

iCLA Obento

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The iCLA Obento is a newsletter dedicated to highlighting the successes of iCLA's community members, celebrating our unique backgrounds, and learning more about the members of iCLA's community. We hope you enjoy reading about iCLA's bright students and wonderful faculty members in interviews, news articles, and feature pieces.

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Meet the Students Behind iCLA's Next Summer Gala

iCLA's semesterly Gala is an evening to celebrate community, creativity, and collaboration.

The lobby transforms into a stage for performances, classrooms and corridors become art galleries. Held twice a year near the end of the Spring and Fall Semesters, the community comes together for an amazing evening before the summer or winter break. It is truly a community-wide event where students, faculty, and staff are all invited to contribute their creative work and attend the festivities.



Timothy (left) and Daniella (right)

The upcoming Summer Gala will be taking place on the evening of Friday, July 3rd in iCLA's first floor lobby. Already, preparations are underway.

Behind the scenes of this extraordinary event is the Gala Committee, a group of volunteer students who organize the stage performances, curate the art exhibition, prepare food, coordinate decorations, and promote the event. Supporting the committee are faculty members Dr. Mike Blow and Dr. Sam Stocker and the Student Affairs Team.

Together, they help students navigate the planning and administrative processes.

Leading the Committee is the Gala Director who is responsible for coordinating the various teams, communicating with Dr. Blow and Dr. Stocker, and ensuring that planning stays on schedule. The Gala Director also oversees the event budget, including funding for decorations, supplies, and food.

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This semester's Gala Director is second-year student Daniella, who has spent the past month working closely with more than 20 committee members to prepare for the event. Through weekly meetings, she helps keep the many moving parts of the Gala on track.

"I think the Gala is very special because there are a lot of different aspects of the community that come together," Daniella explains, "That's not very common, especially in bigger universities because most events in other universities are department-based. But the Gala brings together all the different majors, so I think it's very fun for everyone to join forces and work on one big event, and then have everybody else in iCLA also join in on the fun."



This summer's Gala will embrace the theme of City Pop, a genre of music that was popular during 1980's bubble-era Japan. In recent years, City Pop has enjoyed a renewal in popularity through platforms such as

YouTube and TikTok in making the tunes viral. The genre's appeal to a new generation of listeners lies in the nostalgia it evokes for the lifestyle and aesthetic of a bygone era.

"We listen to it and we sing it when we're at karaoke," Daniella says, "I thought it would be a good theme to have this year, especially because there's a big resurgence of the movement. Japan is the home of City Pop. There's a big mystery about 1980s Japan when it was a booming economy. There are a lot of very different things from the Japan students know today to the Japan in the 80s."

In addition to the performances and art exhibition, the Gala Committee is introducing several new interactive elements to the event, starting with an 80's-themed chill room featuring retro game consoles and vinyl records, organized in cooperation with Dr. Darren Ashmore. Students can also participate in a photo opportunity with film cameras, where friends take pictures together and have them developed after the event. Meanwhile, the decorations team is working to transform the first-floor lobby into a nostalgic tribute to the 1980s.

Another highly anticipated feature of the Gala is the fashion show.

Leading the Fashion Team is fourth-year student Timothy, who organized the first Gala fashion show in 2024.

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Gala Fashion Show in 2024

This year's show will draw inspiration from 1980's retro fashion. He is also enthusiastic to get more talent in the community involved.

"For the past iterations, there's still that connotation that fashion shows are quite exclusive and inaccessible," Timothy says, "So I think this time we've done a great job in terms of bringing in more people, not just in terms of modeling, but also to help direct the creative process. What students will see is going to be a lot more diverse in the sense of the output. We're going to have students who make clothes, students who design accessories, and we're going to be styling in different ways. We're going to be going over students' closets and sourcing different clothes. It's going to be really exciting."

The event is scheduled to take place in the evening on July 3rd. The event gives students a grand evening to relax before final exams and papers.

Daniella hopes the event will attract both new and graduating members of the community.

"I hope that everybody would come and join us even though it's on a Friday. We hope it will be a fun experience for everyone, especially the new students who have never experienced the Gala before. I would also like to invite the graduating students who I know don't have as many classes to come, so that they could see the different installations and programs we have, especially the fashion show."

Timothy is equally enthusiastic about what attendees can expect.

"It's looking like a really, really good event," he says, "Maybe my favorite so far. I think that a lot of people will get to see that in many different formats and mediums."

For Timothy, the sense of connection is what makes the Gala a unique event. It is an opportunity for students to mingle outside their usual circle.

"The Gala is one of a few events that really makes it feel like we're part of a community," he says, "I think that's a really special thing here."

