



Monthly newsletter: November 2019

Message from Keith

Should the Hong Kong government register journalists and issue them an official press card?

This question of journalist accreditation was first broached by police officials who complained that some Hong Kong protesters were posing as reporters, with yellow vests and helmets falsely labelled, "PRESS." They complained the riot police had no way to tell real working reporters from those they deemed "fake journalists."

Journalist organisations, media outlets and journalism educators [sounded the alarm](#), warning that any accreditation system was likely to be abused, handing the government to power to decide who was a real journalist and who was not. Chief Executive Carrie Lam was pressed to make a [statement on October 19](#) denying any plans for a centralised registration system.

But Lam also said she had no plans to withdraw the ill-conceived, much despised China extradition bill—a few weeks before she withdrew it. So her statement saying there were "no plans" has been met with suspicion.

Proponents of a press accreditation system say legitimate journalists have no cause for concern, since the practice is common in many other countries, around the region and in many Western democracies. That much is true.

When I landed in Manila for my first foreign posting as a bureau chief for *The Washington Post*, I was issued a colourful yellow and blue press card that allowed me to enter Malacañang presidential palace, the foreign ministry, and the Philippine military headquarters in Quezon City. Traveling anywhere in the country, that press card opened doors—governors, mayors, provincial warlords, local military commanders and even Communist rebels and army mutineers all recognised the press card and gave me access and interviews.

France had a journalist card issued annually by a section of the French foreign ministry. It was a straightforward affair—I brought a letter from the home office, and was handed this card with my photo and the French tricolour, that allowed me to stroll into the Élysée Palace or cross police lines during any protest march. One added benefit; reporters with a valid press card could enter any national museum without charge—and not just in France, throughout the European Union.



The most convenient press card I had was also one of the hardest to obtain—the New York Police Department press pass. With the NYPD card, I could enter police headquarters easily, I could talk to the cops on the streets, and during crime scenes I could enter into the cordoned off areas behind the yellow “Do Not Cross” tape. To get the card, renewed annually, I just had to show I had written at least three stories involving the NYPD in the previous 12 months—which meant a spate

of cop stories in the Post every December.

The difference in all those countries was that the press card was issued to facilitate access and reporting—not to cull the number of journalists. One difference now is that recent years have seen an explosion in the number of journalists—not just those working for major newspapers, like I was. Now the media landscape is populated by freelancers, citizen journalists, part-time bloggers and tweeters, reporters and photographers for startup websites, and recently graduated journalism students still trying to sell their first story or picture. Why should anyone—let alone a government official—tell them they are not "real" journalists?

For me, official press cards over the years actually opened doors and made my job easier. In Hong Kong, in the current atmosphere of distrust of the government and the police, there is a real fear a press card will become a tool of control.

If you think that won't happen, just look north to China, [one of the world's most restrictive places in the world for the press](#), ranking 177 out of 180 countries. There, the accreditation system is routinely used to harass and intimidate foreign correspondents. Write something the Chinese Communist Party dislikes, and officials will delay your accreditation, often by months, or dangle the threat of revoking your press credentials altogether—as they did most recently with [Wall Street Journal Beijing reporter Chun Han Wong](#), and many others in the past.

In the past, I might have said a press accreditation system in Hong Kong was worth considering. But in the current situation, it would likely become another step in the gradual erosion of press freedom.

Keith Richburg
Director of the JMSC

Highlights



[Willy Wo-Lap Lam](#), the author of [The Fight for China's Future: Civil Society vs. the Chinese Communist Party](#), gave a talk at HKU on 6 November where he shared his assessment of Xi Jinping's hard-authoritarian leadership & the opportunities this has given civil society groups to promote the rule of law, media freedom and other global norms in China.



Watch the entire event here

Student & Alumni News



FALSE: No, Government Flying Service did not hang a banner to support "genuine universal..."
This image is digitally manipulated. It is a composite of two pictures.

ShanLi
Nov 1 · 2 min read



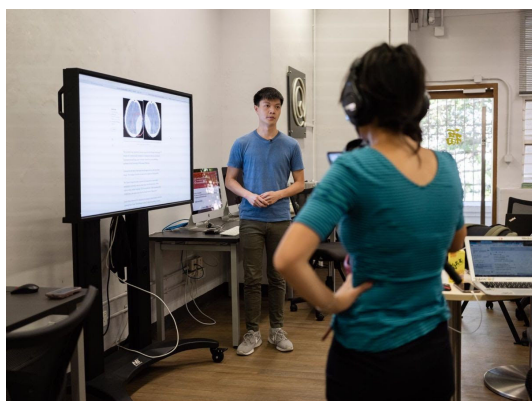
does
ted

FALSE: No, police commander did not admit to sexual assaults



False: No, this poster supporting Hong Kong police is not in train stations all...

We are proud to announce the launch of our student-driven factchecking project [Annie Lab](#), in collaboration with ANNIE, the Asian Network of News and Information Educators. [Dr. Masato Kajimoto](#), who set up and leads the project, said "We believe journalists must learn how to navigate the complex media landscape, identify problematic information and effectively combat the spread of false claims and 'fake news'."



