
		JS4227	Jpns Political Economy	Seminar	6	4.667	4.004	2
	1	JS3226	Japan: the Green Nation?	Seminar	18	4.455	4.208	2
		JS4101	Research & Writing in JS	Seminar	12	4.000	4.208	1

Table 2: Teaching history and recognition at University of Colorado, Boulder, 2000-09.

Academic Year	Sem	Module				Role	Recognition
		Level	Title	Type	Size		
2009-10	1	2000	Exploring a Non-Western Culture: Japan (Anthropology)	Lecture	90	Visiting lecturer	--
2005-06	3	1000	World Regional Geography	Lecture	25	Grad instructor	--
	2	3000	Geography of China	Lecture	80	Grad instructor	Winner, Graduate Student Teaching Excellence Award
2004-05	3	1000	World Regional Geography	Lecture	25	Grad instructor	Nominee, Dept of Geography Teaching Excellence Award
	2	3000	Geography of China	Lecture	80	TA	--
2001-02	3	3000	Political Geography	Lecture	20	TA	--
2000-01	3	3000	Geography of Water in the Western U.S	Lecture	20	TA	--
		3000	Political Geography	Lecture	20	TA	--
	2	1000	World Regional Geography	Lecture	250	TA	--
	1	3000	Geography of China	Lecture	100	TA	--

## V. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

Since arriving at NUS I have developed research interests in the “Geographies of Teaching and Learning.” This includes interest in the physical locations of teaching and learning, as well as the effectiveness of teaching and learning policies and practices.

My interest in teaching and learning locations includes research on overseas field courses and virtual classrooms. For the former, I have reviewed the scholarship on field learning in Geography and related disciplines, and I have incorporated several best practices in my own annual field course. I have also reflected on this course and constantly revised it, all while incorporating student feedback on ways to encourage more active and student-driven learning. This has resulted in multiple conference presentations and workshops at NUS as well as publications in the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* (2015) and *Education About Asia* (2014). The former article was also quoted in the *Japan Times* newspaper (2016) in an article about the fifth anniversary of the 3.11 disasters in Japan and the prospects and controversies of disaster tourism in the Tōhoku region.

I have also paid attention to virtual spaces for teaching and learning by researching the challenges and opportunities associated with teaching *about* and *with* popular culture via Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs. This project analyzed popular culture-based courses offered by all major MOOC providers, both in 2012, and again in 2015. In addition to collecting information on all such courses, I also corresponded with faculty members from around the world who created such courses. My findings acknowledged the MOOC format for its potential to democratize education, while also warning that copyright issues threaten to hinder the creation of popular culture MOOCs, except by wealthy institutions. This work appeared in *Teaching Japanese Popular Culture*, which I co-edited with Deborah Shamoan (2016, Association for Asian Studies Publishers), and the *electronic journal of contemporary japanese studies* (2013). My findings were featured in an article in *Times Higher Education* in May 2016.

I have also done research on the effectiveness of policies and practices related to teaching and learning. The foremost is my project, “Assessing the impacts of Grade-free Learning” (2014-present). When NUS introduced a Gradeless First Semester in 2014, I set out to understand its effects on students and faculty. I began with an online survey that received over 1200 responses, which I later repeated every six months and expanded to a faculty-specific survey and focus group interviews of NS men. So far, the study has collected over 3000 responses. The study received \$7000 in funding from the NUS Center for the Development of Teaching and Learning. So far, the research has produced one peer-reviewed publication (in *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 2015), one conference presentation, and a report shared with the Provost’s Office. The project also allowed me to co-publish with a colleague at CDTL and an undergraduate student. This work led not only to a comprehensive review of the history of grading and pass/fail systems around the world, but also important findings about the limitations of the current policy to relieve student stress and aid student transition to university life. It also joins an emerging set of voices questioning the relationship between grades and learning in the broader context of education.

In addition to these two strands of SoTL research, I have also written on pedagogical innovations (*Asian Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 2016) and the problematic of teaching and learning area studies (*Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2016). Moreover, I co-edited a volume entitled *Teaching Japanese Popular Culture* (with Deborah Shamoan, 2016) that aims to reach a wide audience of instructors at the university and secondary school level who either do, or wish to, teach *about* or *with* Japanese popular culture. Ideally, the book will improve their teaching approaches and practices, thus leading to a wider impact through their students. Susan J. Napier, Professor of Japanese Studies, Tufts University calls it an “incredibly valuable book” that will be “invaluable both to those of

us who work on popular culture and in Japanese Studies.” Mark McLelland, Professor of Sociology at the University of Wollongong, writes, “The editors have brought together an essential volume that needs to be read by all those engaged with Japanese culture in the classroom.”

