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By: Nicole Madigan in On Campus, Top Stories April 8, 2019 0

University of Technology Sydney professors Peter Fray and Wanning Sun have committed to a second season of a ground-breaking radio program and podcast about Australian-Chinese Relations.

The brainchild of Fray, *The Middle* aims to shed more light than heat on the vital and often misunderstood relationship between Australia and China.

"*The Middle* aims to steer a middle path, without pulling its punches," says Fray.

"There is no more important or developing international relationship for our country.

"Obviously the US relationship is vital, as is, say, Indonesia. But the Chinese relationship will be an ongoing matter of debate and understanding."

Each week, the show examines an aspect of the relationship with two subject area expert guests.

"We have 26 minutes on the radio show and about 40 minutes on the podcast about one aspect of the relationship," says Fray.

Co-host Wanning Sun says *The Middle* is a completely unique program on Australia and China.

"It does what most mainstream media can't do, won't do, or fail to do.

"Bringing in experts with fresh perspectives, it cuts through the noise to deliver depth and nuance."

Being an international university, with several thousand Chinese students enrolled, Fray says UTS has an obligation to discuss issues of the day.

In 2018, *The Middle* pioneered bi-lingual, multiplatform program delivery, with the show being made available as both a podcast in English and a vodcast with Mandarin subtitles at [themiddleau.com](http://themiddleau.com). Season 2 includes topics looking at Chinese humour, transnational security, Australian studies in China, and the importance of tea in the Australia-China relations.

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Edited versions in Mandarin have been published by Chinese language news websites in Australia, including the largest site, *Sydney Today*.

The first season gained a regular listening audience of about 70,000 people and was downloaded in the United States and China as well as Australia.

"In the first season we filmed the show and then translated the transcript into Mandarin. We uploaded the Chinese version on YouTube. This time around we will translate the text into Mandarin and then make that available for free to Chinese media websites in Australia and overseas."

"*The Middle's* second season comes at a time of growing mistrust between Australia and China.

"We don't shy away from the issues behind that but at the same time, it is important to explore the many other aspects of the relationship that don't get as much attention.

"I love the episode we've done on Chinese humour, for instance, featuring comedian Jenny Wong and scholar Jocelyn Chey."

*The Middle* is produced by Caitlin Frances McHugh at 2SER and has been supported by the UTS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Centre for Media Transition, an applied research centre co-funded by FASS and the Faculty of Law.

"It is gratifying to be involved in *The Middle*," says Fray.

"I think it is a real contribution to the debate.

"I get quite a buzz out of seeing the translated version of the transcript shared on Chinese language websites."

*The Middle* started its second season Wednesday April 3 on 2SER 107.3 FM at 6.30pm.

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