

Proposal to Restructure the Existing B.A. Major and Minor in Asian Studies

I. The Request:

The existing B.A. in Asian Studies currently requires students to double major in Asian Studies and a second field. The major requires three introductory courses, five electives, a senior seminar and third year level proficiency in an Asian language for a total of 27 credits excluding language. The minor requires five courses (15 credits) and second year language proficiency.

We propose converting the Asian Studies major to a stand-alone major and changing the requirements as follows: increase the number of electives to 7 upper division courses, which must include 5 courses in a core geographic area, 5 in a core discipline and two outside the core area and discipline; and reduce the required language proficiency to two years. This will increase the number of required credit hours to 33 plus two years of language.

We propose changing the requirements for the minor as follows: remove the language requirement for the minor and increase required courses to 6, including HIST 1210 (Asian Civilizations) or HIST 1220 (Modern Asia) and ASTP 5001 (Current Research in Asian Studies). At least 4 of these courses must be at the upper division level.

II. Need

The Asian Studies major as it stands now is too difficult for many interested students to attain because of the unusually heavy language requirement, yet it is, paradoxically, lacking in rigor due to the low number of total credit hours and lack of disciplinary or geographic focus requirements. These changes will bring our major and minor requirements in line with those of most other comparable programs at places like the University of California at Berkeley, UCLA, the University of Colorado, Boulder, and Arizona State University. The changes proposed here will make our major more accessible, more rigorous, and also more flexible for students who wish to combine it with other majors. The stand-alone major with disciplinary focus will produce graduates with both interdisciplinary area studies expertise and the disciplinary education needed for success in graduate school or professional fields.

Although language acquisition is a crucial component of all area studies programs, most require only two-year proficiency. Our three year proficiency requirement makes the Asian Studies major inaccessible to many students who do not enter the university with a background in an Asian language or who are trying to combine the major with one of the more credit-heavy majors like Business or Engineering. We will continue to strongly encourage students to take language and literature courses past the second year and these will now count as electives. This will also encourage the many students who already take third and fourth year language courses to add the Asian Studies credential to their degree, thus broadening their knowledge of their chosen country of study and giving them some focused disciplinary training beyond language study. Elimination of the language requirement for the minor will make an Asian Studies credential accessible to students who do not need language training or those interested in Southeast Asia, an area for which we do not currently offer two years of language training, but do offer many other courses.

As a stand-alone major, the Asian Studies degree will offer students whose career interests center on language and area studies expertise an interdisciplinary liberal arts program that will provide them with the linguistic, critical thinking, writing and analytic skills that are an essential foundation for any career. Such an area studies degree can provide a competitive

springboard for graduate studies in Humanities and Social Science disciplines and in fields like Business, Law and Public Policy. But it also makes students competitive for the many jobs opening up for translators, interpreters and language and intelligence analysts with federal agencies like the FBI, NSA, CIA, and State Department, all of which actively recruit undergraduates on the University of Utah campus. The large numbers of students interested in using their Asian language skills in professional careers in business, law, journalism, and policymaking will be strongly encouraged to combine their Asian Studies major with a major in a disciplinary field that will give them the specific skills needed to enter these career tracks. In Fall 2005, we created a special track for Business majors, adding classes in the Business School to our list of electives to facilitate such double majors.

III. Institutional Impact

We expect that the proposed changes will significantly increase the numbers of Asian Studies majors and minors and thus also the enrollments in the courses that count for the Asian Studies degree across twelve departments. (Support letters from the departments most affected by the changes, History, Languages and Literature, Philosophy, Political Science, Economics, Sociology, and Geography are attached.) The proposed changes will not involve any change in existing administration of the program, nor will they require new faculty, space, or any other new resources.

IV. Finances

The proposed changes are revenue neutral: they will not cost anything, nor are they expected to bring in any new revenue.

Signature Page

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