Holding Up Half the Sky: Women’s Leadership and Development:
Mansfield Conference features speakers from Southeast Asia and Montana

Vietnamese partner, Dr. Vuong Thi Hanh, who helped recruit the Vietnamese contingent.

The 26th Annual Mansfield Conference will feature women’s leadership in a public event entitled “Holding Up Half the Sky: Women’s Leadership and Development.” The one-day Conference will be held on Thursday, April 26, from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. in Turner Hall at UM.

The conference brings together experts from Montana, across the U.S., and Asian Pacific countries to examine diverse issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment in three arenas: law, economic development, leadership, and focusing particularly on the problems of violence against women. It will feature international experts from Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia participating in the Women’s Empowerment Project, a program of the U.S. State Department.

The Mansfield Conference is an annual event focusing on themes of public policy and leadership, and rooted in the tradition of public education and service embodied in the career of Senator Mike Mansfield (1903-2001). For more information, see www.umt.edu/mansfield.

Gender, Sex and the City: Urdu Rekhti Poetry in India, 1780-1870

Rekhti, a genre of Urdu poetry with female speakers, focused on worldly experience, celebrates love and friendship, both same-sex and cross-sex. Through its ground-breaking analysis of 18th–19th century Indo-Islamic poetics, this book reveals a vibrant society of women, including courtesans, as shapers of material culture. The social, economic and spiritual lives of women animate the urban terrain, even as hitherto invisible figures, such as servants, assume prominence. Offering first-time translations of sparkling and funny poems, Ruth Vanita explores the poetics of play as a form of resistance to religious and literary orthodoxies and to the colonial enterprise.

Ruth Vanita is Professor of Liberal Studies. She is author of several books, including Gandhi’s Tiger and Sita’s Smile: Essays on Gender, Sexuality and Culture.

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UM Students Travel to Vietnam, Study Culture and Environment

"An adventure you will never forget... eye-opening."
"The Vietnam course changed my life...." say the eight students hosted at Can Tho University in the Mekong Delta this past winter session. The program includes extensive field study; UM students are accompanied by Vietnamese students and professors; field trips introduce UM students to farmers and wildlife professionals to study lives affected by climate change. EVST Associate Professor Dan Spencer will lead the next field courses winter session 2013 from Dec. 26, 2012 to Jan. 13, 2013. An information session will be held at the Davidson Honors College Tuesday, March 20, at 5:15 p.m.

SEAsia-Montana Exchange Program
The U.S. Department of State has awarded the Mansfield Center a $400,000 grant to implement an exchange program between women in Montana and women in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos on the topics of women’s empowerment. The goal of the program is to teach emerging Southeast Asian and U.S. leaders how to engage in collaborative action to address women’s concerns that have global repercussions. The project brings twenty women from Southeast Asia to serve on selection panels to identify participants from among nearly two hundred applicants to the program. Among the women traveling to Montana will be: Sutada Mekrungruenkul of Thailand, the coordinator of a network of eighty women’s organizations and an advisor to the prime minister. From Cambodia, Soeum Soren provides legal support to women and children in a judicial system hostile to domestic violence charges. Tran Thi Phuong Anh of central Vietnam creates opportunities for disabled women and girls, in a system that traditionally discounts those with disabilities. And in Laos, Anousone Phimmachanh runs a fair trade association to support women in marketing their goods and supporting their villages. In return, twenty women from Montana will travel to Southeast Asia to share their professional expertise; broaden their own perspectives on women’s issues; and learn about Southeast Asian cultures and societies. Many Montana participants will come from program partners: The Salish and Kootenai tribes; WORD, the YWCA, Montana Community Development Corporation, and the State Department of Health and Human Services.