All of this SoTL research has the potential to impact teaching practices and policy discussions, not only at NUS, but beyond. I hope that my work can play some part in helping NUS develop as an institution devoted to improving knowledge and practices related to teaching and learning.

## **VI. SoTL-specific Research Awards**

2016. Teaching Enhancement Grant (NUS-CDTL). (\$4200)

- Conference funding to present “The Contested Value(s) of Higher Education” at Annual Meetings of the American Association of Geographers (San Francisco)

2014-16. Research Award (PI): “Assessing the impacts of Grade-free Learning,” CDTL TEG (NUS). (\$7000)

- Conducted four online surveys and focus group interviews and analyzed findings
- Funded two undergraduate RAs
- Led to the following outputs:
  - 2015. “Assessing the Impacts of Grade-free Learning,” report prepared for Provost’s Office, NUS (first author, with Kiruthika Ragupathi)
  - 2015. (online first). “Assessment and Learning without Grades? Motivations and Concerns with Implementing Gradeless Learning in Higher Education,” *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* (first author, with Kiruthika Ragupathi and Luo Simei).
  - 2016. “The Contested Value(s) of Higher Education,” at Annual Meetings of the American Association of Geographers.

2013. Teaching Enhancement Grant, (NUS-CDTL). (\$4000)

- Conference funding to present “Earth-writing in Japan: matching methods and aims in the field” at Annual Meetings of the Association for Asian Studies (San Diego)
- Led directly to 2014. “How ‘Green’ is Japan? Studying Environmental Issues in the Field,” *Education About Asia* 19(1), pp. 18-21.

2011-12. Teaching Technology Grant (NUS-CIT). (\$24,000)

- iPad loan for 24 students. This module piloted a teaching and learning project in which students used iPads for research and writing tasks both inside and outside the classroom. Students could read and take notes at home, in the library, and on the go. Moreover, when paired with an AppleTV in the classroom, students could instantly display their screens to the entire class through the projector. Turn-taking involved more than raising one’s hand and talking. One could also display note-taking skills, conceptual maps, outlines, abstracts, early drafts, and more.

2011-13. Teaching Technology Grant (NUS-CIT). iPad for teaching/research. (\$1000)

## VII. SoTL Presentations at International Conferences

Table 3: Conference participation

Year	Title	Contribution	Venue	Deliverables
2016	“The Contested Value(s) of Higher Education”	Paper presenter	American Association of Geographers (AAG) meetings, San Francisco	TBD
2016	“Beyond the Armchair: Tips and Strategies for Teaching an International Field Course”	Panelist	AAG meetings, San Francisco	TBD
2014	“Roundtable: Teaching and Learning in the Field”	Organizer and presenter	7th International Conference on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, NUS	2015. “Between fan pilgrimage and dark tourism: competing agendas in overseas field learning,” <i>Journal of Geography in Higher Education</i> 39(4): 568-583.
2014	“Revisiting MOOCS and Japanese popular culture”	Paper presenter	JSA-ASEAN Conference, Bangkok, Thailand	2016. “The Online Future(s) of Teaching Japanese Popular Culture,” <i>Teaching Japanese Popular Culture</i> , Shamoon and McMorran, eds., Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies Publishers, pp. 257-282.
2013	“Earth-writing in Japan: matching methods and aims in the field”	Paper presenter	Association for Asian Studies (AAS) meetings, San Diego, CA	2014. “How ‘Green’ is Japan? Studying Environmental Issues in the Field,” <i>Education About Asia</i> 19(1): 18-21.
2012	“Sustainability in the field: undergraduate field studies in ecotourism”	Paper presenter	AAG meetings, New York	

## VIII. SoTL Presentations at NUS

Table 4: NUS workshop presentations

Year	Title	Type of presentation	Venue
2016 Feb/ Aug	Incorporating Peer Review in Student Writing: a hands-on workshop	Invited workshop (PDP-elective)	Center for Development of Teaching and Learning (CDTL)
2015	Oil and Water? Popular Culture and MOOCs	Invited presentation	3rd Annual FASS Teaching Seminar
2015	Turning Students into Peer Reviewers: a hands-on workshop	Invited workshop (PDP-elective)	CDTL
2015	Leading Discussions and Seminars	Invited workshop	Teaching Assistants Programme (TAP)
2015	Peer Review in Student Writing: managing chaos with Turnitin	Invited presentation (with student Michelle Tan)	BuzzEd conference, Center for Instructional Technology (CIT)

