

Open Library of Humanities

Editor's introduction

Taku Suzuki, International Studies, Denison University, suzukit@denison.edu



It is with great enthusiasm that I introduce the second issue of *ASIANetwork Exchange* for 2025, which brings together a compelling range of scholarship united by a shared commitment to deepening student learning in today's liberal arts classroom and to supporting their well-being as an essential ingredient of human flourishing. Across the United States, college educators are grappling with an increasingly familiar challenge: how to engage students whose attention is continually fractured by the social, technological, and institutional pressures surrounding higher education today. In this context, I am especially delighted to feature a special issue titled *Mindful Flourishing*, guest-edited by Mark Dennis and Blake Hestir of Texas Christian University (TCU). Their thoughtful stewardship has shaped a collection that not only addresses this pedagogical moment with clarity and creativity but also offers alternative pathways for cultivating meaningful learning grounded in presence, compassion, and shared purpose.

The seven essays presented in this special issue are authored by members of TCU's CALM Studies group—Mark Dennis, Blake Hestir, Andy Fort, Chad Pevateaux, Lexi Cole, Max Sklansky, Wendy Williams, and Monica Jenschke—whose collaborative work models the very ethos they advocate. While I will leave the detailed introduction of the special issue content to Dennis and Hestir in their guest editors' introduction, it is worth emphasizing the collective vision that animates this set of articles. Together, the authors challenge dominant assumptions that continue to shape American higher education, including the valorization of individual achievement, competition, status accumulation, and market-driven metrics of success. These pressures, which have only intensified in recent years, often work against students' abilities to cultivate reflective attention, relational awareness, and the deeper modes of intellectual engagement that support genuine flourishing.

By contrast, the CALM Studies group's interventions invite us to reimagine what it might mean to foster mindful flourishing in the college classroom. Their essays explore practices that encourage students to slow down, to listen—both inwardly and to one another—and to inhabit their learning environments with greater intentionality. They draw on philosophical, religious, ethical, and contemplative traditions from across Asia to illuminate pedagogical approaches that counter the frenetic pace and competitive individualism characteristic of much contemporary academic life. In doing so, this special issue contributes not only to pedagogical conversations within Asian studies but also to broader debates about the aims and possibilities of liberal arts education today. At a moment when many faculty members express uncertainty about how to meet students where they are without capitulating to distraction, the insights offered here feel both timely and urgently needed.

Following the special issue, the volume concludes with a book review by Ronald Green of *Mapping Taiwanese Cinema, 2008–20: Environments, Poetics, Practice* by Christopher Brown. Green’s review provides a thoughtful engagement with Brown’s examination of recent Taiwanese filmmaking. It offers yet another example of how scholarship in Asian studies continues to illuminate diverse cultural expressions, aesthetic practices, and sociohistorical contexts. In pairing this concluding review with the pedagogically focused special issue, this volume showcases the breadth of inquiry that defines our field—ranging from innovative classroom-centered research to sophisticated cultural and media analysis.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue underscore the expansive terrain that Asian studies in a liberal arts context can traverse and the meaningful interventions it can make. I am proud to share the work of our guest editors, the CALM Studies group, and our contributing reviewer, and I hope that readers will find in these pages both inspiration and practical insight for their own teaching, research, and engagement with Asian studies.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