The daily factchecking newsroom, housed in Eliot Hall, is currently focusing on Hong Kong protest-related rumours and will switch gears to look at the Taiwan presidential election next month. All stories by Annie Lab are written by our student reporters and can be found on their [website](#). You can also follow them on [Twitter](#).

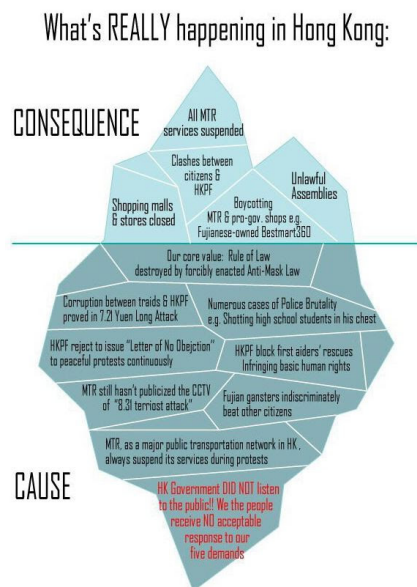
Faculty & Staff News



The documentary [M for Malaysia](#), for which [Ruby Yang](#) served as creative producer and was edited at the [Hong Kong Documentary Initiative](#) facilities, will be [representing Malaysia for the Oscars](#) in the International Feature Film category, marking the first time for a documentary film to represent the country. The film also completed a four-week theatrical



run in Malaysia, the first time a Malaysian documentary was screened in theatres nationwide. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, whose campaign was documented in the film, attended the premiere in Kuala Lumpur on 10 September with the production team.



[Dr. King-wa Fu](#) co-hosted a seminar with [Dr. Gary Tang](#) of the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong about "[The Era of Post Truth: Fighting the Information War](#)" on 15 October at JMISC. The seminar was held in partnership with [Matters Lab](#), a content platform co-founded by JMISC alumna Annie Zhang.

Seminar Series - Learning as Boundary Crossing

Seminar #1

1 Nov Fri

Crossing the Cultural Boundaries: Designing Meaningful Intercultural Interactions

12:45pm - 2:00pm RR321, Run Run Shaw Bldg

Speakers

 **Kevin Sites**
JMISC, HKU

 **Dr. Jason Pun**
Faculty of Science, HKU

Facilitator: Dr. Tracy Zou, Assistant Professor, CETL

Organised by: Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

Associate Professor of Practice [Kevin Sites](#) took part in an ongoing seminar series facilitated by HKU about "Learning as Boundary Crossing." The seminar explores how students learn as they cross boundaries between classroom learning and real-world experiences, cultural exchange, and interdisciplinary learning. Find out more [here](#).



Kevin Sites and [AJ Libunao](#) have been volunteering with [EmpowerU](#), a non-profit in Hong Kong that provides learning opportunities for domestic workers. The classes are held at HKU, with many staff and students volunteering as facilitators and instructors. Kevin and AJ teach photography and video storytelling under the Media Studies stream.



[The Foreign Correspondents' Club Hong Kong](#) held a follow-up legal and safety workshop on 23 October. Our media law expert [Sharron Fast](#) and Stevo Stephen, news risk senior manager at *The Wall Street Journal* gave a breakfast briefing about "[From Water Cannons to the Face Mask Ban: Dealing with Increased Risks at the Protests](#)." Watch [here](#).

JMSC in the news



(14 October) South China Morning Post: [Hong Kong protests and 'fake news': in the psychological war for hearts and minds, disinformation becomes a weapon used by both sides](#)



(23 October) Nikkei Asian Review: [From Hong Kong to the NBA, how China is losing the media war](#)



(23 October) The Washington Post: [Hong Kong's domestic workers feel caught between both sides in information war](#)



(23 October) New Atlanticist: [Can Beijing export its manipulation of information?](#)



(23 October) The Christian Science Monitor: [Four months into protests, Hong Kongers' distrust runs deep](#)



(29 October) Quartz: [Students in Hong Kong used fax machines to fight Chinese censorship of Tiananmen Square](#), by King-wa Fu



(1 November) Global Voices: [Beijing constructs an "independence" plot for Hong Kong protests through information operations](#), by Weiboscope project team



(5 November) Thomson Reuters Foundation: [Crops in the clouds: The rise of rooftop farming in space-starved Hong Kong](#), by Marianne Bray

Coming up



Masato Kajimoto will be joining three other researchers from the [Faculty of Social Sciences](#) at the "Hong Kong 2020" Forum on 8 November. Keith Richburg will moderate. The speakers will discuss how politics, media, social structures, and social and psychological support should respond as part of the recovery and rebuilding process in Hong Kong following the current social crisis sparked by the extradition bill. Details [here](#).



King-wa Fu will be speaking at the "Fact or Fake" Forum organized by the [Project Citizens Foundation](#) on 9 November. Speakers will discuss how factchecked stories about the ongoing protest movement in Hong Kong can come through while an information war is being

Bachelor of Journalism

JMSC, HKU

A communications-focused
double major degree for the digital age

waged on both sides locally and internationally. Details [here](#).

We will be holding a [Bachelor of Journalism](#) Admissions Webinar on 18 November. The 45-min interactive webinar will allow prospective students to hear from professors and current students, and ask questions in a live chat room. During the session, we will also be running instant polls, so we can get to know what students expect from their college experience. Details [here](#).