Year	Title	Type of presentation	Venue
2014	Leading Discussions and Seminars	Invited workshop	TAP
2014	My PDP Experience	Invited workshop for PDP Orientation	CDTL
2014	Releasing the Reins: technologies that put students in charge	Invited presentation	BuzzEd conference (CIT)
2013	Leading Discussions and Seminars	Invited workshop (2x)	TAP
2013	Incorporating Student Response Systems (clickers) in Japanese Language Lectures	Invited workshop	Center for Language Studies
2013	Earth-writing in Japan: matching methods and aims in the field	Invited presentation	Teaching Enhancement Grant Talks (CDTL)
2013	Collaborative Learning using Google	Invited presentation	Technology in Pedagogy Speaker Series (CDTL)
2013	Effective Incorporation of Student Response Systems in Large Lectures	Invited workshop	Department of Japanese Studies

## IX. Pedagogical Innovations

A. Student response systems (clickers) in JS1101E, Introduction to Japanese Studies (450 students). This provides both instructor and student immediate feedback about what has been learned and what needs to be immediately reviewed and/or corrected. When used correctly, this also stimulates communication among students and encourages synthesis of knowledge through peer-learning. Finally, it helps relieve exam anxiety by providing exam-like questions during each lecture. See clicker questions in JS1101E Module Folder.

Student feedback: In their comments students overwhelmingly praise the clickers:

- “lectures are really fun!! I looked forward to them every week. Lectures are very interactive with lecturer giving clicker questions and asking other questions.”
- “Social science doesn't seem as daunting as before under Dr McMorran's lectures. I particularly like his use of clickers - not only are we constantly assessed and revising, but it also served as a form of communication in opinion polls.”
- “He is really knowledgeable and actively shares his knowledge with us. Furthermore, he makes us participate in lectures using the clickers, which I feel will ultimately help us during our examinations.”
- “The use of clickers for this mod also keep students constantly engaged with the lecture.”
- “Lectures were interactive - eg. Clickers!!”
- “1) The clicker enables him to know whether we understand the topic well and this has helped us to learn better too. 2) The clicker also makes lectures more interesting and fun.”
- “He actively seeks innovative ways to enhance student's learning experience. I benefited from the usage of the clicker. This approach gave me the opportunity to try sample exam questions and gain awareness of where I fall short in my understanding of Japan.”

Sharing the innovation: I shared findings and best practices in two workshops (2013) with faculty from the Center for Language Studies and Department of Japanese Studies.

B. Peer review. First, I introduce the importance of peer review to the production of academic knowledge and provide guidelines on how to review the work of others. Then, I assign students to groups of 3-4, after which they read the first draft of their group members' papers and provide feedback in response to a clear rubric or set of questions. Then, students workshop all papers in their group in tutorial. Finally, students revise and submit a final draft based on peer reviews. This assignment allows students to recognize writing strengths and weaknesses in themselves and their peers. It also provides an avenue for communication about the writing process through both written and verbal feedback. Finally, this innovation eliminates all hard-copy paper submissions and provides instant online feedback for students, saving reams of paper and making it more likely students will read feedback (as opposed to the common problem of student papers collecting dust at the end of the semester).

Student feedback: According to one student, "Usage of Turnitin for peer review was a great implementation as it provided valuable feedback from peers as well as from the professor." Another noted that the module in question "Offers multiple platforms for students to exchange ideas (e.g. peer review session)." Also, in nominating me for Best Teaching, another student noted, "Encourages peer to peer interaction to build rapport within class and enhance quality feedback during class discussions." Other comments:

- "Overall, it was an enriching exercise as I got to explore the different writing styles others have and learn from them. Through analysing others' works, I am better able to review my own work to ensure I'm concise and coherent. I really appreciated how we were given a first draft to experiment with writing styles aside from our usual without being graded - something uncommon in the modules I've taken thus far."
- "The peer review exercise is an excellent platform for students to assess their own strengths and weaknesses in writing abilities. It will be great if students are encouraged to use the platform as a means to try out different techniques in writing."
- "Despite having only 1 reviewer to workshop my paper with me during tutorial, I still found the workshop most beneficial. Not only was I able to clarify doubts, but I was also able to actively discuss my viewpoints and debate about it, which I felt was not just beneficial for this exercise but also for my overall learning."
- "The peer-review process is a very fresh concept to me, but I feel that it has potential to allow students of all majors and years to improve tremendously."

