



**Monthly newsletter: September 2019**

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## Message from Keith

First of all, welcome to the new class of Master of Journalism students, and to the latest entry class of Bachelor of Journalism (BJ) students, who will finish in 2023. These cohorts have the distinction of being our 20th class of students at the JMSC, and we are excited to see such a continuing strong interest in journalism over these two decades.

These new cohorts, and our returning BJ students, are in Hong Kong at a particularly tumultuous time. Our city has been wracked by more than 13 weeks of protests over the now-suspended, much-despised China extradition bill. Recent weekends have seen a marked escalation in violent clashes between protesters and riot police.

Journalists have found themselves at the middle of the conflict. Reporters on the front lines have been hit with tear gas, pepper spray and with police truncheons; videographers have had police shine laser lights at their cameras to prevent them from filming; and media organizations, including the [Hong Kong Journalists Association](#) and the [Foreign Correspondents' Club Hong Kong](#), have issued statements decrying the violence directed against journalists who are trying to do their jobs and faithfully chronicle these historic events.

For the most part, I think journalists have been doing an incredible job covering the protests under extremely difficult circumstances, including facing physical danger, harassment, intimidation and online threats. There are long days and hours in sweltering heat and torrential rains. There has been misinformation, disinformation and sometimes a lack of any information. But reporters have still managed to produce some admirable journalism under tough conditions.

Here are a few of my takeaways after closely following the more than three months of protests.

First, social media sites—and for me, Twitter—have emerged as essential news platforms for up-to-the-minute details on the latest happenings. I have been following the protests mainly through the Twitter feeds of some of the top reporters and analysts on the front lines, and their posts are typically well-informed and accurate. I used to doubt whether a platform like Twitter could ever really rival an old-fashioned print newspaper or even a newspaper website for covering breaking news, but I must admit, I am now a convert.

Second, I have always known—and tried to impart to our students—that words matter, and the protest coverage has reinforced that view. I have seen stories, in the [South China Morning Post](#) and other outlets, referring to Hong Kong as in

the midst of “chaos,” “mayhem” and “anarchy.” One article reported how “masked radicals” supposedly “went on a rampage.” One news website carried the recent headline; “[Hong Kong is on fire](#).” And protests that have descended into violence are typically described as “riots” and protesters as “rioters.”

I’m old enough to remember the 1967 riots in Detroit, where 43 people were killed, businesses were looted and burned to the ground and National Guard troops deployed to restore order. I also remember watching televised images from the Los Angeles riots of 1992 that left 63 dead, more than 2,000 injured and some US\$1 billion in property damage.

In Hong Kong, when young protesters were chased into high-end shopping malls like Pacific Place, not a single store window was broken and not a single item was reported stolen. Can this really be accurately described as “rioting”? I don’t think so. Many of my friends and colleagues have never even seen a protest in Hong Kong other than the live feeds of local news outlets—hardly a case of a city “on fire.”

My third takeaway is that a renewed focus on journalists’ safety and training is paramount. The recent protests have shown how a reporter does not need to be in a war zone to face grave physical danger. Responding to events, the FCC has put on a series of [safety workshops for journalists](#). We at JMSC will be doing the same thing here in September—workshops on physical safety, digital security, legal safety and first aid—even though we do not intend to send our journalists-in-training out to any frontline protest sites.

We will also be hosting a panel discussion on “[The Protests and The Press](#)” for September 12 where many of these issues will be debated and discussed.

These are tumultuous times, for our society and for journalism. We need to also make sure to seize this time as a learning opportunity.

Keith Richburg  
Director of the JMSC

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## Highlights



JMSC welcomed this year's undergraduate and graduate class at orientations held the last week of August. The new [Bachelor of Journalism](#) students gathered at Eliot Hall on 28 August to be welcomed by programme director [Jeffrey Timmermans](#), meet faculty,



and sample a taste of investigation with a fun fact-checking exercise. Jeff stressed the importance of freedom of speech as a core value. “Without freedom of speech there is no freedom of the press, and without freedom of the press there is no journalism.”



This year's class of 72 incoming [Master of Journalism](#) students gathered at the Global Lounge on August 31. Programme director [Matt Walsh](#) welcomed the students, explaining that the mission of the course was “seeking truth and dispelling lies” through compelling storytelling.



Matt provided an overview of the course before several alumni took the stage to offer their insights and answer students' questions. After a presentation on health, welfare and safety issues on campus, the students broke into groups for discussion with faculty members. Read more on our [website](#).

