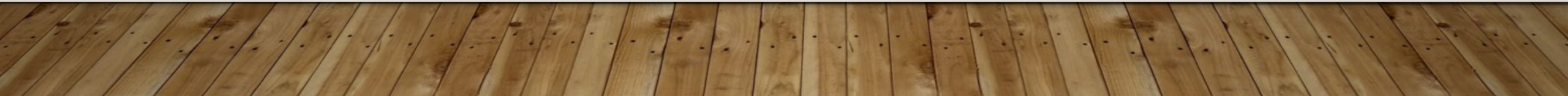


# WEAVING ORAL HISTORY INTO LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CLASSES

---

KUN SHAN CAROLYN LEE & MAHA HOUSSAMI

ASIAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES DEPARTMENT



# **CHN232 AND AMES320S**

## **CROSS-PROGRAM & CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE**

---

Background of the project:

- Mission from the DUS (Humanity Write Large)
- Project goals
- 30 students from CHN232 Intermediate Chinese for Bilingual Learners (Instructors: Wenjia Ma and Ya-Chuan Chou)

All students have Chinese language background.

- 18 students from AMES 320S Refugee Lives (Instructors: Maha Houssami and Nancy Kalow)

Not all of the students have Arabic language background.

# RATIONALE OF THE PROJECT FROM CHN 232:

---

- Freeman claimed in 1990 that heritage language is a national treasure. For heritage learners and minority language communities, Fisherman argued, “it is the historical and personal connection to the heritage language that is salient and not the actual proficiency of individual students” (in Valdes, p. 411, 2005).
- Heritage learners’ learning needs (Ding, 2013; He, 2010; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007)
- Experiential Learning (Dean, 1999; Helou & Newsome, 2018)
- Community-based language learning (Clifford & Reisinger, 2019)

CBLL refers specifically to interactions that take place between L2 students and heritage/native speakers of the target language residing in the United States.



# CHN232 DIASPORA PROJECT: PRE- TASK

---

Texts: 「美国的华侨」、「华人需不需要政治代表」 (*Oh, China* by CP Chou, et al.) :

- Explore personal immigration experience.
- Learn about the history of Chinese immigration to the United States
- Focus-on-form & discussion, assessment



Chinese Exclusion Act  
of 1882 (排华法案)



# CHN232 DIASPORA PROJECT: DURING THE TASK

- Two students as a group: Design the project; research the community of Chinese immigrants in the NC Triangle Area.
- Teachers' support: Help connect the students with the local communities; Give advice on the students' project proposals.
- Brainstorming the discussion questions for the meeting with AMES Refugee Lives.
- Nancy Kalow from the Documentary Program
  - How to create a documentary?
  - How to prepare interview questions?  
(interview protocol, ethic consent)
- Prepare the interview questions.
- Arrange the meeting time and conduct the interviews.



# CHN232 DIASPORA PROJECT: DURING THE TASK

---

- Video post production: Editing the footage into a 4-5 minute video; create the subtitles. (Audio project for AMES 320S students)
- Listen or watch the other class' projects before the large group meeting.
- Group discussion
- Reflective discussion
- Final project: Reflective writing (2200-2500 words)





# “Local” is “global.”

<https://sites.duke.edu/chineseindurham/2017/04/09/karen-lizzy/>

## Chinese in Durham

-A Community-Based Language Initiative of Duke Service-Learning



## Welcome!

Chinese Americans have started to migrate to U.S.A. since last century. Some of them came for education, some for living, some for political asylum. Each of them has a different story and their lives differ a lot from their families in China. Come join us to learn more about the Chinese community in U.S.A.