Sharing the innovation: I have shared this Peer Review exercise with NUS colleagues in four venues. First, I shared the exercise with colleagues in the Social and Cultural Geography Research Cluster. Next, I co-presented the exercise (with a student) at the 2015 CIT BuzzEd workshop. Finally, I presented the exercise at two invited CDTL workshops (in 2015 and 2016), both of which were PDP-electives.

C. Author meets critics. This exercise is meant to resemble a session found at academic conferences, where an author receives public comments from 5-6 readers, or "critics," before responding. In this case, students ask one or more question about a particular reading, which I then forward to the author, always a globally-recognized expert in Japanese Studies. The author then replies to the questions and we discuss the replies in class. This exercise makes concrete the notion of the "Burkean parlor," by encouraging students to think of academic work as a conversation in which they can participate. The exercise stresses that authors are not simply producers of knowledge; readers also actively produce knowledge through their interpretation of and engagement with scholarship. Students see the collaborative nature of knowledge creation through their questions. The exercise aims to make students feel comfortable playing an active role in the act of knowledge creation and to see the accessibility of the authors and the ideas they read in their modules.

Student feedback: Anonymous student feedback on the exercise has been overwhelmingly positive. In particular, students have praised the exercise's ability to create unique exchanges between the student and author that go beyond the content of the work. For instance, following the latest Author Meets Critics exercise (April 2015, 8 responses from a class of 8), students were asked about their expectations and experience, as well as what was useful about it. Several students suggested that the exercise pushed them to engage more with the text than they might otherwise have done. One wrote, "Definitely had to take more effort to read in order to ask good questions to the author!" Another commented, "It is a good exercise and allows us to engage more with readings and think critically about it, especially since we will be talking about it with the author himself!" The exercise motivated these students to read the work carefully so that they could ask a sufficiently engaging question. Other students built upon this heightened level of engagement by suggesting that humanizing the author was the greatest value of the exercise. One noted, "Normally we just critique and poke at texts (maybe even tear them apart!), forgetting that they're the product of an actual person, so it was interesting to get to talk to the person behind the text, and understand a bit more about him and the things he writes about." Here, the student emphasizes that the exercise is less about being a critic, and more about establishing a connection with the author. Two other students agreed that it was valuable to recognize the author as an "ordinary person":

- "I thought the responses the author gave was (sic) enlightening and the whole experience for me was insightful. Not only did it help us put the things we read into greater perspective, the author also told us some of the projects he was currently working on which we could keep a lookout for. It was also interesting to know that these people whose [works] we read about are ... ordinary people who go out to explore, experience and analyse before they can produce a paper."
- "I think it is a insightful experience that not only motivates students to think more critically about what they have read but also realise that these authors aren't perfect in their writing as well. It is a chance for us to learn more about writing a paper and the things that the author had hoped to include in the paper but couldn't do so."

According to students, the exercise not only encourages critical thinking regarding the work in question, but also emphasizes the author as an embedded individual with unique motivations, restrictions, and even flaws. Importantly, this awareness stimulates students to reflect on their own positionality with respect to research, which we discussed as a group in class, and it may even reduce some of the pressure they place on themselves in their own research and writing. This is yet another unintended benefit of the exercise.

Sharing the innovation: 2016. "Author meets critics: learning through scholarly conversation," *Asian Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 6(1), pp. 8-26, which includes the above discussion about student feedback.

D. Field-based learning. In 2010 I proposed and developed "Field Studies in Japan," the first field-based module in the Department of Japanese Studies. Our recent visiting committee mentioned this as a strength of the Department. Some of the specific pedagogical innovations I have developed for this module include a collaborative Google Map exercise that incorporates student fieldwork and photographs, as well as reflective writing exercises and a student-driven walking tour that has provided students an opportunity to create and share new field-derived knowledge.

