On the evening of Thursday, February 2nd, 2012 the East Asia Institute hosted a public viewing of the movie “Pinoy Sunday.” The event was co-sponsored by the Cultural Division of the Taipei Economic and Culture Office in Houston. The event was the third installment of the East Asia Institute’s Asian Film Series.

The screening began at 5:30 and was attended by over 40 guests, many of whom come from a Filipino background. During the beginning of the film, popcorn and spring rolls were distributed to the guests.

“Pinoy Sunday” follows the story of Dado and Manuel, two Filipino migrant workers who live and work in Taipei. Dado is a man who sought out a foreign job to make a better life for his wife and child. He just wants to go home. His friend, Manuel, is a chaser of women and dreams. The two live with harsh conditions and have many restrictions placed upon them.

On a Sunday, their only day off, the pair discover a sofa discarded on the sidewalk. With the dream of making their dorm more comfortable, Manuel insists that they carry it back with them. They are miles from their dorm and must find a way to make
Part I: **Autumn Gem**  
(November 14, 2010)

Part II: **Speaking in Tongues**  
(November 19, 2010)

Part III: **Pinoy Sunday**  
(February 2, 2012)

The main characters Dado (left) and Manuel (right)

---

it back before curfew. If they miss curfew, they will be deported. Dado has his doubts, but the two start on their journey. Along the way they face many obstacles, such as the language barrier and cultural bias. Their friendship and beliefs are constantly tested. For them, the couch represents not only making their dorm more comfortable, but also making this foreign place feel like home.

Following the movie, the East Asia Institute’s Associate Director Mimi Yu gave a lecture covering various aspects of foreign work in Taiwan. The official admittance of foreign workers into Taiwan’s work force is still fairly recent. They were first allowed to be legally imported into the labor market in October of 1989, although quite a few conditions were imposed. Yu explained that workers come from surrounding Asian countries. The majority of the workers come from Thailand and the Philippines, but many also come from Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Mongolia.

Foreign workers generally work in construction, manufacturing, house keeping, home care assistance, and fishery. The manufacturing and house keeping industries employ over 90% of foreign workers. The rest of these occupations employ a far smaller percentage. Employers usually provide living arrangements for their workers. “The majority of these jobs offer dormitories,” Yu pointed out, “but they are usually small and must be shared with others.” As displayed in the movie, Dado, Manuel, and four others foreign workers were forced to share a small living space. Foreign home care assistants and housekeepers often live with the family who hired them.

As seen in the film, employees are only given one day off per week and have a strict curfew. Workers also face cultural barriers and sometimes abuse from their employers. To prevent workers from running away some employers also
 withhold the employees’ passport, even though this is illegal. If an employer is found committing this act, they will be faced with a hefty fine. Foreign workers are prohibited to form unions so many Non Governmental Organizations have been created to help with these problems. The purpose of these organizations is to aid foreign workers by fighting unfair conditions and to provide emergency shelter. “Many of the foreign workers are made aware of these organizations,” Yu explained, “however some workers are afraid to seek help. After all, these laborers rely on the job and do not want to cause any trouble for fear of losing their employment.” Despite the great benefits these organizations may provide, many of them are self-funded and usually run on volunteer power. The groups face difficulties due to their small size. It is not uncommon for these programs to cease function if the leader leaves for any reason or the number of volunteers decreases.

The audience was pleased with the choice of movie and found the lecture very informative. “The movie was great!” said UTSA student Jane Smith, “The end was bittersweet, but they didn't lose heart. The whole experience was very nice. I liked being able to watch while being served spring rolls and popcorn. The lecture was interesting and really showed the accuracy of the film despite all the humor it had.” Many guests expressed their wishes to see another event such as this one in the future.