**Contributors** This collection of stories from Chinese-speaking community members is collected and edited by Duke undergraduate students in the following courses:

- **Chinese 232:** “Literacy in Chinese II” (Spring 2017, instructors: Wenja Ma, Ya-Chuan Chou, Menghuan Li)

### Language Sites

- [Languages in Durham](#)
- [Latinos in/en Durham](#)
- [French in Durham](#)
- [Arabic Communities](#)
- [Persian in Triangle](#)
- [Kreyòl in Durham & Duke](#)
- [Chinese in Durham](#)

# AMES 320S: REFUGEE LIVES

- Refugee Lives students study and analyze theory, policy, and history of the Arab refugee crisis over the last 70 years.
- 
- Guest speakers invited represent the interdisciplinary scope of refugee studies. For example, historian Adam Metsyan presented the origins of the refugee crisis in Iraq, Palestine, and Syria; Fuqua professor Jon Fjeld led a class about social entrepreneurship in the refugee context.
  - Academic study of the refugee crisis paired with creating oral history projects, archived at Duke Libraries and available to the public on the "Arabic Communities" site sponsored by Duke Service-Learning (<https://sites.duke.edu/arabiccommunities/stories/syria/>). In spring 2017, students worked with Syrian refugees residing in Canada, Brazil, Italy, Germany, and Lebanon. The teaching of documentary practice emphasizes the ethics and relationship building that are the foundation of oral history.
  - The oral history research in AMES 320S builds on the Arab refugee oral history project directed by miriam cooke, Maha Houssami, and Nancy Kalow, which was funded by the Mellon Foundation's Humanities Writ Large program.



## NaTakallam In The Press

# “To Understand the Others:” Interview with K.

Posted by [Jesse Remedios](#) on March 27, 2017



Before war broke out in Syria, K was a loving son and brother, a passionate student, and a hard worker. After receiving his degree in English Literature from Damascus University in 2009, K was eventually drafted into the Syrian military and forced to fight in the civil war as a soldier under Assad's regime. His experience in the war changed his life, both in terms of his outlook and eventual decision to flee Syria for Lebanon in order to escape violence he no longer felt he could participate in. K now lives in Germany as a refugee along with his wife, a fellow Syrian refugee herself. In this clip, K shares a story from the war that strengthened his belief in God and the inherent decency of humanity.



# IMPACT OF THE REFUGEE LIVES CLASS

---

- extended and ethical direct contact with refugees is a transformational experience for our Duke students, many of whom plan on further engagement with the global refugee crisis.
- The partnership between Asian & Middle Eastern Studies and the Center for Documentary Studies has created a rigorous academic and documentary arts approach to the refugee crisis.
- Meaningful research and in-depth study contribute to exceptional student research, both in oral history and in a traditional academic final paper.

# STUDENT OBSERVATIONS

---

Noah noted the **power of individual stories** in interviews with his refugee community partner, Saeed, who "thoroughly explained the trials of his attempt to make it to Sweden. I know that during this time I did my best to keep my mouth from going agape, as Saeed recounted every aching minute of his story with heart-wrenching detail. "



Our students learned from their refugee partners, as Emily recounts:

"Hearing [K] talk about his religious beliefs and how important they are to him was really moving. It really makes me want to share his story because more people should listen and understand how their misconceptions about Muslims are wrong. I'd like to hear more about what he draws from the most in the Quran because that's not something I know much about and after reading it so many times he must have a really good understanding. This just **makes me wish those people who support politics against refugees would actually listen to their stories.**"



---

Libby also noted that the Refugee Lives class changed her views: "Another observation of Carmen's that struck me was how she describes **common misconceptions Canadians have about refugees: that they think refugees have never had any education, don't know what computers and cell phones are, etc.** I know that **to be quite accurate and to be honest, I had similar misconceptions before taking this class and getting to know Carmen.**"





**Students uncovered truths about the lived reality of refugees in countries of first asylum, such as Hayes in hearing about being Syrian in Lebanon when one is not wanted**

---

"Gueya talked about how, in Lebanon, you can find Syrians at every corner and then [she] went into more depth about the struggles of the Syrian community there. They have so much trouble finding work – she told a really great anecdote about getting interviewed and having a future employer asking her not to speak in Syrian Arabic so that the customers would not know she is Syrian."