Student feedback: In an anonymous online survey given six months after returning home, students commented on these exercises. One student commented, “I liked that the students at certain points were able to think of new ideas and connections through the interactions, the tours and their own observations. I think this is what makes the field studies special as students are able to give their personal opinions and critical analysis in the entire learning journey and are not constantly being led by the lecturer or the student assistant.” Another student emphasized the hands-on element of this and other exercises. “Personally I prefer hands-on activities ... compared to just listening to talks/visiting museums. I thought the Tsuetate neighbour[hood] survey was practical in that we got to contrast whatever we learnt second-hand to first-hand interactions.” Here, the student also highlights the freedom to come to different conclusions via contrasting knowledge learned in different ways. In other words, the itinerary not only reinforced classroom knowledge, but also allowed them to challenge classroom knowledge. This benefit of the exercises can also be seen in this quote: “I particularly liked the Tsuetate stay because not only did we hear that Tsuetate is in decline, we could also feel the decline for ourselves due to the various inconveniences as tourists there. However, we also saw that it was not only dull and gloomy, but residents in that place were also trying to liven up the place for themselves, not just for tourists.” For this student, experiencing inconvenience in the field reinforced classroom knowledge about the decline of rural Japan, thus justifying my original reason for visiting this particular location. However, the straightforward narrative of rural decline was complicated by local efforts to revitalize, emphasizing the usefulness of digging beneath the surface via geographical research methods found in this module.

Sharing the innovations: I presented on the Google Maps exercise at CDTL (2013), shared parts of this work at the American Association of Geographers conference (2012, 2016) and Association for Asian Studies conference (2013), and published two articles on the topic: 2015. “Between fan pilgrimage and dark tourism: competing agendas in overseas field learning,” *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, Volume 39(4): 568-583 (in which the above student feedback is found); 2014. “How ‘Green’ is Japan? Studying Environmental Issues in the Field,” *Education About Asia* 19(1): 18-21.

E. Flipped lectures. My most recent pedagogical innovation is a new lecture style that promotes active learning. This is not a “flipped classroom,” which is often narrowly defined as a video lecture viewed before/outside class and a discussion/practical format during the lecture meeting. I do not prepare and present a lecture, per se. Instead, I run the lecture like a seminar. Each week we engage in a close reading of one or more key texts. Students prepare for lecture by answering six critical thinking questions for each reading. We begin the lecture meeting with a warm-up discussion about a “home”-related song. Next, students break into groups of 3-4 to share their replies to the critical reading questions. Then, students pass the microphone around the theatre as groups report their collected responses. I mediate discussion through white board work, follow-up questions, and relevant anecdotes. I also prepare short lectures or videos that can be inserted when appropriate that provide necessary background or expand on ideas mentioned in the readings. For instance, when an author recently alluded to Benedict Anderson’s work on nationalism, I prepared a brief lecture about his work and shared a 3-minute clip of an interview he gave in 1994 about his notion of “imagined community.” This ten-minute aside supplemented our discussion on the nation-as-home without breaking its continuity. Students do not arrive expecting to listen to a 90-minute lecture, as in other modules. They arrive prepared for engagement with the material and know they will be expected to contribute in some way. We

learn from each other through the six critical thinking questions and the discussion that can lead in many directions. See extensive positive feedback my 2016 Peer Review.

Student feedback: Students seem to really respond to my experimental lecture design, which turns a large lecture module into a seminar. In the first instance (AY2014-15, Sem 2), I was encouraged by feedback like the following:

- “He conducts very thought-provoking discussions during the lecture, and makes students think critically. While this calls for (compared to other modules) intensive preparation for the lectures, this also factors in individual dedication and effort into the module. He is quirky, funny, informative and interesting. More importantly, he makes us talk about what we think, and individual thinking is one of the most important aspects of education. This style of teaching is refreshing and definitely effective, especially for a GEM of interest.”
- “Dr McMorrان is a very inspiring and passionate educator. His lessons are always lively, fun-filled, engaging and extremely thought provoking. He uses different materials (videos, clips, songs, etc...) to supplement readings and lectures. He also gives extremely detailed and valuable feedback to us in the form of peer review and individual and group assignments.”
- “Dr McMorrان was very knowledgeable on the subject. He made lectures very interesting and made links across various weeks and topics to help us better understand a more comprehensive view of the module. The way he facilitated the lecture was also useful as we were made to engage more actively with the readings instead of merely listening passively to a lecture.”
- “Prof McMorrان is perhaps one of the most engaging lecturers I have had. I appreciate the way lectures are being conducted, kind of in a tutorial style, where we had discussions. It made the lectures worth going to, as it wasn't just a presentation of the content that we could obtain easily from the readings and notes (like other modules).”

Sharing the innovation: I have not shared this with colleagues yet; however, my 2016 teaching peer review highlighted the value of this innovation. I may give a workshop on this practice or write a piece about it in the future.

## X. Reflections on Student Feedback

Over the years, my feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Repeated comments that I am most proud of include those that mention my passion and approachability; my willingness to listen to students and let them share ideas, regardless of the size of the class; and the benefits of my various pedagogical innovations (clickers, peer review, flipped lecture) on student learning. I will continue to work on these elements of my teaching in order to maintain them.

