

ASIAN CONVERSATIONS

Ka Wong, Tomson Hall 351
507-786-3567
wongk@stolaf.edu
wp.stolaf.edu/asian-studies/asian-conversations

Asian Conversations ("Asian Con") is a high impact learning community about Asia, along with a sequence of Chinese or Japanese language study for participants' first two years of college. The program is dedicated to providing students with a comprehensive global perspective with disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to Asia (such as art, history, linguistics, literature, political science, and religion) as well as a faculty-led experiential January term to Asia during the sophomore year. Students from all academic backgrounds and pathways are welcome, as long as they are committed to the study of Asia. Asian Conversations highlights critical thinking, inclusive conversation, and cross-disciplinary collaboration for not only a better understanding of Asian languages and societies, but also the development of students to become skillful, thoughtful, and impactful global citizens.

Asian Conversations is open to incoming students who are interested in studying Asia and enrolled concurrently in level-appropriate Chinese or Japanese classes. Entering students enrolled in the Asian Conversations' First-Year Seminar and Writing and Rhetoric sections will be eligible for the second-year Asian Conversations sequence: January term abroad in Asia and ASCON 220 the following year. Whether students plan to major in natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, or anything else, Asian Con offers an integrated, international, and innovative curriculum to complete required study in world languages and cultures as well as the liberal arts.

Intended Learning Outcomes for the Program

See Asian Studies for information about Chinese language courses, Japanese language courses, and Asian Studies curriculum.

Program Overview

Year 1

Code	Title	Credits
Fall Semester		
ASCON 110	Asian Conversations: Global Flows	1.00
One of the following:		1.00
CHIN 111	Beginning Chinese I	
CHIN 231	Intermediate Chinese I	
JAPAN 111	Beginning Japanese I	
JAPAN 231	Intermediate Japanese I	
Spring Semester		
ASCON 120	Asian Conversations: Imagine Asia	1.00
One of the following:		1.00
CHIN 112	Beginning Chinese II	

CHIN 232	Intermediate Chinese II	
JAPAN 112	Beginning Japanese II	
JAPAN 232	Intermediate Japanese II	
Total Credits		4

Year 2

Code	Title	Credits
Fall Semester		
One of the following:		1.00
CHIN 231	Intermediate Chinese I	
CHIN 301	Third-Year Chinese I	
JAPAN 231	Intermediate Japanese I	
JAPAN 301	Advanced Japanese I	
January Term		
ASCON 215	Asian Conversations III (study abroad)	1.00
or ASCON 216	Asian Conversations III (on campus)	
ASIAN 217	Encountering China (study abroad)	1.00
or ASIAN 218	Encountering Japan: Tokyo (study abroad)	
Spring Semester		
ASCON 220	Asian Conversations: Engaging Asia with Voice and Representation	1.00
One of the following:		1.00
CHIN 232	Intermediate Chinese II	
CHIN 302	Third-Year Chinese II	
JAPAN 232	Intermediate Japanese II	
JAPAN 302	Advanced Japanese II	
Total Credits		5

Course Equivalents for OLE Core Curriculum Requirements

By successfully completing ASCON 215 or ASCON 216 a student fulfills the following OLE Core requirements:

- *Global Histories and Societies (GHS)*
- *OLE Experience in Practice (OEP)*

By successfully completing ASCON 220, a student fulfills the following OLE Core requirement:

- *Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)*

Courses

ASCON 110: Asian Conversations: Global Flows

"Global Flows" engages students in academic and public discourses that emphasize inclusivity, cross-cultural understanding, and global citizenship. We will examine the movement of objects, ideas, and people across history and within and outside of Asia, helping students develop a historical foundation for their future study of Asia. As a first-year seminar, students will also focus on building community as well as skills for succeeding at college. This is the first course in a four-course Conversation Program.

ASCON 120: Asian Conversations: Imagine Asia

"Imagine Asia" explores the concepts of "self" and "other" in both Asian and American contexts, taking them as entry points for engaging with the histories, cultures, and communities of the region. We will examine how Asia has been integrated into the global circuits of meaning, imagination, and (mis)representations and what popular media can reveal about power, race, gender, sexuality, and national identities. As a writing and rhetoric course, students will write in multiple genres and engage in writing as a systematic, interactive process for different purposes and audiences. This is the second course in a four-course Conversation Program.

Prerequisite: ASCON 110.

ASCON 215: Asian Conversations III (study abroad)

Students pursue guided fieldwork experience in Taiwan and Japan (Okinawa). Activities and readings in this course build on the topics from the first year ASCON sequence and language study. Students continue to explore their understanding of Asia through language activities, site visits, and ethnographic observations. Students develop projects and follow a process of inquiry that will help them understand how ordinary people construct "Asian" culture and society today. Offered periodically during January term.

Prerequisite: JAPAN 112 or CHIN 112.

ASCON 216: Asian Conversations III (on campus)

Building upon the knowledge and language skills acquired throughout the previous year and a half, students will pursue guided fieldwork experience in the United States. Students reflect on the experiences of Asians in America through readings, site visits, ethnographic observations, and interviews. Students develop projects and follow a process of inquiry that will help them understand how ordinary people construct "Asian" culture and society in the United States today. Offered periodically during January term.

Prerequisite: ASCON 120.

ASCON 220: Asian Conversations: Engaging Asia with Voice and Representation

The final course in the Asian Conversations program will provide critical reflections on the students' academic and personal journey in the Asian Conversations program in particular, and in the college as a whole. Students examine diverse interpretations of Asia, engage with various primary and secondary texts through written and oral presentations, including materials collected during January Term, and conclude their overall experiences from their past two years in the learning community and beyond. Offered annually in the spring semester.

Prerequisite: CHIN 231 or JAPAN 231, and ASCON 215 or ASCON 216.

ASIAN 217: Encountering China (study abroad)

In this course, students travel to China. They consider how direct experience provides them with their own narratives about people, places, and culture of China. Through attention to their own structured and unstructured experiences during the course, students better understand how ordinary people construct "Chinese" and "Asian" culture and society today. Through multifaceted engagement with multiple sites in China students may visit during their stay, they analyze the role representation and narrative play in both their encounter with and study of Asia. Offered periodically during January Term. Apply through Smith Center for Global Engagement.

Prerequisites: at least one Chinese language course or equivalent.

ASIAN 218: Encountering Japan: Tokyo (study abroad)

Students pursue guided fieldwork experience and language study in Japan. Activities and readings in this course build on the topics from ASCON 110 and ASCON 120 and language study. Students continue to explore their understanding of Asia through language activities, site visits, and ethnographic observations. Students complete language-based tasks and follow a process of inquiry that will help them understand how ordinary people construct "Asian" culture and society today. Offered periodically during January term. Priority will be given to ASCON students.

Prerequisite: at least one semester of Japanese language study at St Olaf or equivalent.

Faculty

Director, 2025-26**Ka F. Wong**

Professor of Asian Studies - Chinese language pedagogy; cultural studies; Asian American studies; visual culture

First-Year Experience Faculty**Rika Ito**

Professor of Asian Studies - Japanese sociolinguistics and language ideologies

January Term Faculty**Ying Zhou**

Associate Professor of Asian Studies - Chinese language pedagogy; second language acquisition and linguistics

Joanne Quimby

Associate Professor of Asian Studies - Japanese Japanese literature; cultural studies and gender studies

Reflection Seminar Faculty**Eric R. Becklin**

Visiting Instructor of Asian Studies history; cultural studies; geography