

# **Asian Studies Program Annual Assessment Report June 25, 2020**

Submitted by  
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## **I. Asian Studies (AIST) Program Goals**

The Asian Studies program currently offers a major and a minor in Asian Studies. The program more recently started to offer a minor in East Asian History and Politics in Fall 2019. The Chinese and Japanese programs that we closely work with additionally offer minors in the Chinese and Japanese language.

Currently, the program offers regular courses in Asian languages, history, politics, culture, and society. Students enrolled in the AIST major and AIST minor are required to complete intermediate II of an Asian Language (e.g., Chinese or Japanese) and 21 and 15 credit hours of approved courses, respectively, including at least three hours in the Asian Studies Colloquium (AIST 4003). In order to earn the AIST major, students must also complete at least 6 hours of history courses and 6 hours of social science courses.

At the end of their program, students are expected to:

1. Attain a practical proficiency in an Asian language (either Chinese or Japanese currently offered by the University or another approved Asian language).
2. Demonstrate a working knowledge of Asian history, politics, culture, and society.
3. Demonstrate competency in Asian studies that spans more than one academic discipline.
4. Apply one or more specific theoretical approaches and research methodologies to produce a written analysis of some aspect of Asian culture or society.
5. Develop the analytical, critical thinking, and research skills needed to make sense of Asia's complex social reality.

## **II. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

The above student learning outcomes are evaluated by:

- Assessing students' language proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening through language proficiency tests, oral presentations or performances, written assessments, or portfolios.
- Assessing students' performance on a wide variety of assignments such as presentations, exams, or research papers.
- Having students demonstrate their writing and analytical capabilities through the successful completion of a thesis or a major research or conference paper.

Below are examples of processes used to determine student competency:

Outcome 1: Besides standardized language proficiency tests, AIST faculty members have developed several methods with which to evaluate students' language competency, including:

- (a) Having students demonstrate the ability to handle authentic materials such as media clips or foreign songs with lyrics or to understand materials such as news articles, literary texts, and movies with limited instructional aid.
- (b) Having students demonstrate the ability to conduct short spontaneous conversations with a native speaker or a series of oral interviews with the instructor.
- (c) Having students complete at least one original research paper that explores a wide range of topics related to Asian culture and society or produce a short documentary or movie in the target language to demonstrate their conversational skills and understanding of cultural differences.

Outcome 2: The program assesses students' knowledge of Asian history, politics, culture, and society primarily through class performance, including class grades and performance on presentations, group projects or research papers, supplemented by other data such as student presentation of papers at conferences or self-evaluation of the knowledge gained during the program.

Outcome 3: This goal is assessed by establishing clear expectations of the distribution of the students' coursework in multiple academic disciplines. Students are also encouraged to participate in study abroad programs and reflect on their experiences and knowledge learned about various aspects of Asian society in a major written assignment.

Outcome 4: This goal is assessed in courses that require students to produce a piece of research on some aspect of Asia by integrating academic content with training in qualitative or quantitative data analysis. The faculty member assesses the students' ability to apply the theories and methodologies they have learned to generate relevant analysis through literature review essays, research papers, or other work that employs qualitative or quantitative data.

Outcome 5: Faculty members assess students' analytical, critical thinking, and research skills through not only written assignments, but also other assignments such as debates, simulations, group projects, or other applied projects. Students' reflections on their experience with study abroad programs or internships provide another means for evaluating their ability to integrate the knowledge and skills they have learned to make sense of their experience. Opinions reflected in exit surveys provide us with yet another means through which to assess this outcome.

