

HKU Journalism

Monthly newsletter
September 2020

Message from Keith

First, a few welcomes are in order.

Welcome to the Bachelor of Journalism class of 2024—which will be our largest-ever undergraduate cohort in the 20-year history of our programme. Welcome to our 2021 Master of Journalism class. And welcome back to all of our returning students.

As our programme enters its third decade, we decided it was a good time for a new look and a new logo, so you will now see us branded as “HKU Journalism.”

The name communicates more clearly what we do, which is teach journalism that is fact-based, accurate, truthful and fair. It also rolls off the tongue a lot simpler than our official acronym JMSC, and our simple, clean and modern logo reflects that.

This is not an official name change—we are still the Journalism and Media Studies Centre. And we will continue with our cutting-edge media research into disinformation and combatting fake news, monitoring Chinese censorship patterns, media law and free expression, and media business models and developments. So in short, while we’re sprucing up our look, we are not changing what we do.

This is a start to a new year like no other. The pandemic that began early this year is still with us, necessitating us to teach all of our courses virtually for the first few weeks. While not ideal, we have had all summer to prepare and can deliver a quality academic experience online until we can resume our face-to-face classes in a few weeks. We can’t wait to welcome all of our students to Eliot Hall in person.

Besides the coronavirus pandemic, the other main issue that is causing concern is the new National Security Law, and I know many of you are wondering how it will affect our teaching, how it will affect your decision to study journalism, and whether there is even a future for the profession in Hong Kong.

As I wrote in an earlier note, just after the new law took effect, for us here at HKU Journalism, nothing

changes. We are not changing the way we teach, we are not restricting what can be said in our classes, and we are not setting any “red lines” or off-limit topics for what our students can report about. As far as we are concerned, it is full steam ahead.

The new National Security Law sets out four new criminal areas, terrorism, secession, subversion of state power, and collusion with foreign forces. The law has been left deliberately vague and subject to broad interpretation, and we have no idea how it will be implemented in the future.

What we do know is that the law is targeting advocacy and activism, not academic or journalistic inquiry. Journalists doing their job are engaged in only one type of activity—digging for facts, searching for the truth. And as journalists, we must continue to be fierce advocates for just one thing: press freedom. That will not change.

As I’ve said many times before, the biggest danger now for journalism is self-censorship, and journalists drawing red lines in their minds seeking to tip-toe around any potential tripwires. I advocate the opposite approach—keep digging, keep pushing the boundaries, testing the limits, giving voice to the voiceless and holding power accountable.

No one in power likes nosy journalists poking around, uncovering corruption, exposing hypocrisy, fact-checking false statement, and giving the public information it needs that someone would rather see buried. That is precisely why the journalist’s job is so vital to society. And that’s why we here at HKU Journalism plan to continue teaching exactly as before.

Keith B. Richburg
Director, Journalism and Media Studies Centre

Highlights



A first for us at HKU Journalism and many schools around the world, we held virtual orientations for our incoming class on 28 and 29 August. Some faculty and staff were at the studio filming live for the two Zoom sessions, while others and all the new students joined us online. George Russell spoke to a couple of our new students and faculty members for a piece he wrote for our website. Read it [here](#).



Both sessions marked a great start to our semester where we will be teaching online the first few weeks of September, with some tutorials in person. We are anticipating moving to face-to-face sessions towards the end of the month when health measures will be relaxed. All of us at Eliot Hall are looking forward to seeing our students back in the building!

HKU
Journalism



Thanks to support from [Hong Kong Free Press](#), Dr. King-wa Fu and his team will continue to update and expand the [ANTI-LAB Research Data Archive](#). HKFP is also making available their archive of explainers, news and photos. Combined, these collections make an invaluable resource for researchers and journalists.

Alumni & Student News



This year's [SOPA Awards Ceremony](#) was held virtually with SOPA live-tweeting the winners. We're proud to be the awards administrator again and even prouder that many of our alumni were among the winners. Here's an incomplete list: Natalie Lung (BJ 2019), Blake Schmidt (MJ 2019), Swe Win (MJ 2009), Wang Yiwei (MJ 2015) and Wu Jing (MJ 2014). See the full list of winners [here](#).