- Andrew, regarding interviewing techniques with Abdul Kader, observed: "He was able to show a lot more emotional and introspective depth [in the second interview], and I feel that is partly due to the quality of questions that my teammates have been asking, veering away from stock or one-dimensional questions about his life and, instead, pressing him about his self-identity and his concerns."
- Regarding the oral history approach to interviewing Saeed, Hannah noted, **"the most interesting and abundant responses we received were to open-ended questions that enabled him to elaborate on themes of family, loss, love and what it means to be a refugee in pursuit of a safe and stable environment."**



This general narrative continued, to the point that it almost felt like questions were merely transitions into the next topic he wanted to tell us about." In the second interview, Meade noted her interviewee's response to the question, "**Could you ever see Germany as home?**" Meade relates, "**He paused and stayed silent for a long moment and then emotionally told us that no**, though he likes it there for now, Germany could never be his home, he will never feel at home there." Meade talked about the paradox of her interviewee's optimism in the face of so much difficulty and separation from his family: Abdul's consistent positive outlook "challenges my assumption that Abdul would be in despair or at least deeply disheartened by his life experiences."





- "My overall impression of him is that he is an amazing person. He thinks so deeply about each of our questions and wants to give us all the information he can to make us understand what he has gone through. I hope we can get these stories out somehow to really make a difference. When he told us he has always wanted to study in America it broke my heart that I couldn't encourage him knowing about the ban and our President's views on refugees. I am ashamed of my country because of that."
- 

- Jesse concluded, **"I really am grateful for the opportunity we had to learn from K's story."** Not only was it helpful to become more aware of all the prevalent issues surrounding the current refugee crisis, but I consider myself lucky to hear first hand from such a brave individual and connect with him on a personal level. **This has made what was before a distant news story on the other side of the world a crisis that is much more real, close, and urgent."**

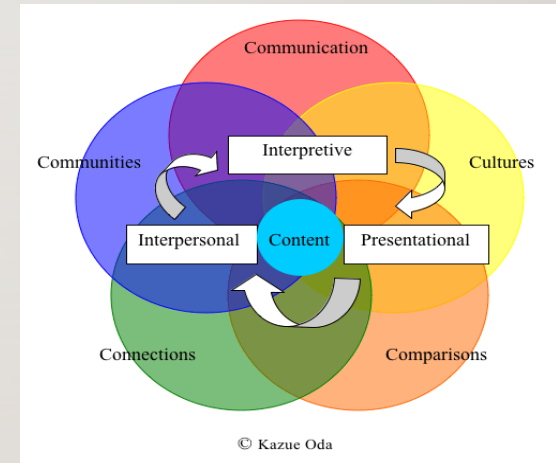




# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

---

- Asian and Middle Eastern Studies department
- Duke Service Learning office
- Humanities Writ Large
- Center for Documentary Studies, Nancy Kalow
- David Paletz Innovative Teaching award committee (FFF)
- Vice Provost for the Arts (financial support for Natakallam)
- Students who participated in this initiative



# BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

Feedback examples from CHN232:

---

- I really enjoyed this activity, namely the meeting/exchange when we were able to discuss with the Arabic students the differences not just between Chinese and Syrian cultures and movement, but also what it means to be an immigrant or refugee.
- I'd recommend that this program lasts an entire semester, with an organized event monthly. I feel that the post discussion needs to be larger with other groups. Possibly provide a list of concepts that the groups should have talked about while watching other groups videos and stories about their interviews.
- I learned a lot from the AMES student, but I felt that I didn't have much to contribute to the conversation because their project was semester long, and ours was very short. We had to find out interviewees, whereas they were paired with theirs. It was a good learning experience for me, but I wish I had more time/understanding of the project on my part.
- More deliberate programming- e.g. give a lot of questions/discussion topics. Also, we could have more time with the other students and engage in more activities. It would also have been beneficial for the Arabic team to have been required to watch our videos.

Go raibh maith agat  
Merci  
AITÄH  
Shukren  
Spasiba  
спасибо  
gracias  
grazie  
Danke  
σας ευχαριστώ  
謝謝

Thank You!

DANK U

cảm ơn bạn  
hvala  
teşekkür edirem  
MUQUM  
ありがとう