

Annual Report of the Undergraduate Adviser

Department of Languages & Cultures of Asia
Academic Year 2009-2010
May 12, 2010

In Fall 2009, LCA formally introduced a new undergraduate curriculum (synopsis attached) consisting of two tracks: Asian Languages and Asian Humanities. Students may complete either track to satisfy the major requirements for an LCA degree. This major change obviously dominated advising interactions with students during this academic year. Some students opted to complete the previous requirement, but most students chose instead to redeclare the major and complete one of the new tracks. DARS encoding for the new major was completed successfully by November 2009 and there have been very few glitches in DARS thus far for either the old or new major requirements.

For the vast majority of students, the new curriculum has provided a considerable increase in flexibility and students across the board were pleased that LCA removed what had been seen as “hidden requirements” (namely, the fact that first-year language study in LCA could not be counted toward the major). The most pleasantly surprising result of this change is the fact that by far the majority of both redeclared and newly declared students choose the Asian Languages track. There had been real concern on the part of LCA faculty that a non-language option in LCA would discourage students from taking language. Fortunately, the opposite appears to be the current trend. There is a crediting incentive (1st and 2nd year language yields 16 credits) to take language and students see that. In fact, one recommendation for next year is to have language instructors, especially in fourth semester, encourage students to consider LCA, since they will have fulfilled half the major requirements upon completion that course.

One key component of the new curriculum was the creation of a new capstone seminar (syllabus attached) in LCA. We wanted to diversify our gateway offerings to relieve some pressure on faculty to staff LCA 100 every semester, while at same time insisting on a more advanced and uniting learning experience for students toward the end of the major. As I happened to teach the capstone seminar this year, I can report that it was very successful. Students felt challenged by the readings and by the discussion format. They appreciated the opportunity to reflect on how their courses in LCA have contributed to a new way to study Asia. In particular, students liked the fact that they were able to bring their earlier coursework to bear on discussions. They made regular references to other courses, study abroad experiences, and language study. A nice camaraderie also developed among the students, only some of whom knew each other previously.

In 2009, the number of majors who needed LCA 600 was manageable and offering the course only in the fall semester was appropriate. Based on current enrollment for the course in Fall 2010 (currently 16), I anticipate no problem accommodating all students who need the course. The LCA major has grown, however, during this academic year. If it continues to grow much more, LCA may face the prospect of having more students than we can easily and effectively teach in one term. Twenty-five seems at the moment like a reasonable upper limit for what is supposed to be a discussion-based seminar. We are some ways from that mark, but if, for example, the number of graduates exceeds 20, that would be a decent indicator that we are getting close to maxing out the ideal cap for the seminar. For the time being, however, the current single-term offering is sufficient.

At the other end of the curriculum, I don't anticipate any problems with staffing our three gateway courses so long as we can continue to find someone to teach either LCA 100 (Asian cultures) or 101 (Asian literatures) at least one semester during the year. LCA 273 (Asian religions) is taught every year and is a key interest both for us and for Religious Studies. Incorporating either 100 or 101 must be a part of the fall Timetable exercise every year.

In terms of interactive advising of students, the increase in majors occasionally made peak times a little stressful for answering students' questions and processing their paperwork. Overall, the job is still manageable at the moment for a faculty member, but if our major base grows, we may need to request additional staff support, especially to handle routine matters such as simple major declarations, standard course exceptions, and requirement checks/reviews.

In addition to academic changes, we tried to ensure that we held at least two social events for undergraduates (and others). The weather conspired in the fall to limit attendance at our potluck, though there were four undergraduates who came. The spring luncheon was better attended, though we should try in the future to find a larger space. Still, students reacted positively to both events and they seem like a good thing to keep up.

Overall, this academic year was, in my estimation, an above-average success for the department's undergraduate program. The two major elements of that success were the smooth transition to the new curriculum and the clear increase in the number of majors. LCA is well on its way to achieving its preliminary assessment goals outlined during the recent ten-year review process (summary attached). In the future, we will begin to track other indicators of success within the department. The final statistics below suggest some of those possible measures.

Statistics

Number of LCA majors graduating in Spring 2010: 12

Total number of LCA majors at time of report: 48

Number of students in LCA 600, Fall 2009: 12

Number of Phi Beta Kappa nominated LCA majors in 2010: 3 (Sherraden, Wallace, Zarate)

Number of Undergraduate Theses in LCA: 3 (Moustafa (Lowenstein), Wallace, Zarate)

Respectfully submitted,

Don Davis

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR IN LANGUAGES & CULTURES OF ASIA
SYNOPSIS

There are two major tracks in the department: Asian Languages and Asian Humanities. Students must fulfill the requirements totaling 30 credits in consultation with the undergraduate advisor. There are no prerequisites for declaring the major, but students must declare in time to take LCA 600 in their senior year.