Vanesse Chan (BJ 2021) and Chermaine Lee (MJ 2018) were part of the ITN Channel 4 News team that has been nominated for an [International Emmy Award for News & Current Affairs](#) for their coverage of the protests, "Hong Kong – A Year of Living Dangerously". Vanesse worked as a fixer and Chermaine was the local producer for the team when they were in Hong Kong last November. The winners will be announced on 21 September during an online ceremony. Here are several of the video reports from their coverage: [14 Nov](#), [17 Nov](#) and [18 Nov](#).

Faculty & Staff News



[Diana Jou](#) has joined us full-time after two years as an adjunct lecturer. She will be teaching video news production and a new motion graphics for journalists course for the Master of Journalism programme. She was a *Wall Street Journal* video journalist and multimedia editor where she worked on a daily live news show, documentary projects and immersive web features. Diana graduated from UC Irvine with a degree in Studio Art Photography and Asian American studies. She got her start in journalism by starting a quirky news magazine in college. She went to UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism thinking she was going to be a writer and photographer but ended up focusing on new media and videography. Welcome aboard Diana!



HKU | LAW

Our media law lecturers [Sharron Fast](#) and [Cliff Buddle](#) spoke at a webinar organized by the HKU Faculty of Law on 5 September —"[Freedom of the Press under the National Security Law in Hong Kong](#)". Speakers looked at how the law would be implemented in ways that would protect press freedom and other freedoms stipulated in the Basic Law, and also examined comparative experiences of Singapore and other countries with authoritarian control of the news media.

HKU Journalism in the news



(15 Jul) AFP Fact Check: [Both clips in this video correspond to Chinese fire service visuals of a December 2019 fire in Shanghai](#) (Annie Lab)



(19 July) Agence France-Presse: [Hong Kong security law sends jitters through city's feisty press](#) (Sharron Fast and Keith B. Richburg)



(21 July) Associated Press: [Hong Kong protesters adapt signs, slogans to skirt new law](#) (King-wa Fu)



(28 July) Meedan: *2020 Misinfodemic Report: COVID-19 in Emerging Economies*, [COVID-19 and China's information control policy](#), by King-wa Fu



(29 July) Fortune: [HSBC tried to defend itself in China. Internet censors erased the post](#) (King-wa Fu)



(7 August) Asialink: [Asia's new normal: Curbing press freedom](#), by Keith B. Richburg



(7 August) Wall Street Journal: [U.S. broadens attack on Chinese internet giants with WeChat order](#) (King-wa Fu)



(10 August) RTHK News: ['Outrageous raid marks end of media freedom in HK'](#), (Keith B. Richburg)



(10 August) The Atlantic: [Hong Kong's most brazen arrest yet](#), (Keith B. Richburg)



(12 August) BBC News: [Apple Daily: The Hong Kong newspaper that pushed the boundary](#), (Keith B. Richburg)



(14 August) The Washington Post: [China transformed Hong Kong into a typical mainland city, almost overnight](#), by Keith B. Richburg



(14 August) Brisbane Times: ['It's revenge': Inside the newsroom at the centre of a political purge](#), (Keith B. Richburg)



(27 August) Bloomberg QuickTake: [The Future of Press Freedom in Hong Kong?](#) (Keith B. Richburg)



(29 August) CitizenNews: [普立茲獎得主一度申請來港教書 入境處50提問刁難](#) (In Chinese, Keith B. Richburg)



(2 September) Hong Kong Free Press: [University of Hong Kong visa application for Pulitzer-winning journalist prompts long list of 'unusual' questions from gov't](#) (Keith B. Richburg)



(4 September) CNN: [As Hong Kong's academic year begins, it's unclear what can legally be said in a classroom -- and whether student activism is a thing of the past](#) (Keith B. Richburg)

Coming up



Ross Settles is hosting a session at [Splice Beta Online 2020](#), Asia's media start-up festival, on 7 September titled "Rebuilding your B2B business after Covid—strategies on moving forward". He will talk about how media start-ups could rebuild "commercial revenue" post-Covid, and what a new ad model could look like. Details [here](#).