Faculty Interview: Dr. Jiamin Li

Meet iCLA's newest lecturer in Marketing, Dr. Jiamin Li! With extensive industry experience, his teaching bridges academic research and real-world marketing practice. His courses include Foundation of Marketing, Brand Management, Marketing Research and Analytics



How is teaching at iCLA so far?

Before I joined iCLA, I felt nervous because it's my first time to teach. I didn't know how students would react to my lecture, but I feel that students here are really engaging and interactive. That makes my teaching much easier because it's not entirely about me teaching them, it's more about discussion, and I prefer that two-way interaction. I'm really happy that I made this decision to join here, truly. I really enjoy it.

How and why did you start your journey in marketing?

I decided to do a marketing job and research during my master's degree and my research topic was about e-commerce.

I am a consumer. You are a consumer too. I wondered, why and how companies could use different pricing strategies or promotion strategies to attract us.

So my initial research question was, how do they manipulate us? Gradually, I became interested in consumer behavior.

Can you tell me about your own story of moving to Japan?

I moved to Japan in 2014, so about 12 years ago. I was accepted to Waseda University as a master's student.

I graduated from Waseda in 2016, and then I worked in marketing within the manufacturing industry in Tokyo for about five and a half years. After that, I quit my job and went back to school and started my doctorate degree [at Hitotsubashi University]. After three years, I graduated, and then I worked in another marketing agency for about a year and a half. Then I came here.

It sounds like you were in industry a lot. Why did you get into teaching?

My mother is a professor, not in marketing, but in accounting. I always had a dream of becoming a professor too.

Faculty Interview: Dr. Jiamin Li

But when I finished my master's degree, I felt that I couldn't get a PhD degree, so I gave up on it and I decided to work in industry.

But gradually, after 2020 during COVID time, I had some time to pause and rethink my future career. I thought, maybe I can challenge myself and try for a doctorate degree.

After getting a doctorate degree, I still went back to industry instead of a teaching position. It is simply because I think, at least for the marketing industry, it is practice-oriented. It's not just about what you learn in the textbook. You always need to apply what you learn into your business so you can understand the preferences of your customer base. We have business to business product and business to consumer segments. They are totally two different worlds, I would say. I wouldn't fully understand them until I had opportunities to practice. When I felt I was ready to teach what I had learnt to students, that's when I decided to become a professor. iCLA was the place I decided on.

What is the most important thing that you want students to learn from your courses?

Empathy.

Of course, you need to learn a lot of technical knowledge on a concept or

definition, but especially in the AI generation, you can Google or ask ChatGPT. But you need to have a sense of empathy so you can understand your customers.

You need to understand what they need, what values they really appreciate. That's the beginning of any marketing campaign. And then we need to bring these values to the customers. I think this sense of passion or sense of empathy will be essential for any marketers to start their marketing job.

Marketing is about communicating with your customers, communicating with your people. There are finance, accounting, and human resource departments... Marketing is the only window for any company to communicate with customers. For any marketer, it is important to know what your customers are thinking, what they care about. So, I think "empathy" will be the keyword.

What is a book that you would recommend to students?

Well, in class, I always recommend *Marketing Management* by Philip Kotler, a classic marketing textbook. I will say that this basic marketing management book should be the first that they could read to understand the concept.



Faculty Interview: Dr. Wung Cheong Chim

Dr. Wung Cheong Chim is iCLA's newest Literature professor! He is a specialist in Japanese and early modern European literature and philosophy.

Dr. Chim's courses include Literature Appreciation, The Art of Storytelling, and Superhero Comics, Films, and Shows.

How are you finding teaching at iCLA so far?

Well, it's a bit different to where I used to work. I was a teaching assistant in the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the students I taught were predominantly Chinese and English was not their first language. Whereas here, I have many students of different cultures and ethnicities, so it's a different experience.

Can you tell me how literature became your passion?

I was not the best student when I was in high school, but there was a particular university I wanted to go to and the English department was the only option for me, so I stuck with it.

Then, when I did my master's, I wanted to become a writer. But I realized the market wasn't really fit for me, so I chose to become an academic instead.

Can you tell me a little bit about your story of moving to Japan?

I've been traveling to Japan every now and again. I mostly visited Tokyo and spent a bit of time in the countryside for field work because half of my research has to do with Japanese literature and philosophy. I was always aiming to work in Japan, and now I am.

How has being in Japan helped you in your research for Japanese literature?

I only moved to Japan two months ago, so it's kind of hard to say, but one thing I can say for sure is that so far, I've mostly only dealt with Japanese culture from the outside, literally because I was living outside of Japan. But now I'm looking forward to seeing, or I suppose experiencing, the very culture that I've been researching for four to five years now.

