

# Harvard Summer Program in Olympia and Nafplion, Greece Comparative Cultures Seminar Newsletter #1 Spring 2011

The Harvard Summer Program in Greece is glad to introduce the first edition of its Comparative Cultures Seminar (CCS) Newsletter. A quarterly publication, the newsletter will help us showcase Program developments and keep in touch with our alumni and friends.

*Enjoy reading and stay tuned!*



Bourtzi (Nafplion), Lisa Wetstone 2010

## **Alumni Reunion**

In December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010 several of our alumni had the chance to meet again at Harvard and celebrate the Program's tenth anniversary along with faculty members. Many friends and longtime supporters of the Program also honored us with their presence. Following a welcoming speech by Sahar Bazzaz, the current Program Co-Coordinator, we had a chance to revisit highlights from the past decade and talk about the future. We hope that the world-wide alumni network that is being formed will be a strong asset in the Program's future development. This Newsletter, as well as our program website, [www.comparative-cultures-seminar.org](http://www.comparative-cultures-seminar.org), will be important tools in keeping our community connected.

## **Greece and China**

Since 2007, the Program has expanded its intellectual and institutional collaborations to include China, initially with Fudan University in Shanghai and soon thereafter with Peking University in Beijing (since 2010). This collaboration was kindled by a visit, in 2007, of Professors Wei Zhang (Fudan University) and Yang Huang (Peking University), who visited Greece and the Program on the invitation of Professor Gregory Nagy and the Center for Hellenic Studies (CHS). Since 2008, the CHS offers two generous scholarships to students from these universities who major in Classics. The Chinese students have consistently made a crucial contribution to the intellectual and social life of the Program, and have provided a fresh and rigorous comparative focus to our study of the legacies of Hellenism and concepts of empire. We asked our Faculty collaborators and student alumni to share with us their experiences of the Program, and Greece more generally. We have great pleasure in dedicating the first issue of our Newsletter to them, and look forward to further expanding and strengthening our links to China.

Students at the Monemvasia rock, Alyssa Murray 2010



*It's been a decade...*

It was on a balmy evening in late June 2002 that the Program faculty, after a long and dusty road trip, arrived at Hotel Europa in Olympia to launch the first session of the Harvard Summer Program in Greece. Desks and chairs were barely in place at the local high school a few days later, when the Program's first students arrived. Ten years on, the Program has established itself as one of the longest-running and most successful Harvard study abroad programs thanks to the commitment of the founding faculty and the excellence of its students. Participants have now come from over fifteen countries, and we are very proud of our more than 130 alumni. The Program's distinguishing characteristic has been its interdisciplinary, trans-generational, research-driven and discussion-based focus. For the first six years, our basis was Olympia. Since 2008, thanks to our affiliation with the Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies, we spend the last two weeks of the Program in the seaside town of Nafplion, where classes are held at the Center's gorgeous neoclassical building, with access to all of Harvard's electronic resources: a splendid place for Program participants to write those final papers!



❖ Professor **Yang Huang**, Department of History; Director, Centre for Classical Studies, Peking University

My involvement with the Centre of Hellenic Studies and the Harvard Summer Program in Greece came with my teaching and research interests, and a strong urge of mine to promote Classical Studies in China. I started teaching ancient history in 1991 in Fudan University, Shanghai, when I finished my studies in London, but my research interest has always been Greek history.

As a result, I also began to teach Greek history and the ancient Greek language to my students. In the course of this I was joined by several colleagues, especially Dr. Wei Zhang. As our teaching expanded we attracted more and more students, and we began to develop a serious Classical Studies program which was something new in China. It was at this moment that we contacted Professor Gregory Nagy, Director of the CHS, in the hope of getting help and collaboration for our endeavour. As a first step, the CHS offered to sponsor two Fudan University students to participate in the Harvard Summer Program in Greece, since 2007. In 2009 I moved to Peking University to embark on a new mission, that is, to create a Centre for Classical Studies for it. The CHS has consequently extended its sponsorship to Peking University students.