ASIAN LANGUAGES TRACK

1. 1 Introductory Course – Either LCA 100, LCA 101, or LCA 273
2. 4 Courses in one LCA LANG language
3. LCA 600 – Capstone Seminar
4. Electives in LCA and/or LCA LANG courses numbered 300 or higher to bring credits for major to 30

ASIAN HUMANITIES TRACK

1. 1 Introductory Course – Either LCA 100, LCA 101, or LCA 273
2. **Either** 2 courses from two FIELD categories:
 - a. Religion: LCA 235, 274, 300, 364, 367, 369, 370, 420, 421, 423, 438, 444, 453, 464, 466, 471, 479, 553, 620, 623, 624, 626, 650, 660
 - b. Literature: LCA 201, 279, 300, 311, 312, 314, 357, 373, 374, 401, 403, 404, 413, 524, 571, 576, 579, 610, 615, 666, 671
 - c. Culture: LCA 203, 205, 244, 251, 252, 265, 300, 361, 362, 379, 402, 430, 442, 443, 448, 449, 450, 457, 458, 459, 462, 463, 614, 621, 630, 634, 640, 651, 663, 670**or** 2 courses from two AREA categories:
 - a. Central and Southwest Asia: LCA 106, 203, 205, 265, 279, 300, 314, 413, 472, 579, 610, 620, 630, 640, 666
 - b. South Asia: LCA 201, 251, 252, 300, 311, 312, 362, 373, 374, 402, 420, 421, 428, 442, 443, 448, 449, 450, 462, 463, 524, 571, 620, 623, 624, 625, 626, 630, 634, 651, 663, 666, 670
 - c. Southeast Asia: LCA 244, 300, 361, 401, 403, 404, 438, 441, 457, 458, 620, 630, 666, 671
3. LCA 600 – Capstone Seminar
4. Electives in LCA and/or LCA LANG courses numbered 300 or higher to bring credits for major to 30

HONORS IN THE MAJOR

With the permission of the department undergraduate advisor, students interested in earning Honors in the Major must complete an Honors in the Major Declaration Form. To earn Honors in the LCA major, students must:

- 1) complete an additional 6 credits of intermediate and advanced level coursework beyond the major requirements in LCA, bringing the total credits to 36
- 2) maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.5 in coursework in the major
- 3) maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.3
- 4) complete LCA 600 before or concurrently with the first semester of LCA 681
- 5) complete a Senior Honors Thesis with LCA 681 and 682 for a total of six credits

DISTINCTION IN THE MAJOR

The department will recommend that Distinction in the Major be awarded to any student who completes the major requirements and earns a 3.5 GPA within the LCA major.

CAPSTONE SEMINAR IN ASIAN HUMANITIES

LCA 600
University of Wisconsin
Fall 2009
574 Van Hise
T 2:25-4:55

Prof. Don Davis
Dept. of Languages & Cultures of Asia
1244 Van Hise
890-0138
drdavis@wisc.edu
Office Hours: TR 10-11 and by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is a rigorous engagement with theory and perspective in the study of Asian humanities generally. As such, readings and discussions in the course will center around broad theoretical questions of humanistic scholarship, such as, What is the nature of humanistic knowledge? Do the humanities “progress”? How are Asian humanities specifically to be integrated in the humanities generally? How do we learn from expressions of human aspirations, values, and ideals and still find a place to be critical of, even denounce, excesses and evils of social, religious, economic, and political life? As a capstone seminar, the course is intended to bring together your previous work in the LCA major. Students are, therefore, encouraged to draw upon prior research and reading in Asian humanities for class discussions and assignments. While the themes of the course are necessarily broad, the purpose of the course is to connect detailed research, language skills, and factual knowledge to larger issues and concerns in the field.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To connect the diverse backgrounds and knowledge of the seminar participants with a broader picture of an ideal humanities
- To place the study of Asia in the context of mainstream studies literature, religion, history, philosophy, and hermeneutics
- To assess the specific humanistic import of a study of Asia through comparative theoretical readings and discussions

BOOKS FOR PURCHASE

1. Said, Edward. *Orientalism*.
2. Anderson, Benedict. 1991 [1983]. *Imagined Communities*
3. Siva Sankara Sarma, Rani. *Last Brahmin: Life and Reflections of a Modern-day Sanskrit Pandit*. trans. D. Venkat Rao.
4. Mottahedeh, Roy. 2000 [1985]. *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*.
5. Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1989. *Truth and Method*. 2nd rev. ed. Trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall. Continuum.
6. Naguib Mahfouz, *The Journey of Ibn Fattouma*
7. John Stratton Hawley. 2009. *The Memory of Love: Surdas Sings to Krishna*.