### **III. Results of the Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes**

Our assessment of program learning outcomes during the 2019-2020 academic year suggests the following areas for continuous improvement:

#### *Further Curriculum Development*

Our program generally does well supporting the achievement of desired learning outcomes. The development of the minor in East Asian history and politics in Fall 2019 has helped to expand our program offerings by providing students with the opportunity to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of

the history and politics of the East Asian region. Nevertheless, there remains areas of improvement. For example, while our curriculum currently puts considerable emphasis on China and Japan, other Asian countries (e.g., Korea or India) have not received the same coverage. Our course offerings in Asian literature, art, or religion are also relatively thin compared to our offerings in Asian politics or history. In addition, we are very much in need of a gateway course that can help provide students in their freshman and sophomore years with the necessary background knowledge about Asia that will effectively prepare them for more advanced coursework. Consequently, there remains the need for us to continuously expand the breath of our course offerings to provide students with a more well-rounded education.

Besides expanding the breadth of the curriculum, the program also faces the need to further increase its depth. For example, some AIST students have demonstrated an interest to combine their knowledge of Asia with their interests in business to pursue a career in Asian business. The growing importance of Asia in the global economy also increasingly requires students to demonstrate not only competency in a functional area of business, but also area studies expertise in order to deal with the challenges of operating in Asian markets. Therefore, it may be in the interest of the program to strengthen our collaboration with the Walton College to develop a minor or certificate in Asian business. Such a program can help students demonstrate to prospective employers in both the private and public sectors a sensitivity to and appreciation of Asian cultures and societies and a capacity to apply their knowledge of Asia for business purposes.

#### *Strengthening Faculty Resources*

To achieve the above objective, it is vitally important that we work on strengthening our faculty resources which have been seriously affected by the retirement of two faculty members in 2018. So far, we have sought to make up for this shortfall through the recruitment of part-time instructors who can teach Asia-related courses. For example, the hiring of two instructors in Asian history and art in the past year has helped to partially address this problem and expand our offerings in areas where we lacked coverage in the past. However, such a strategy is not sustainable in the long-term. Instead, it will be necessary for us to have tenure-track faculty members to offer these courses on a regular basis. This will help ensure that we will have the necessary capacity to provide students with the training needed to achieve our main program goals.

#### *Improving Student Recruitment and Retention*

Periodic assessment of our advising practices suggests that the program may need to improve channels of communications with students, in particular in their freshman and sophomore years, in order to enhance student recognition and awareness of the program and increase student enrollment. There also exists the need to identify students who may be struggling with their coursework early in the process to increase our ability to retain students. In addition, the program may need to offer more opportunities that can help students better understand the demands in specific careers and make stronger connections between their coursework and career objectives.

### **III. Changes to the AIST program made or planned**

Below are the proposed changes to the AIST program based on the assessment results reported above:

### *Improving our Curriculum*

AIST will continue to improve its course offerings in Asian history and politics by closely monitoring student interests in these areas. Before we have the ability to offer courses in Asian art, literature, or religion or cover Asian countries besides China and Japan, we will try to promote student interests in and awareness of these issues by encouraging them to participate in our interdisciplinary speaker's series and explore these topics in independent studies or research projects. We will also explore the possibility of offering a new gateway course or converting one of our existing courses to one that can function as a survey course to the region. In addition, we will continue our ongoing discussions with the Walton College of Business about the creation of a minor or certificate in Asian Business.

### *Strengthening Faculty Resources*

We have been working closely with the Dean's office in the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences to hire a part-time instructor to address our teaching needs in the short-term. In the long-term, we will continue to explore the possibility of an additional tenure-track line in Asian Studies, possibility in the form of a joint hire such as with the School of Art.

### *Improving Student Recruitment and Retention*

More efforts will need to be directed to recruiting more students into our program. These may include more widely publicizing the program among high schools in the State; more actively promoting the program to first-year students, especially during the freshmen orientation; regularly visiting language classes to increase program recognition; regularly participating in the majors and minors fair; and working closely with the Advising Office to reach out to students of diverse backgrounds.

Once students enter the program, we will work closely with AIST faculty members and the advising center to identify struggling students, closely monitor their progress, and offer the necessary support in order to help them address areas of deficiencies and devise a strategy for long-term improvement and success.