Faculty Interview: Dr. Wung Cheong Chim

What inspired you to go into teaching?

There is a certain sense of achievement to be had when I watch my students progress over a semester. After spending four to five years in graduate school, I started forgetting what I was like as an undergraduate. In teaching students, I remember what I was like back then and remember what I needed to study and so on, and adjusting to that. By doing that, I also ended up reflecting a bit on myself, which is always good.

What is the most important skill or piece of knowledge that you want your students to learn from your courses?

I research both literature and philosophy, so I tend to want my students to acquire the ability to reflect.

In philosophy, there's a term called "The Condition of Possibility". It's the condition for why things appear to us the way they do. There are different answers for why that is the case. It is culture, ideology, et cetera. But in general, that's the thing I want my students to reflect on all the time. Which can be uncomfortable because it means partially rejecting what you think is common sense and looking deep, and

realizing it is manufactured or fabricated by someone else. But I think it would be a very important skill to have in this time and age.

What is a book that you would recommend to students?

George Berkeley's *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. It's one of the more readable philosophical texts. Berkeley, as a philosopher, is infamous for saying that physical reality does not exist, which is considered mad in his lifetime and is still considered mad by our standard. Normally, we say that this desk would continue to exist even if I closed my eyes or if everyone else closed their eyes, or human beings go extinct. But you're still thinking about the desk, right? Berkeley's point is that there's no such thing as a reality that is independent of the human mind, of the consciousness. It's always connected. Which then brings us to the other question: why do you think it's independent of you in the first place? Then it would become an issue of illusions and truth, which would be the first step to asking why things appear the way they do.

Faculty Interview: Dr. Randy Fowler

One of the newest faculty members to join the Global Business and Economics department is International Business specialist, Dr. Randy Fowler!

His courses include Introduction to Global Business Management, Introduction to Strategic Management, and Leadership and Organizational Behavior.



How is teaching at iCLA so far?

Well, so far so good. I've been very impressed by the general motivation level of the students.

In every class, I have students who are very intellectually curious, ask me a lot of questions, and contribute a lot. There's certainly a broader range of countries represented in the room than I was accustomed to in my previous position. It's been interesting to have a lot of different cultures mixed into the same room, and different people have different perspectives depending on where they came from. So I've enjoyed that part very much.

How and why did you start your journey in your specialization, international business?

Before I started my MBA degree, I spent about a year and a half working in Taiwan. This was the very first time I'd been outside of the American continent, and I was changed by that experience. I found it very interesting that their perspectives on things were different.

I also realized that you can understand your own culture more when you've been somewhere else. I felt like I understood American culture better after I left.

That was really the beginning. When I started my MBA degree, I hadn't intended to go into academia. I thought I would go back to work after I finished my MBA, but I was surprised to find that I was interested in the academic side of business. My professors had really studied their field with incredible rigor and had all kinds of interesting things to say. I concluded I was so interested that I would go on to pursue a PhD.

And when I was thinking about which field within business I would pursue, partly because of my experience in Taiwan and I took a couple of international business classes at Indiana University, I decided I would choose that as the subject of my PhD.

Can you tell me about your story of moving to Japan?

There's a quote I like, which I heard

Faculty Interview: Dr. Randy Fowler

from the movie director, Woody Allen, but I think other people have said it too, which is, “If you want to hear God laugh, tell him about your plans.”

The idea is, sometimes things don't turn out and you wouldn't have predicted that this is the way that things would end up.

For my PhD, I thought it would be better to study international business overseas, because there was something about studying international business in my own country which seemed not appropriate for the subject. So I studied in Singapore for two years and then I spent three years in England finishing my PhD at the University of Leeds.

When I was applying for jobs while I was still in the program, I thought I would spend some time working and teaching overseas. I put in applications in France and other places in Europe, and I just happened to come across the one for Rikkyo University in Japan, and they got to me first. I originally expected to stay at Rikkyo University for a few years, but they were very good to me so I stayed for some time.

I found there were a lot of things I enjoyed about being in Japan, too, and it was obviously very appropriate for my research interests since for my PhD thesis, I'd looked at specifically East Asian business practices. So it was very relevant from that perspective as well.

What inspired you to go into teaching?

Originally, being a teacher was not in my plans. I was drawn to the research side. But once I started teaching when I was at Leeds, I found that I enjoyed being able to explain things to other people. Every year I have students who are very interested in the subjects that I teach, and so I've sometimes been inspired by them.

I would say one of the great role models of mine for teaching is the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, who always taught his students by asking them questions. This is still very much ingrained in the Western tradition, there's a lot more discussion going on than there would be in a typical Japanese classroom.

