Asian Conversations

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The goal of the Asian Conversations program is to provide students with an opportunity to incorporate an off-campus learning experience as well as language study into an extended discussion of the peoples and places that make up Asia. Asian Conversations is open to all students interested in studying Asia and Asian languages who are enrolled concurrently in at least second year Chinese or Japanese. Asian Conversations is a three-course sequence, which includes an Interim program in China and Japan.

Asian Conversations is a learning community that introduces students to some of the key texts of Asia as well as key historical, cultural, political, and linguistic constructs through an integrated sequence of three courses. Over that time students pursue conversations with six different faculty members about the issues that have shaped the development of Asian societies over the centuries. The January interim abroad is mainly experiential, focused on having students practice their language skills through interactions with the people and places of China and Japan.

For information about Chinese language courses, Japanese language courses, and Asian Studies curriculum see Asian Studies.

Overview of the Program

Asian Conversations is an interdisciplinary program integrating study of the Chinese and Japanese languages with investigations into the culture, history, language, and societies of Asia. Whether you plan to major in biology, economics, history, Asian studies, or anything else, the Asian Conversations program offers you an integrated, innovative way to complete required study in foreign language and the liberal arts.

Intended Learning Outcomes for the Program

Course Equivalents for General Education Requirements

By successfully completing courses ASCON 210, ASCON 215 or ASCON 216, and ASCON 220, a student fulfills the following general education requirements, which are all awarded upon completion of ASCON 220:

- Multicultural Studies - Global [one MCG]
- Artistic Studies [one ALS-A]
- Literary Studies [one ALS-L]
- Studies in Human Behavior and Society [one HBS]
- Writing [one WRI]
- Oral Communication [one ORC]

Courses

ASCON 210: Asian Conversations I
What is Asia? Students explore how concepts of culture, language, nation, race, and environment define Asia today and in years past and plan related projects for their Interim course. Offered annually in the fall semester. Counts toward Asian studies, Chinese, and Japanese majors and Asian studies concentration.
Prerequisite: CHIN 112 or JAPAN 112 or permission of instructor; must be accepted into Asian Conversations program to register.

ASCON 215: Asian Conversations IIA (abroad)
Students pursue guided fieldwork experience in China and Japan. Activities and readings in this course build on the topics from ASCON 210 and three semesters of 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 annually during Interim. Counts toward Asian studies, Chinese, and Japanese majors and Asian studies concentration.
Prerequisite: ASCON 210.

ASCON 216: Asian Conversations IIB (on campus)
Students pursue guided fieldwork experience in the United States. Activities and readings in this course build on the topics from ASCON 210 and three semesters of language study. Students reflect on the experience of Asians in America through readings, 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 during Interim as needed. Counts toward Asian studies, Chinese, and Japanese majors and Asian studies concentration.
Prerequisite: ASCON 210.

ASCON 220: Asian Conversations III
In this final semester of Asian Conversations students examine modern reinterpretations of traditional Asia. Students engage with primary and secondary texts through written and oral presentation, including materials collected during Interim. Offered annually in the spring semester. Counts toward Asian studies, Chinese, and Japanese majors and Asian studies concentration.
Prerequisite: CHIN 231 or JAPAN 231 and ASCON 215 or ASCON 216.

Faculty

Director, 2019-2020
Hsiang-Lin Shih
Assistant Professor of Asian Studies
Chinese literature; classical and modern eras

Rika Ito
Professor of Asian Studies
language change and variation; sociolinguistics; language and gender; Japanese

Stephanie Montgomery
Assistant Professor of History and Asian Studies

Thomas A. Williamson
Associate Professor of Sociology/Anthropology
Southeast Asia; theory; globalization; medical anthropology

Ka F. Wong
Associate Professor of Asian Studies
Ying Zhou
Associate Professor of Asian Studies
second language acquisition and language pedagogy