



Monthly newsletter: April 2020

Message from Keith

Greetings, and I hope you are all staying healthy and safe.

Much has changed since my last message to you, when I informed you that the university had suspended face-to-face classes for March. Since then, as you are well aware, the coronavirus outbreak, which for a time seemed contained here in Hong Kong, has become a global pandemic. And Hong Kong is now experiencing what experts fear is a “second wave” of infections, precipitating far more stringent curbs on public gatherings.

The new situation has unfortunately impacted us here at JMSC, and I wanted to keep all of you updated with how we are managing this turn of events.

First, we have been forced to cancel most of our face-to-face classes for the remainder of this semester, with just a couple of exceptions allowed for two Master of Journalism classes in documentary film production and also TV news, which requires some hands-on instruction in our studio. All other classes have reverted to an online-only format.

Shifting courses online is not what we wanted, not what our instructors spent time preparing for and not what our students expect. But in the midst of this unprecedented worldwide lockdown, this is something that schools everywhere from Asia to Europe to North America are coping with. We are different only in that we switched to an online format a few weeks earlier as the crisis hit here first. So in that sense, we got a few weeks head start in using the technology and reworking our coursework to fit the new format.

Eliot Hall has largely remained open except for 14 days from the end of March, when the new government guidelines limited gatherings to just four people or fewer. Following those new restrictions, the university management instructed all of us to postpone our planned resumption of the two face-to-face classes. We also decided to temporarily close the student lounge, the editing room, the podcasting room and other classrooms until further notice. The Equipment Office has remained open for students to check out and return equipment.

Our students have proven incredibly flexible throughout this challenging ordeal. For many, this has meant changing their capstone projects and altering their ideas for final assignments to accommodate our new normal of face masks and “social distancing.” Many interviewees do not want to meet face-to-face or are isolated in home quarantine. Some topics no longer seem as pressing in the age of pandemic.

In addition, we teamed up with the School of Public Health to offer a three-hour online workshop for local and international journalists covering the virus crisis, to help them decipher the often-dense science and to enhance their public health understanding. The workshop was such a success that we hope to conduct a follow up soon.

Finally, we are making plans to begin our fall semester as scheduled in September, with every hope that by then Hong Kong, and the world, will see some return to normalcy.

No one can predict the course of this awful virus. A vaccine seems unlikely before 2021. What we do know is that we are living through an unprecedented moment, with billions of

people around the globe simultaneously having their movements restricted or under near lockdowns. Once vibrant cities have been reduced to virtual ghost towns. And journalists, and journalism students, are already writing and recording the first rough draft of this amazing history, and will be for months and years to come.

Keith Richburg
Director of the JMSC

Highlights



In an effort to help build health literacy and knowledge in professional journalists, JMSC and the [School of Public Health of HKUMed](#) co-organized an [online workshop for journalists](#) on 31 March. The pilot programme, which was attended by about 40 Hong Kong and overseas journalists, is part of an initiative to enable journalists to develop greater insight related to public health and science.

The workshop was hosted by [Keith Richburg](#) and [Professor Keiji Fukuda](#), Director of SPH. The panel of speakers included Professors [Malik Peiris](#), [Ben Cowling](#), [Leo Poon](#) and [Joseph Wu](#) of SPH and [Dr. Masato Kajimoto](#) of JMSC. Watch the entire workshop on our [YouTube channel](#).



Jeff Timmermans launched a new series last month, *Journalists in chairs drinking wine*, where he invites journalists to our broadcast studio at Eliot Hall to talk about their work. The first episode features [Darren Long](#), Creative Director of the *South China Morning Post*, and in the latest episode Jeff speaks to [Madeleine Lim](#), Senior Executive Editor for Asia-Pacific at Bloomberg News. Watch [here](#).

Student & Alumni News

The New York Times

Congratulations to [Alvin Lam](#), who's in his second year of the [Bachelor of Journalism](#) programme! His essay, "Do Whatever You Want to Shape the Future" was first runner-up in [The New York Times 2019 Asia-Pacific Writing Competition](#). The theme was "Our World: 2050"; you can read Alvin's winning essay [here](#).

Faculty & Staff News



Masato Kajimoto spoke at a roundtable discussion about "[Mis\(information\) in the Coronavirus Crisis](#)" on 3 April along with panellists Summer Chen, Chief Editor of [Taiwan FactCheck Center](#), and [Dr. Rose Luqiu](#) of the Department of Journalism at Hong Kong Baptist University. The online event was organized by the [Centre for Media and Communication Research](#) at HKBU.



[Kevin Sites](#) was recently paired with Oscar-winning sound editor Cindy Jo Hinkleman to narrate the audio version of his 2013 book [The Things They Cannot Say: Stories Soldiers Won't Tell You About What They've Seen, Done or Failed to Do in War](#). Hinkleman was a member of sound editing team that won the 2001 Academy Award for the film U-571. Sites's book was released in mid-March this year by Tantor Audio, a Division of Recorded Books.

JMSC in the news



(10 February) Agence France-Presse: [From dead, to alive, to dead again: How China handled virus doctor's death](#) (King-wa Fu)



(12 February) Los Angeles Times: [Coronavirus outbreak spurs hoarding in Asia](#), with reporting by Antonia Tang Wai Yin (BJ 2022)



(13 February) Agence France-Presse: [The matchmaker of Beijing: Grandfather plays cupid for generations](#), co-written by Chloe Feng (MJ 2020)



(21 February) Quartz: [Why a Chinese virology lab is unable to quell the coronavirus conspiracy theories around it](#) (Masato Kajimoto)



(27 February) Thomson Reuters Foundation: [How Hong Kong's social enterprises are tackling the coronavirus](#), co-written by Marianne Bray



(6 March) Nikkei Asian Review: [Hong Kong 'war on humor' pits public broadcaster versus police](#) (King-wa Fu)



(9 March) Financial Times: [Call for Chinese to thank Xi Jinping for coronavirus effort backfires](#) (King-wa Fu)



(4 March) Deutsche Welle: [Press freedom pays a price in US-China media showdown](#) (Keith Richburg)



(10 March) Hong Kong Free Press: [Trees not car parks – why Hong Kong needs a city-wide ‘greening master plan’](#), by Chloe Feng (MJ 2020)



(16 March) The Washington Post: [Singapore introduced tough laws against fake news. Coronavirus has put them to the test.](#) (Masato Kajimoto)



(3 April) Cambridge University Press: [Limited early warnings and public attention to COVID-19 in China, January-February, 2020: a longitudinal cohort of randomly sampled Weibo users](#), co-written by Yuner Zhu and King-wa Fu