The CHS sponsorship is a huge boon to our course. Chinese students from two of the top universities in the country have the precious opportunity to study together with an international group of students in a fantastic program that is directed and taught by a group of international scholars. They also have the rare opportunity to examine with their own eyes some aspects of Greek civilization, and to communicate with the Greek people. Every student who has participated in the program cannot but share that unforgettable experience with us and his or her fellow students with excitement and gratitude. So far the program is still the first and only one that offers Chinese students this kind of opportunity in the field of Hellenic and Mediterranean studies. As we are still in the initial stage of our enterprise and still lack the necessary resources, continued and expanding support and collaboration from institutions like the CHS are vital to our course. It is my belief that for us Chinese Classical Studies are not only the end itself, they are also the means by which we reach a better understanding of the West, and hence of ourselves, we share an important part of the human heritage, and we engage in serious dialogue with the international community. Hence they are all the more meaningful for a China headed for fully joining the international community.



❖ **Wei Zheng**, Professor of Classics, Department of History, Fudan University in Shanghai.

I was educated in the United States, receiving a BA in Classics from Cornell and a PhD in Classics from Johns Hopkins. My primary scholarly interests are in ancient Greek literature and philosophy, especially Homer and archaic poetry, the tragedians and Plato. My research has focused on two areas: first, the origins of ancient Greek poetics, especially the poetics of education among the archaic poets within their social and intellectual context; second, the intellectual history of Plato's conception of philosophy.

It was a great honor for me to be invited as a guest to the Harvard Summer School at Olympia in July, 2007. Although I stayed for only one of the five weeks of the summer school, I immediately realized that the program was a great idea put into efficient practice. Learning about the ancient Mediterranean in a

number of intensive courses taught by some of best scholars in the world, visiting the sites guided by experts in archaeology and art history, participating in cultural activities such as enjoying a performance in the ancient theatre, communicating with students from different cultural backgrounds, etc, everything worked in a seamless whole. Personally, I was struck by the living presence of ancient Olympia, and how teaching and learning could make its ancient voices resonate after more than two millennia. For a Hellenist such as myself, there was no experience more inspiring than being there in the company of equally enthusiastic teachers and students. It was the year before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, so I felt that this wonderful experience was a personal pilgrimage to kindle the Olympic fire in my heart and spirit.

Starting in 2008, our students have had the privilege to take part in the summer program at Olympia, a unique opportunity I believe among Chinese students of ancient Greece. To tell from the public presentations they did after their return, it was obvious that the experience was a great moment in their life and scholarly training. The ties that are fashioned among Harvard, Greece and Chinese students are most treasured, a tribute to a truly multi-cultural effort to understand a great ancient culture and thereby to enhance mutual understanding of all those involved in the process.

**TAO GUO (FUDAN UNIVERSITY, 2010)**

I am Tao Guo, a graduate student in department of History at Fudan University, majoring in ancient Greek history. My main interest is ancient Greek historiography, especially Herodotus in his near-eastern context. Last year, I was very lucky to participate in Harvard Summer Program in Greece because of the scholarship offered by CHS. I have collected

**KEJI SONG (FUDAN UNIVERSITY, 2008)**

I took part in the program in 2008. I was so lucky that I and Bai were the first two Chinese students to join the program. I was a student majoring in





so many wonderful memories during that unforgettable summer, including not only the excursions to archeological sites and museums provided by the program, but also many lovely friends I have met in

Greece! Here, any time and in any place, anybody could share his idea with smart students coming from different cultures, America, the UK, Greece, Turkey and China. The interesting discussion about some fundamental concepts in ancient Chinese philosophy at dinner time still keeps in my mind today. Actually, although nearly half of one year has passed by, my heart is still in Greece, together with our group.

### **JIANRONG QUE (PEKING UNIVERSITY, 2010)**

I am Jianrong Que, an MA candidate at the Department of History, Peking University. I was honored to be selected to participate in the program last summer (2010).



Before this program, I had studied modern Greek for nearly two years and was determined to dedicate myself to the study of modern Greece, and this program enriched my experience. The curriculum covered

all the historical periods of Greek history, from the classical period to the twentieth century, and paid special attention to interesting topics such as the various forms of Greek art, which enabled me to explore Hellenism from different perspectives. Through the heated discussions with professors and classmates, I not only learned about their viewpoints and modes of thinking, but also had the chance to share with them my ideas from the perspective of a Chinese student. I also feel very lucky to attend the conference and lectures of visiting professors and scholars, which very much broadened my horizon. And I became more and more interested in observing how modern Greeks preserved and interpreted their heritage. At this point, I think, we are eager to share these thoughts. Last but not least, this program provided an excellent platform for me to communicate and make friends with professors and students from various cultures. In spite of the differences in

national background and academic fields, it is the passion for Hellenism that brought us together. The intellectual sparks we've inspired and the friendships seeded in that month will always be a treasure to cherish in my memory. Many thanks to the Center for Hellenic Studies and congratulations to the Harvard Summer Program in Greece on her tenth birthday!