However, I have also received constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement. Table 5 features some of the most common suggestions, along with my responses.

Table 5: Student feedback and responses

Feedback (with representative comments)	Responses
<p>1. Provide more concrete directions for assignments</p> <p>“Please have more specific instructions for certain activities or assignments that has been assigned to students. Sometimes we do the assignments without knowing what it is for, and it is a little confusing as we try to link what we are doing to what we have learnt, and sometimes that does not tally.”</p> <p>“Too much flexibility and freedom can be a problem for students.”</p>	<p>Over the years my assignments have become more detailed, as have my rubrics. This is particularly the case for lower level modules. However, in upper level modules I try to be less concrete with my assignments, as I do not want students to feel confined by too narrow a guideline. This is especially true with the field studies module, where I want students to be inspired by what they experience in Japan and not limit what they might learn because of a narrowly-defined assignment.</p>
<p>2. Provide assignments and readings and assign groups for field studies module further in advance</p> <p>“It would be nice if the pre-field trip groups be decided earlier, so that group members can know each other and at least discuss a little on the presentations and projects”</p> <p>“Make known expectations for this module so students can prepare in advance in terms of their schedule. It would be better if the syllabus was released earlier, or project groupings made known in advance to allow preparation time and thus, better presentations.”</p>	<p>The field studies module is incredibly intense, both at NUS in the pre-departure orientation (4-5 days, 6+ hours per day) and in the field (10 days). In the first few years I commonly received complaints that the workload was too heavy and that students should have access to all materials farther ahead of time (1-2 months) so as to relieve some of the pressure. Beginning with year 4 I made materials available earlier and assigned groups. However, students found they were too busy with regular semester courses to begin work for the field studies module. I will continue to make the materials available early and will try to warn students of the intensive nature of the module. However, this seems to be a perennial problem that may be impossible to solve unless I shift the entire module to another month.</p>
<p>3. Provide more feedback</p> <p>“More in depth feedback over the whole course of the module (including during field trip)”</p> <p>“The feedbacks given are sometimes general and leaves students flailing. It will be helpful if they are more specific.”</p>	<p>It is always a challenge to provide sufficient feedback. This is particularly the case with a module like JS2010: Approaches to Japanese Studies. Since the students can write a research paper about a topic of their choice, I am sometimes left only able to provide feedback on the quality of their research process and writing skills. For some students, exploring a topic they are passionate about, but which they have only begun to address in an academic way (such as some element of popular culture), my lack of knowledge of the topic causes students concern or disappointment. I may not provide sufficient</p>

	<p>feedback regarding <i>what</i> to say about these topics, but I hope I am providing better feedback on <i>how</i> to say something significant. Incidentally, I am heartened that some students feel my feedback is sufficient:</p> <p>“He provides useful feedback and opinions. He is constantly pushing students to better the work they've already done”</p> <p>“The teacher is very approachable and gives useful feedback during consultations.”</p>
<p>4. Provide complete lecture notes</p> <p>“Give more complete lecture notes”  “If possible, could provide more detailed slides for easier reference &amp; note taking”  “He rarely gives full lecture slides available, making people rush to copy down the slide he showed on lectures instead of listening to him. My suggestion is either upload the full lecture slides or no lecture slides at all”</p> <p>“His lecture notes really have to be improved as they are way too brief and he often adds his own slides in which makes it inconvenient”</p> <p>“Blanks within slides are extremely stressful. Especially when the lecture was rushed due to time constraints, there wasn't sufficient time (sometimes) to fill in blanks.”</p>	<p>Many students complain because I leave blanks in some of my lecture notes. This is to encourage students to listen during lecture and to put what they hear in their own words. I explain this to students on Day 1, yet they still complain. I do not plan to alter this practice. However, in line with some students’ concerns that it is a problem when I rush, I have tried to be more cognizant of time management so as to avoid this issue. Some students appreciate the blanks, and I still believe it makes good pedagogical sense.</p> <p>Some supporting comments:  “He also let us fill in the blanks in lecture notes and that make us more attentive”</p> <p>“I like his style of notes- with the blanks, the plain white background, and it's format of being on ppt so I can easily add any additional stuff on the slides itself”</p>
<p>5. Improve time management</p> <p>“He tends to rush over certain slides”</p> <p>“Slow down the pace of his lectures and provide us more clicker questions”</p> <p>“spend less time on the first half of the lecture so it doesn't get too rushed at the end (:”</p> <p>“sometimes he kind of digress hence unable to finish content designated for that lecture”</p>	<p>Lecturing is a form of storytelling, and storytelling is best when it is not <i>too</i> practiced. This leads to interesting asides, which many students appreciate. However, it also means occasionally rushing to complete all slides. This was an issue in my first few years at NUS, as I was expected to provide students my slides ahead of time but did not know if I would complete them. Plus, the use of clickers means I sometimes stop to review a point. It is difficult to plan for such events. Over time, I have learned how to adjust content to fit the time, however, my lecture style and use of particular pedagogies mean time management will always be a potential issue.</p> <p>Some supporting comments:  “Dr. Chris has a flair for speech. His lectures are generally lively.”</p> <p>“Very passionate about his subject, very witty and can relate well with students. Make lectures fun through interactive clicker questions, but also stimulate deeper thinking that are relevant to society today in Japan and even Singapore”</p>

