Workshop at Yale showcases the work of junior research scholars from Myanmar

Since Myanmar’s 2021 military coup, the country has been plunged into a deep crisis. Diverse resistance groups have been battling the military junta in a conflict that has displaced three million people, and the junta’s repressive acts make daily life even in the cities a struggle for survival.

The coup has had a far-reaching impact on education in Myanmar. As the strike of public servants, including many teachers and lecturers, enters its fourth year, enrollment in state universities remains at historic lows, and more and more Burmese youths are forced to look abroad for education. Universities like Yale have looked for ways to use their deep regional expertise to support the education sector and upcoming researchers from Myanmar.

Two postdoctoral researchers at Yale’s Center on Southeast Asia Studies, Dr. Courtney Wittekind and Dr. Frances O’Morchoe, organized a four-month-long online mentoring program connecting twenty-two promising young researchers from Myanmar with eight scholars at Yale and other universities.

The mentees from Myanmar worked one-on-one with their mentors over four months to produce and polish a piece of writing. Each junior scholar was matched with a mentor in their subject area, ensuring in-depth feedback on their work and a chance to learn from a senior researcher in their field.

In April, CSEAS held a week-long in-person and virtual workshop where the mentees presented the results of their months of research. The event brought together junior researchers from Myanmar working on topics in human rights, law, anthropology, history, religious studies, and public health.

The workshop was a great opportunity for junior scholars to share their research with their peers and to build their networks in the US academy. One participant called the program “a very enriching experience for me as I have learned a lot both from our mentors and all the interesting work of fellow junior scholars.”

Another participant commented, “While it may be exhausting at times to be reminded of our country’s deep-seated problems, the workshop also gives me a sense of hope to see that there are those who are passionate to resolve those problems with much care and thought for the people.”