I like the idea of going on an exploration with my students, questioning everything and trying to figure out if we can arrive at the truth. I'm always eager for any additional piece of information that my students have that I don't. I enjoy it as a collaborative journey to discover things.

From the teaching perspective, I really enjoy the dialogue between my students. It's gratifying to me if I succeed in getting them interested in something, which I try to do by mixing in some entertainment value into the teaching.

Faculty Interview: Dr. Randy Fowler

I always say the expression, “A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.” I try to notice when the students are tuning out and try to figure out a way to get them back into the fold.

What is the most important skill or piece of knowledge that you want your students to take away from your classes?

I would say to keep learning is the most important thing.

Most of the reading I've done in life has been since I graduated from college. Obviously, I went on to get an MBA and a PhD, so that makes sense.

But even just as a lifelong habit, not even reading things that were necessarily directly relevant to my job, I've always just been a lifelong reader.

A lot of the professors that I had in college really started me on a track of going down that road because you can only learn so much in four years. So, the most important part is to be able to instill the interest and the motivation so that people can continue to learn throughout their lives. I think there's a real difference between the people who stop learning when they finish college and the ones who continue.

It keeps you mentally alert, it makes you flexible, to keep your eyes open about new things that come around that you didn't necessarily know before. So that's the main lesson I would like to impart, is to stay curious and to keep learning.

What is a book that you would recommend to your students?

I would recommend reading the Socratic dialogues of the ancient Greeks.

These were documented by Plato. Some of those dialogues are fictional which Plato creates himself to express his own philosophy, but I recommend the ones where he's trying to document what Socrates himself said. A good example of this would be *The Apology*, which is the speech that Socrates gave when he was on trial for, I guess in modern parlance we would call, “spreading misinformation”.

He was going against the grain about what everybody else was saying, but all he was doing was just trying to grasp at the truth. There are very important lessons, I think, to be found in the Socratic dialogues regarding being intellectually rigorous and trying to really be loyal to the truth above all else, even if it makes you unpopular, and to try to pursue knowledge for knowledge's sake.

iCLA Club Feature

Haven't found a club to join yet? Looking for a new hobby to pick up? Consider joining these clubs below!

Introduction from the Hiking Club

Our club is all about enjoying.
We climb mountains almost every week.

Anyone and everyone is welcome to join, if you have the passion to do something that gives you a tad bit of adrenaline, you're at the right place.



Message from the Club Leader!

“We've been hiking for the past few weeks and so far we have completed 5 hikes including one called Daibosatsu san. We are looking forward to climbing peaks such as Kinpusan. It is a a good change of pace by inculcating Japanese culture of climbing into the foreign culture of socializing. Anyone and everyone can consider joining the club.”

- Aaryan



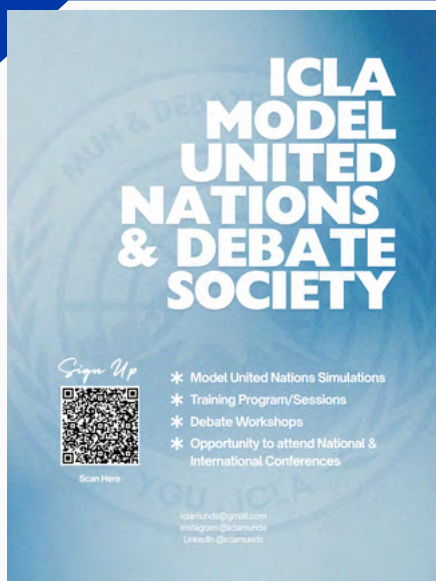
To join our club you would want to get in contact with either Sebastien, the vice president of the club, or myself, Aaryan, the president of the club.

iCLA Club Feature

Introduction from the iCLA Model United Nations and Debate Society

iCLAMUNDS is a student-led organization dedicated to developing public speaking, critical thinking, diplomacy, and leadership skills through various debate types. We mainly offer Model United Nations simulations and structured debate. We provide an inclusive environment for students to learn, collaborate, and engage with global issues regardless of prior experience.

All students are welcome to join, including both beginners and experienced delegates/debaters. We have members from every major even on our leadership team.



Sign-up via QR code that can be found both on our instagram: @icla.munds and posters around school. You can also personally email iclamunds@gmail.com.

Message from the Club Leader!

“I'm Natalie Ung, founder and acting Secretary General of the society! Whether you are completely new to Model UN and debate or already experienced, our Society is a place to learn, challenge yourself, and grow alongside a supportive community. We look forward to meeting passionate students from all backgrounds and building an engaging and collaborative environment together.”



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