## **XI. Reflections on Peer Reviews**

### **A. GEM1046: Home – reviewed 16 February, 2016**

The reviewers praised my ability to engage students through my “flipped lecture” format. By “flipped lecture” I do not mean a “flipped classroom,” which is often narrowly defined as a video lecture viewed before/outside class and a discussion/practical format during the lecture meeting. My lecture resembles a seminar, in which, following a warm-up lecture on a piece of music related to the day’s topic, students break into groups of 3-4 to discuss 1-2 key readings. Then I pass a second microphone around the lecture theatre as groups report their collected responses. I mediate discussion through white board work, follow-up questions, and relevant anecdotes, as well as reminders of how student comments relate to ideas discussed in previous weeks. When necessary, I also prepare short lectures or videos that can be inserted when appropriate that provide necessary background or expand on ideas mentioned in the readings. However, for the most part I act on my feet.

Speaking specifically about the value of this lecture format in encouraging student engagement, one reviewer wrote, “The student engagement in this class was EXCELLENT! I was really impressed with how it was set up, the use of technology to facilitate the interactive processes, and the comfortableness students exhibited in its practice. It was really a lively and connected class. It was so great to see students actively taking part and wanting to contribute, fully engaged in listening to each other and having the confidence to disagree or to stretch a discussion further in a particular direction. The facilitation by Dr McMorrnan was very smooth and expertly executed.” Another commented, “Because of the strong focus on student work in the module, the lecturer acts more like a discussion facilitator than a lecturer in the classical sense, and there is a greater need for Chris to think on his feet and channel and synthesize the various views the students put forward in class. Chris’s goals of encouraging high levels of class preparation and student involvement are clearly achieved through adoption of this teaching format.”

I was especially pleased by one reviewer’s intention to emulate the “second microphone” approach, writing, “I was so inspired and motivated by this style of student engagement and facilitation that I tried to book a second mic for the honours class of 85 that I was to start teaching in week 7. Sadly I was told that only one mic would work in the seminar room the class was assigned - but I aspire to adapt this approach in my own teaching.”

Reviewers also spoke highly of my use of technology, my ability to demonstrate the relevance of the topic and encourage critical thinking, and my assessments, particularly the group fieldwork and presentations. Commenting specifically on the assessment rubrics, a reviewer intended to adopt some of my practices and encouraged that they be adopted throughout the faculty. “The rubrics for the assessment of the different pieces of coursework are very clear and I’m sure very useful for students. This is extremely good teaching practice and I would like to see it more encouraged in the faculty. There should probably be a set section on ‘assessment rubric’ in the description or assessment section on the IVLE to encourage more people to develop their own. I have decided that I will try and devise my own having seen Chris’.”

Reviewers also suggested room for improvement, such as incorporating more readings/content focused on Asia (or more specifically Singapore), in order to increase the subject’s relevance for students and (possibly) including a longer individual project. On the former, I will include 2-3 new such readings next year. On the latter, I hesitate because the module is already 115 students and can increase to a cap of 140 next year. A longer individual project (800-1000 words was suggested, as opposed to the current 500) will nearly double the time for reading, marking, and inputting marks. Also, since this GEM module attracts students of all levels and majors (from Year 1 Projects and Facilities Management majors, to Year 3

Chemistry majors, a longer essay might unfairly benefit FASS students (yesterday during a Peer Review workshop in tutorial I overheard a Year 4 Industrial Design major apologize to her group members, “Sorry guys, I haven’t written an essay in three years!”). Clearly, this GEM attracts a range of students with different strengths and deficiencies. Including longer or more complex readings, or longer essays, may widen the divide between the skills and sensibilities of the FASS students and the rest. Finally, if I did include a longer essay, it would only be possible with sufficient TA support or release of time from other duties.

