

ASIAN STUDIES

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ing the course requirements to four hours per week. Enrollment for 101-level classes will be capped at about 19 students, Yue said.

"These are changes we've wanted to make for a while, but we've never had a handle on this until this year," Yue said. "We haven't had the resources until this year because Chinese and Japanese are just now stabilizing."

Sahar Amer, director of the Arabic program, said she hopes to add a tenure-track Arabic professor in addition to the two introduc-

"The reason is simple: We don't have room. The growth has gone up so much that we cannot keep pace."

GANG YUE, CHAIRMAN OF THE ASIAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT

tory-level lecturers. Introductory Arabic classes are also available during the summer and are rarely full.

Amer said the interest in Arabic has really been on the rise since Sept. 11, 2001, going from just one section of 101 to four.

"Of course 9/11 has made a huge interest in anything having to do with the middle east including

Arabic and Islamic culture," Amer said.

"There is information that government jobs have been interested in the ability to speak a second language, particularly Asian languages like Arabic, so people take our classes."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

BLACKBOARD

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said the company prioritizes service and that the bar will keep climbing.

"The expectations are always going to rise ... what was good enough last year isn't good enough this year," Chanoff said.

The alternatives to Blackboard are free, but the programs ITS is considering come without technical consultants and support.

University of California at Los Angeles is one major public university that is moving away from Blackboard. The school began a rollout of a program called Moodle about eight months ago.

UNC has considered that program, although Green said ITS is leaning toward another called Sakai because it draws on a more familiar programming language.

At UCLA, individual departments decide what they will use, said Curtis

Fornadley, a coordinator in the Office of Instructional Development. He said he expects the departments to consider programs other than Blackboard.

"When their license agreement comes up ... they're likely to look at the alternative, just from an economic point of view," he said.

Although most UNC classes use Blackboard, some professors opt to use traditional Web sites or other project management systems.

Mike Schmidt, a UNC visual communications professor, said he uses the alternative Base Camp because Blackboard doesn't translate to the professional world.

"I don't even know how to use Blackboard. I've never used it, but frankly, I don't want to know how to use it because it's not used in the real world," he said.

Contact the State & National Editor at statedesk@unc.edu.

BUSINESS

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what she has seen in past years.

"I'm missing two of my busiest hours of the week," she said. She'll close at 10 p.m. instead of midnight.

Results also indicate that local businesses think other downtown festivities have a better effect on revenue in the area.

Thirty-nine percent of downtown respondents said events such as Locally Grown or UNC basketball wins have a good effect on revenue, compared to 24 percent for Halloween.

The results from two free-response questions about which elements of Halloween should be preserved and which should be changed are being compiled.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

National and World News

FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Bill Clinton meets with Sen. Obama

NEW YORK (MCT) — At a private lunch with Barack Obama on Thursday, former President Bill Clinton made a prediction about the outcome of the closely fought race for the White House.

"I predict that Sen. Obama will win and will pretty handily," he said as he stood with Obama in his Harlem office.

"President Clinton and Sen. Obama had a great conversation in Harlem today," a joint statement released by the former president and Democratic presidential nominee said.

Presidential race is getting closer

WASHINGTON, D.C. — John McCain and Barack Obama are neck and neck, according to a Ipsos/McClatchy poll. The poll finds Republican McCain with 46 percent of voters and Democrat Obama with 45 percent.

With the race so close, several factors could prove pivotal, including how the two campaigns do in winning the support of the roughly 15 percent of voters who could go either way, and how well Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin does in assuring skeptics that she's up to the job.

2,500 displaced Iraqis take refuge under stands in a soccer stadium

KIRKUK, Iraq (MCT) — Qader Abdullah Rasoul lives in the Kirkuk Stadium along with 2,500 others, mostly Kurds. They inhabit mud and cinder-block huts beneath the stands, in the parking lots and the luxury boxes, and it's no longer beautiful. It's a dirty, sewage-ridden slum and Rasoul is the unofficial mayor.

"We apologize to the youth of Kirkuk, because this is a place for sport," he said. "But where else can we go?"

The answer is nowhere, for the time being. Five years after the birth of a new Iraq, Kirkuk

is under Kurdish control, at least for now, and at the center of national debate over whether it will join the semiautonomous Kurdistan region or remain under federal control.

Members of the Kirkuk provincial council say the people living in the stadium are the responsibility of the federal Ministry of Displaced People and Migrants. Ali Mosawi, the deputy minister, said this week that he knew nothing about the situation. "If they are displaced, of course we will have some ideas about helping them."

NASA pushes to buy Russian craft

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (MCT) — NASA officials have decided that they must convince U.S. Congress to allow the agency to buy Russian Soyuz spacecraft. The spacecraft will serve as transport vehicles and lifeboats for U.S. astronauts and their international partners.

Without the Soyuz, NASA said in a congressional briefing, it will have to abandon the station when the current contract with Russia ends in October of 2011. They will then have to cede control of the \$100 billion facility to Moscow.

Economy hasn't healed in Georgia

POTI, Georgia (MCT) — It has been nearly five weeks since a Russian bombing raid killed workers and pockmarked buildings and storage tanks at the Black Sea port. A two-day shutdown followed, but since then the Georgian port has been ready for traffic.

So far, however, the freight traffic that Poti is accustomed to has yet to materialize. Shipping companies remain skittish about the lack of a resolution to the ongoing crisis between Georgia and Russia, and about clusters of Russian soldiers in fields just outside Poti.

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