World History then. And now I am a teacher at Fudan University, giving lectures on Art History. Together with my academic advisor Prof. Huang Yang, we translated the book *Democracy and Classical Greece* by J.K. Davies and it was published in June 2010. I should thank the program for all these. Great experiences to open my eyes and great teachers to open my mind.

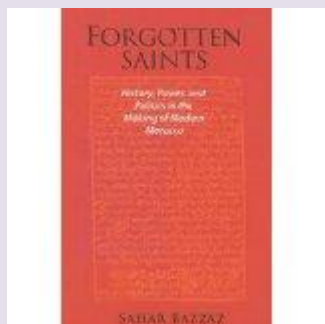
### **BAI CHUNXIAO (FUDAN UNIVERSITY, 2008)**

Professor Gregory Nagy and his colleagues have opened a window into classical studies for Chinese young students, by providing scholarships to the program. The study experience was so amazing that I vividly remember several scenes: Anna Stavrakopoulou and Christos Giannopoulos worked extremely hard to manage the program; Emily Allen guided us around the archaeological site and the museum of ancient Olympia with much patience; George Syrimis had great charisma and enthusiasm when he taught us how to understand Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and Cavafy's poems; Sahar Bazzaz made the seminar on *The British Rule in India* by Karl Marx and *The Conditions of Working Class in England in 1844* by Friedrich Engels become an insightful talk when she found there were Indian and Chinese students in the program; Professor Nagy was happy and grateful whenever the students found any small errors in his forthcoming book on Homer, etc. In a word, all of these show me what Harvard spirit is.

After the study in Harvard Summer Program, I went to King's College London and studied there for one year. Then I returned to Shanghai and received my PhD degree at Fudan University in the summer of 2010. Currently, I am an assistant research fellow at the Department of History, Zhejiang University and have an opportunity to continue my working on Thucydides. I gratefully acknowledge Professor Nagy and Emily who gave me some very helpful suggestions about my final paper for the program, and this paper finally developed into my PhD dissertation (it is about the human condition in the view of Thucydides).

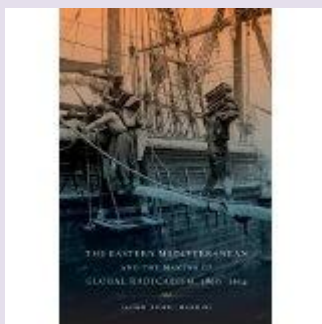


## Faculty Publications



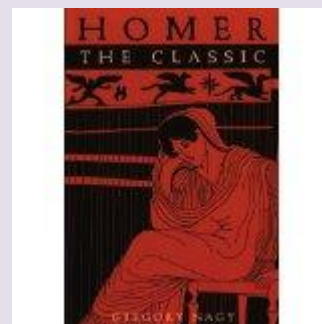
Sahar Bazzaz

**Forgotten Saints:  
History, Power and Politics in the  
Making of Modern Morocco**  
Harvard Center for Middle Eastern  
Studies, 2010



Ilham Khuri-Makdisi

**The Eastern Mediterranean and the  
Making of Global Radicalism,  
1860-1914**  
University of California Press, 2010



Gregory Nagy

**Homer the Classic**  
Center for Hellenic Studies, 2010

### *Useful to Know*

- ✓ The dates for the summer 2011 are June 27<sup>th</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup>. Please let us know if you are going to be in the area – we would be delighted to see you!
- ✓ The Program's third annual research workshop on the theme "Imperial Objects in Circulation" will take place this summer (June 21st – 23rd, 2011), at the Center for Hellenic Studies in Nafplion, Greece. Program faculty as well as distinguished guests from Harvard and other universities will be participating. More to follow in the next volume of the Newsletter.

***We are looking forward to your feedback!  
Please feel free to send us photos and texts  
for the next newsletter that will come out in Summer 2011.***

***We will be more than happy to host any other news you want to share within  
our network of more than 160 people – alumni and friends!***

***For more information, contact us:  
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