#### B. JS2101: Approaches to Japanese Studies – reviewed 18 February, 2013

Reviewers noted my good rapport with students and clear delivery. They also pointed out the benefits of the plagiarism exercise I used to test student understanding of the content and encourage peer learning, as well as the overall positive interaction between students that I encourage in class. They wondered if the lecture material was too elementary. Based on student understanding of the content, I can attest that it was not too elementary for the majority of students. For those who quickly picked the content, the exercise enabled them first to show their understanding through paraphrasing its main points, then to explain the information to their peers.

Following on the suggestions made in this peer review, in the following year I raised the intellectual level of this day’s lecture content. However, I continued to have students read for “gaps,” since this is the most effective way I know to help students understand what authors are doing in lit reviews, book reviews, etc. Also, since these reviewers wavered between suggesting my lecture material was too “elementary” and my exercises were “above their heads,” I chose to keep the bar high on both fronts. Overall, the reviewers called me “an effective teacher” and praised my efforts at taking “proper scholarly standards very seriously.”

Reviewers stated that my use of technology exceeded that used in most other courses. In this particular year, I received an iPad for each student through a CIT grant. My main motivation was to enable students to take notes and read papers on the device, in order to create an electronic archive of notes, readings, and other materials easily-retrievable in the future. I also linked every device to an AppleTV, which allowed us to switch between instructor and student iPads, thus displaying different screens for all to see. This allowed us to see each student’s annotations on readings, conceptual frameworks, and more. Despite the learning curve and time involved, the reviewers suggested it was worth it. Finally, reviewers thought my assessments “reasonable, conscientious, and scholarly relevant.”

## **XII. Efforts to Improve Teaching**

### A. Attendance at SoTL conferences (or conferences with a SoTL element)

- Meetings of the American Association of Geographers (2016) – panelist and speaker
- CIT BuzzEd Conference (2015) – invited speaker and attendee
- 7th International Conference on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2014) – panel organizer and attendee
- Meetings of the Association for Asian Studies (2013) - speaker
- CIT BuzzEd Conference (2013) – invited speaker and attendee
- Teaching 3.11: Issues, Materials, Pedagogy and Research. Sophia University, Japan (2012) – attendee
- Meetings of the American Association of Geographers (2012) – speaker
- CIT BuzzEd Conference (2012) – attendee
- 6th International Conference on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2011) – attendee

#### B. Attendance at Center for the Development of Teaching and Learning courses

- Completed Professional Development Program (PDP – total of 48 hours) (2013)
- Completed three-day PDP teaching orientation (2011) and attended workshops (2010-present)

#### C. Other efforts to improve teaching

- Co-organized “Teaching Japanese Popular Culture” conference at NUS in Nov 2012, which attracted over 40 global scholars and led to a special issue of a journal and an edited volume.
- Occasional reflection on teaching and learning via “Learning Spaces” blog (<http://blog.nus.edu.sg/mcmorran/>)

### **XIII. Curriculum Consultation**

I have been consulted by groups within and beyond NUS about their curriculum and development plans. These include the following:

- In September 2015 I was invited to provide feedback on the newly-approved WEC modules in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. I was also invited to be one of the three inaugural faculty whose online lectures would serve as the foundation for a new hybrid course taken by 2000+ incoming students each year. Due to my pedagogical concerns with the “dual-instructor flipped classroom” model that will be used, I declined to participate for now.
- Given my experience leading students to Minamata and teaching about the various controversies surrounding Minamata disease and its aftermath, in May 2014 I was consulted by Prof. Tanaka Akio of Kumamoto University, regarding the University’s plan to develop a field-learning station in Minamata.
- In September 2013 I attended a workshop in Bangkok organized by Kyushu University, at which members discussed potential exchange opportunities between Kyushu University, NUS, Ateneo de Manila, University of Malaya, and Chulalongkorn (Thailand), as part of Kyushu University’s “Reinventing Japan” learning initiative. I also collaborated with this program by co-leading my “Field Studies in Japan” module with students from these other three universities (2014). All students and instructors traveled together to two locations in Hiroshima prefecture, both to engage with local activists and business owners about efforts to preserve an historically-important port landscape, and to visit established, UNESCO-listed heritage sites: the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Itsukushima Shrine.