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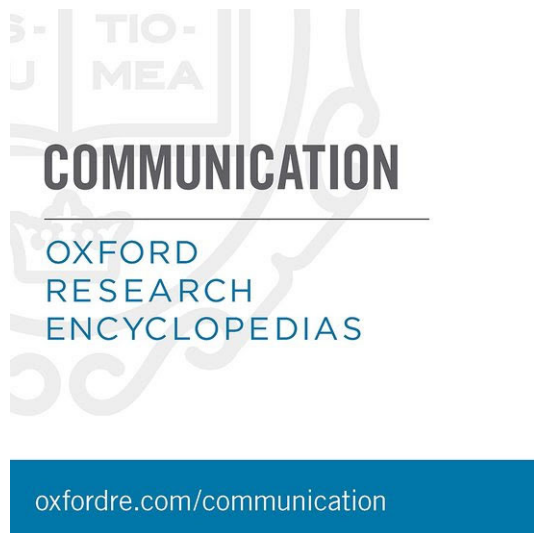
## Student & Alumni News



We're pleased to announce this year's winner of the [Mick Deane Scholarship for Video Journalism](#), Master of Journalism graduate Lyn Yang (MJ 2019). The scholarship honours the veteran British cameraman [killed on duty in 2013](#) and is awarded annually to a JMSC student who shows exceptional talent, skills and commitment to excellence in video journalism. Read about Lyn's achievements in this [profile by George Russell](#).

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## Faculty & Staff News



Dr. Jeffrey Timmermans defines “Financial Journalism” for the [Oxford Research Encyclopedia \(ORE\) of Communication](#). From 28 August, the Encyclopedia will have a new [11,000-word entry on Financial Journalism](#) that traces the long history of financial journalism and explores several recurring themes in that history. The peer-reviewed [OREs](#) are a relatively new venture by Oxford University Press to “give readers an overview of a subject that they can understand in a half an hour reading or less,” written by “world-class experts”.



Dr. Masato Kajimoto attended the launch of Indonesia’s Fact Checking Competition organised by the Indonesian Anti-Slander Society ([Mafindo](#)) on 7 August in Jakarta. This project is the first in a series of media literacy programs that JMSC, in partnership with the [Google News Initiative](#) and creative agency [Love Frankie](#), will roll out around Southeast Asia to help young people distinguish quality content online and fight disinformation through video-based teaching and learning



materials.



Lecturer [Sharron Fast](#), who teaches our media law & ethics course, gave a workshop at the [FCC Hong Kong](#) on 6 August, "[Covering the Hong Kong Protests – A Workshop on the Legal Risks for Journalists](#)". Sharron's workshop is part of a series of talks and workshops the FCC has been holding for journalists in Hong Kong since the start of the anti-extradition bill protests. Full video [here](#).



[Ting Shi](#), who joined us last fall as an adjunct lecturer, is now with us full-time as a Senior Lecturer. Ting will be teaching Business Journalism and Reporting and Writing to our Master of Journalism students this semester. Previously, she was a senior correspondent with Bloomberg News, and was also China Editor at *South China Morning Post* for four years.

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## JMSC in the news



(5 June) The Independent: [‘They were the hope of China’: Nearly 200,000 people mourn Tiananmen Square massacre](#), by Erin Hale



(7 June) chinadialogue ocean: [China and the global state of fish \(Podcast\)](#), co-produced by Li-Ting Lin (MJ 2019)



(20 June) The Strategist: [The fight for Hong Kong](#), by Keith B. Richburg



(21 June) Washington Post: [Five myths about Hong Kong](#), by Keith B. Richburg



(2 July) NBC News: [Hong Kong protesters smash way into legislative building on anniversary of Chinese rule](#), co-written by Veta Chan (MJ 2019)





(5 July) AFP Fact Check: [The Chinese temples in this video are Buddhist and Taoist - not Sikh or Hindu](#), by Supriya Batra (MJ 2019)



(9 July) Global Voices: [China's censored histories: The struggle to carry memories of the Tiananmen Massacre into the future](#), co-written by Weiboscope project team



(14 August) Washington Post: [The Hong Kong protests are the inevitable effect of an impossible system](#), by Keith B. Richburg



(21 August) Apple Daily: [反送中燃起國際信息戰狼煙](#) (In Chinese), by King-wa Fu



(2 September) The Strategist: [Bringing Hong Kong back from the brink](#), by Keith B. Richburg



## Coming up



Keith Richburg will be joined by panelists [Antony Dapiran](#), [Jeffie Lam](#), [Professor Francis Lee](#), [Kristie Lu Stout](#) and [Damon Pang](#) on 12 September at HKU to discuss how reporters maintain objective throughout the anti-extradition bill protests in Hong Kong when the media itself has become part of the story. Details [here](#).



*Washington Post* foreign affairs columnist [David Ignatius](#) will be giving a talk at HKU on 16 September about the ongoing trade war between China and the United States. His visit to Hong Kong is supported by the U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong & Macau speakers programme. The talk will be held in room CPD3.04, Run Run Shaw Tower, from 6:30-8:00pm. Further details about the event will be posted on our [website](#) in the coming week.

