

Program in Asian Studies

Carleton College

Learning Goals and Outcomes

Introduction

Carleton's Asian Studies Program takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the cultures and societies of Asia. We provide an education that is both broad and deep. The students' horizons will broaden as they acquire a comprehensive knowledge of Asia as a region, and their understanding will deepen as they pursue their overriding interest in one or more regions. Their horizons will broaden as they learn critical and creative skills as liberal arts students, and their understanding will deepen as they focus on one academic discipline among one of nine departments and gain skills in an Asian language. The faculty of the Asian Studies Program is devoted to excellence, which balances teaching, learning, and scholarship. They respect the students and prepare them for a world where Asia plays a more and more important role.

Overview

The Program in Asian Studies at Carleton promotes a wide variety of courses and programs aimed at appreciating and understanding the richness, variety and values of past and present Asian cultures. We concentrate on three regions: East Asia (China, Korea, and Japan), Inner Asia (Tibet, former Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia), and South Asia (India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka). The program consists of courses on Asia in nine departments, extracurricular events on campus, and off-campus studies.

Through our program of study, we seek to provide students with imaginative, analytical, written, oral, and social skills that will permit them not only to gain the ability to understand Asian societies, but also to become productive members of any community, scholarly or non-academic, Western or Asian. Our major gives our students many opportunities to gain the understandings and practice the skills we recognize as central to a liberal arts education. We acknowledge that learning is a gradual process that involves both success and failure, and our approach involves both encouragement and appropriate criticism. Majors are required to focus on either east or south Asia, study an Asian language, and gain proficiency in the theories and methods of one "base" discipline. Our senior integrative exercise requires integration of the skills and knowledge of that base discipline so as to engage in independent scholarship relevant to their focal culture, and also to gain a sense of the wider world of intellectual inquiry—and we attempt to foster the higher order thinking skills necessary for this type of research. At the same time, we recognize that our majors are novice scholars, and we seek to nurture their learning and

skills at a level that is appropriate for undergraduates.

Understandings

Majors should be able to:

- Appreciate the variety of Asian cultures, both in the traditional formations and their modern contours.
- Focus in depth on one Asian culture, whether south or east Asian.
- Understand the interconnections between the focal culture and other cultures, whether Asian or Western.
- Have some familiarity with at least one Asian language, ideally that of the focal culture.
- Study Asian culture(s) from the standpoint of one traditional disciplinary base, whether anthropology, art history, economics, literary studies, linguistics, political science, religious studies, or sociology.
- Appreciate the ways in which Asian cultures best are understood through multiple disciplinary perspectives.
Ideally, be exposed to Asian life as it is actually “lived, ” through participation in off-campus study.
- Reflect knowledgably and critically about Asia’s place in the contemporary world.
- Skills of Inquiry, Analysis, and Communication

Majors should be able to:

Locate (with appropriate searching tools) and cite (in a style appropriate to their base discipline) both primary and secondary sources in the field.

- Know when and how to make use of standard reference works in the field.
- Utilize primary and secondary sources in constructing a thesis-driven paper.
- Apply theories and methods that have been developed within the field.
- Apply theories and methods that have been developed within the field.
- Communicate research and ideas effectively in writing .
- Communicate research and ideas effectively in oral presentation .
- Participate respectfully and effectively in group discussions.
- Work independently on a major research project.

Skills of Higher Order Thinking

Majors should be able to:

- Recognize and interrogate key assumptions underlying primary and secondary texts.
- Recognize and interrogate key assumptions and the types of arguments scholars make in the field.
- Recognize and interrogate key assumptions underlying their own work in the field.
- Integrate general and specialized learning to ask productive questions and solve problems concerning important issues and topics in the field.
- Practice ethical reasoning and action in the collection and attribution of both primary and secondary material.
Participate actively and respectfully in the community Asia scholars as well as the world of academic discourse in general.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

As noted in the Overview, our goal is to give our students multiple opportunities to gain the understandings and practice the skills we have identified. Although the students design their own curriculum in consultation with their advisor, we encourage them to organize their major so as to develop their understandings and skills in stages of increasing complexity, culminating in the Senior Integrative Exercise. Along the way we provide our students with feedback and critical evaluations of their work so that they are aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses. Majors can expect the following:

- Assessment of understandings through evaluation of a range of course-work at all levels, as well as the Senior Integrative Exercise;
- Assessment of skills of inquiry, analysis, and communication through evaluation of a range of course-work at all levels, as well as the Senior Integrative Exercise;
- Assessment of skills of higher order thinking through course-based research projects and especially the Senior Integrative Exercise.

In addition to feedback to individual students, we also engage regularly in programmatic assessment. Regular monitoring of and consultation with students during their junior and senior years, especially at the completion of the Senior Integrative Exercise, provides us with valuable feedback as to how we are succeeding as a program and where we need to make adjustments to our curriculum to accomplish the outcomes we expect. Our programmatic assessment also benefits from the decennial review that the program undergoes.

Conclusion

Asia is, in a certain sense, a construct, a geographical term that belies an immense variety of cultural history and practice. Yet Asian Studies has a long and distinguished history at Carleton, and we are confident that our program is able to combine breadth and depth in a way that assures that our majors graduate with an ability to analyze and articulate the contours of Asian societies as a whole, the specific features of one Asian society, the

interrelations among multiple Asian societies, and the complex interaction between Asian societies and the West. We believe that our goals are appropriate to the context of a liberal arts education, and that our learning outcomes complement and enhance the overall mission of the College and prepare our majors for a lifetime of learning.