

Beijing and the Olympics 2008:
Social, Economic, Cultural, and Urban Transformations in the 21st Century

The Scholarly Communications Center in Alexander Library was filled on May 1st with students and professors attending the symposium on Beijing and the Olympics 2008. The symposium was organized by the Confucius Institute at Rutgers University in collaboration with the Rutgers Asian Studies Program. The symposium addressed the transformations which have occurred in Beijing in preparation for the 2008 Olympics. The panelists were Richard Belsky, Haili Kong, Weijie Song and Guoqi Xu. Rutgers Dean Ann Fabian gave the welcoming remarks and Rutgers Professor Dietrich Tschanz was the moderator.

Richard Belsky, an Associate Professor of History at Hunter College in New York City (CUNY), focused his presentation on the significance in the Chinese mindset of locating the 2008 Olympics in the Beijing. His presentation was titled *Capital Spectacle: Historically Situating the Beijing Olympics*. Prof. Belsky graduated from Harvard University. His teaching interests are History of East Asia, modern China and modern Japan. His research interests are the social and political history of late imperial and modern China and urban history.

Haili Kong, an Associate Professor in Chinese language, literature and film at Swarthmore College earned his Ph.D. in comparative literature from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Professor Kong's presentation, *Beijing (1949-2008): With and Without Walls*, spoke about the importance of Beijing's city wall throughout history beginning from Ling Siming in 1353 up until Mao Zedong in the 1960's.

Weijie Song, formerly an Assistant Professor of Chinese at Purdue University, will join the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at Rutgers University this fall. Professor Song's presentation, *Reimagining Beijing: From Ancient Capital to Olympic City* discussed the urban transition which occurred in Beijing from imperial city to modern metropolis. Professor Song holds two Ph.D.s; one in Comparative Literature from Peking University, one in Chinese Literature from Columbia University. His research interests include Modern Chinese Literature and Film, Martial Arts Culture, Beijing Narrative and Chinese Diaspora Writings.

Guoqi Xu, an Associate Professor of History and East Asian Affairs at Kalamazoo College earned his Ph.D. from Harvard. Professor Xu's presentation entitled, *Beijing 2008 Olympics: Its Significance and Implications*, covered Professor Song's presentation, *Reimagining Beijing: From Ancient Capital to Olympic City* focused on the urban transition which occurred in Beijing from imperial city to modern metropolis. the history of Chinese desire to hold the Olympic Games in China. He also touched upon the possibility of holding the Olympic Games in China in the future.

At the end of the session, panelists answered participants' questions and further discussed issues related to the 20th century history of Beijing, the challenges faced in preparation for the Olympics and the changes that had been taken place in Beijing and China as a whole.