Project Director Deena Mansour recently returned from a visit to southeast Asia to serve on selection panels to identify participants from among nearly two hundred applicants to the program. Among the women traveling to Montana will be: Sutada Mekrungruenkul of Thailand, the coordinator of a network of eighty women’s organizations and an advisor to the prime minister. From Cambodia, Soeum Soren provides legal support to women and children in a judicial system hostile to domestic violence charges. Tran Thi Phuong Anh of central Vietnam creates opportunities for disabled women and girls, in a system that traditionally discounts those with disabilities. And in Laos, Anousone Phimmachanh runs a fair trade association to support women in marketing their goods and supporting their villages. In return, twenty women from Montana will travel to Southeast Asia to share their professional expertise; broaden their own perspectives on women’s issues; and learn about Southeast Asian cultures and societies. Many Montana participants will come from program partners: The Salish and Kootenai tribes; WORD, the YWCA, Montana Community Development Corporation, and the State Department of Health and Human Services.

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See “An Invitation” back page
New courses, faculty, global studies opportunities
Arielle Rittersmith recently completed her doctorate in Anthropology at Oxford University, based on two years’ field research in Singapore on traditional Chinese medicine. She currently teaches for UM’s Anthropology Department; this spring, she developed a new course: ANTY/SSEA 491: Globalization and Overseas Chinese, cross-listed with Anthropology, Mansfield Center, and the new South and Southeast Asian Studies Minor. She also is pursuing comparative research projects. She will introduce the Indonesian film, “Laksar Pelangi” on March 15th in the UC rooms 330-331 at 6:00 P.M.

Visiting Faculty teaches gateway course in new SSEA Minor
Professor Do Thu Ha, Head of the South Asian Studies Department, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Vietnam National University, Hanoi, has been in Missoula since January. She is teaching the introductory, gateway SSEA course, bringing fresh approaches and material as a specialist of South Asia, as well as contemporary materials from her own country, Vietnam. Dr. Ha is available for guest lectures in other courses on Asia, gender and women’s issues, or public policy; she has office hours daily at the Mansfield Center, tel. ext. 243-2838.

Yamaguchi Travel Awards Available to Faculty
UM faculty may apply for travel funds from the Yamaguchi Fund for research or to present at conferences in Asia. Guidelines are available at Mansfield Center; deadline is March 30th.

SSEA related Brown Bag Lunch Lectures
Wednesday, February 29 “Literature of the Vietnam War: A Comparative Perspective”
Dr. Quan Manh, Assistant Professor of American Literature & Ethnic Studies, Department of English The University of Montana (Mansfield Center)

UPCOMING
Tuesday, March 13 “Cultural Arts in Vietnam’s Villages,” Dr. Do Thu Ha, Visiting Foreign Scholar, Vietnam National University, Hanoi
Mansfield Center
March 28th “The University of Montana in India,” Sandy Ross, Peter Baker, Prageeta Sharma.
Stone Hall Room 303
Tuesday April 17 “India sandwiched between the 17th and 21st centuries: the paradox of co-existent Mortar-Cement technology and the Information Age”
Bharat Sriraman
Stone Hall Room 303
Tuesday, April 24 “Reflections on Women’s Empowerment Issues in Southeast Asia”
State Department Exchange Visitors from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand
Mansfield Center
Dr. Quan Manh and Mansfield Director, Terry Weidner (above)
UM Students, Community members, UM faculty, Dr. Doh Thu Ha, Visiting Fellow.
Autumn 2012 SSEA Courses
Students interested to minor in SSEA should see Prof. Ruth Vanita, faculty advisor, during Spring pre-registration.
Office LA 146 A
tel. 243-4894.

LS/SSEA 202X: South Asia    Ruth Vanita
SOCI/SSEA 212S: Social Issues in Southeast Asia
RLST/SSEA 232H: Buddhism    Brad Clough
RLST/SSEA 234: Hinduism    Brad Clough

Invitation to Meet Visiting Women from Southeast Asia
An important part of the Women’s Empowerment program is introducing the visiting Southeast Asian women professionals to American culture and society. If you are interested in hosting any of the visiting women for a meal in your home, or getting to know them, please contact Deena at the Mansfield Center at deena.mansour@umontana.edu.

AAUW-PDK Used Book Sale
Thursday through Sunday, April 12-15, 2012
Orchard Homes Country Life Club
2537 S. 3rd St. Missoula

Proceeds benefit UM scholarships