GRADING & REQUIREMENTS

- 1 Book Review (~ 2,500-3,000 words) = 30%
- 1 Final Paper (15-20 pages) = 30%
- Class Attendance & Participation = 40%

CLASS SCHEDULE

Sep 8 Introduction – a Parable
Reading: Naguib Mahfouz, *The Journey of Ibn Fattouma*

COLONIALISM, NATIONALISM, COSMOPOLITANISM

Sep 15 Clearing the Mental Decks: Power and Knowledge
Reading: Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Sep 22 History, Macro-Processes, and Big Ideas
Reading: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*

NOSTALGIA AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Sep 29 The Loss of Unique Human Worlds
Reading: 1) Naiyer Masud “Essence of Camphor”; 2) Orhan Pamuk, “Hüzün” and “Four Lonely Melancholic Writers” 90-115, “Melancholy of the Ruins” 245-53, “Ship on the Golden Horn,” 342-54, all from *Istanbul*. [Learn@UW]

Oct 6 How to Read the Newspaper
Reading: Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, (first half to roughly p196).

Oct 13 On Our Hang-ups about Islam
Reading: Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, (finish)

Oct 20 Answering Parents: What are you supposed to do with this major?
Assignment: **Book Review due** in class, along with short presentation

Oct 27 Categories and Voice beyond Identity
Reading: Rani Siva Sankara Sarma, *The Last Brahmin: Life and Reflections of a Modern-day Sanskrit Pandit*. trans. D. Venkat Rao.

Nov 3 Literature across Cultures

Reading: John Stratton Hawley. 2009. *The Memory of Love: Surdas Sings to Krishna*

HERMENEUTICS AND HUMANITIES

Nov 10 Stuff You Have to Read and Why

Reading: Classics in Social Theory – Hegel, Marx, Freud, Weber [Learn@UW]

Nov 17 Horizontsverschmälzungen in und mit Asien

Reading: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall, 1-42, 101-133, 265-306, 324-341, 438-491.

Nov 24 Ideas Can Matter

Reading: Paul Ricoeur, “Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology,” in *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*, 63-100. [Learn@UW]

Dec 1 Asia is Mine, I am Other

Reading: Emmanuel Levinas, “The Vocation of the Other” and “Being-for-the-Other,” in *Is it Righteous to Be?: Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, 105-120; “Substitution” in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 79-95. [Learn@UW]

Dec 8 Reframing the Humanities in Consumerist World

Reading: Edward Said, “The Changing Bases of Humanistic Study and Practice” in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, 31-56. [Learn@UW]

Dec 15 Learn from, not just about

Final Paper due not later than Friday, December 18th at Noon

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM
Department of Languages & Cultures of Asia
Academic Year 2009-10

Academic focus and mission

Asian humanities in our formulation rests on two principles, pillars, or even mantras: 1) *learn from*, not just about, and 2) *connect histories*, don't just compare them. Obviously, these pillars have implications and complexities far beyond these simple expressions, but the department has enthusiastically embraced what it considers a meaningful and innovative approach to the study of Asia that, to our knowledge, does not exist in these terms anywhere else. Our mission is to instill these principles in our students as a way of building a more rigorous, more relevant, and more ethical intellectual engagement with Asia that also serves the broad goals and aspirations of education in the humanities.

Highlights of recent history

- ~2000—introduced gateway course to LCA
- 2000-4—several new courses in religion and literature (including LitTrans) aimed at undergraduates
- 2004—explicit expansion of LCA's foci to include cultural studies; beginning of a move away from civilizations or area studies model
- 2005—reformulation of several courses as large-enrollment courses to accommodate student interest
- 2006-9—discussions and formalization of new undergraduate curriculum under the Asian humanities ideal, including expanded gateway offerings, a mandatory capstone seminar, and creation of Asian humanities and language tracks; development of an assessment plan for undergraduate program; regularization of LCA representation at undergraduate majors fair, at CCAS and other advising venues
- 2009—formal commencement of new curriculum; first capstone seminar taught; introduction of research methods course; noticeable increase in major declarations and redeclaration under new curriculum by most majors; submission of two MIU proposals to expand faculty and TA support within LCA and related units

Departmental goals for undergraduate program

- 1) to attract 10-20 new majors to the LCA major within five years of implementation and to have a five-year running average of 40-50 majors
- 2) to have 1/4 of all LCA majors submit honors theses within the major within five years of implementation of new curriculum
- 3) to attract a diverse community of majors, including students from many ethnic and racial backgrounds and a balance of male and female students
- 4) to place graduates in a variety of professional careers and/or graduate programs