

Interdisciplinary Major Proposal: Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
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Asia and the Middle East are fast developing regions that the US has begun to encounter more and more in recent decades. An area spanning over the majority of the Asian continent, these regions boast a colorful array of peoples and societies from numerous backgrounds. With the advent of globalization and a speedy rate of cultural expansion, it is important that we as Americans understand the people and civilizations we are interacting with. The rise of global terror, technological exchange, cheap labor, and increased democratization has forced America into closer relationships with regions once romanticized as inhabited by gypsies and imperial warriors, where magic carpets, camels and junks were the common mode of transportation. Now that we are brought together by the forces of globalization, we must put those stereotypes to rest and begin to understand each other for our true cultural values for the sake of communication. So that we are able to do this, we must be willing to learn more about linguistic, religious, political, historical and cultural aspects of Asia and the Middle East that make up some of the core pieces of these societies.

I believe that miscommunication and misunderstanding is one of, if not *the* main, problem when it comes to global, international political issues. By studying the cultures and societies of the peoples with whom we are interacting with, we will not only be able to better understand each other but we will be able to better understand the issues that arise across cultures.

The Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major encompasses each of the subcategories that I feel make up a society: language, religion, politics, history and culture. In order to appreciate elements of language in Asia and the Middle East, I will take introductory

Chinese language courses while at Hendrix and an introductory Arabic language course during my study abroad period. To understand religious motivations and interactions within and between societies, I have added courses that focus on all three of the Abrahamic religions as well as a Buddhism course. Political theory courses will give me the tools to follow trends within these societies and compare between them. To bring these elements together, my proposed history courses on the regions will provide a background to apply these elements to. Finally, an anthropology course on globalization will reinforce the importance of why we need to invest ourselves in studying and understanding these areas and their peoples.

12 courses as follows:

Completed Courses:

- POLI 271 01 - *Democracy, Development & Violence*

Covering theoretical political ideas, *Democracy, Development & Violence* provides various tools to measure and understand the growth or decline of nations as they experience democratization, internal conflict, the struggles of autocracy and various other political phenomena. **Within the Asian and Middle Eastern studies interdisciplinary major, this course will be vital to understanding Asia and the Middle East as a large number of states in these regions are developing nations. This course will also be important later on when tying Middle Eastern development and Asian development together to understand similarities and differences between development in the two regions.**

- HIST 228 - *The Medieval Islamic World*

Focusing on the pre-colonial Middle Eastern world, the *Medieval Islamic World* helps create a bigger picture of a region that expanded into one of the most powerful empires in history, yet managed to fall so hard and completely that many of the nations within the empire's boundaries are still struggling today to emerge as developed countries. **Within the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major, this course will complete a comprehensive historical background for the Middle East by introducing history that, misunderstood by the West, plays an important role in many Middle Eastern states today.**

- HIST 243 - *The Modern Middle East*

Analyzing various causes and effects of globalization on the Arab world, the *Modern Middle East* covers over 200 years of history in the region. This class provides incite to nation building in the region and how colonialism impacted Middle Eastern politics and culture. **Within the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major, this course will complete a solid historical background of more recent events that have shaped the Middle East and led to the nation building process the world sees today. Later, this will be useful in comparisons with developing East Asian nations that also have colonial pasts.**

- RELI 216 - *Judaism*

One of the major Abrahamic religions to come out of the Middle Eastern region, *Judaism* provides religious, cultural and historical backgrounds on the Jewish religion and people. **Within the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major, this course will help round out the religious aspects of this interdisciplinary major by providing insight to one of the major Abrahamic religions to come out of the Middle Eastern region.**

Proposed Additional Courses:

Leibniz Universität Hannover - *Analyzing Terrorism & Political Violence* (or similar)

This course is a political science course with a focus on the themes of terrorism and political violence. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major, this course will provide information on a trend that radical groups have increasingly employed as a means to get across a particular political message.**

Leibniz Universität Hannover - *Grundkurs Neues Testament/Bibelkunde II* (or similar)

This course is an introductory course to the New Testament. It will provide a basis for Christian thought and practice in regards to the gospels of Jesus Christ. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major, this course will provide incite to one of the most widely practiced religions in the world. Not only has Christianity affected areas of the Middle East, its birthplace, but it has had a major effect as it has spread to Asia and the world. This course will help with understanding conflicting religious attitudes between peoples and states in Asia and the Middle East. This course will help round out a knowledge of one of the three Abrahamic religions in the Middle Eastern region.**

Leibniz Universität Hannover - *Arabic*

A year of Arabic language study abroad provides the equivalent of two semesters of beginning language courses at Hendrix college. These two semesters will engage learning and understanding of Arabic language, culture and communication skills. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major, Arabic will fulfill the language aspect of culture in the Middle East. This will be of vital importance because of the significance that the Arabic language plays in a number of Middle Eastern states as well as the fast growing, widespread Muslim religion. It will also provide a good balance to any Asian language counted towards the major.**

- CHIN 120 - *Beginning Chinese II*

A year of Chinese language study will provide a basic and necessary understanding of Mandarin Chinese. Reading skills, speaking skills, writing skills and cultural awareness will allow for a better understanding China's official language. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major, Chinese will fulfill the language aspect of culture in Asia. With 85% of the East Asian population and 20% of the world population, Mandarin Chinese will be beneficial not only in cultural, historical and political contexts, but global contexts as well. It will also provide a good balance to any Middle Eastern language counted towards the major.**

- One of the following HIST

- 304 - *Mao & the Chinese Revolution*

This course will follow and discuss in depth the legacy of Mao Ze-Dong, one of China's most important historical political figures. It will provide information on the Chinese Revolution, which has shaped, to a high degree, the country of China we know today. This course will also focus on the importance of Marxism and Leninism in Mao's China and the break from those schools of thought. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major, this class will provide an understanding for the largest country in the Asian region. As China pulls important weight not only in Asia, but the world, this class is important to understand Asia.**

- 306 - *Crime & Punishment in East Asia*

This course will examine what constitutes a crime and the way in which punishment for crimes are executed in East Asia. It will provide a background on traditional practices in regards to crime and punishment within the Asian region and provide incite to the recent advent of globalization and the effects the influx of western ideas has had on the criminal system in East Asia. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major, this course will provide a background on what a crime is in East Asia and the forms of punishment that counteract those crimes. This will help with understanding the cultural, political and social mindsets that make up the Asian region.**

- 307 - *Gender & Society in East Asia*

This course is designed to look at the implications of gender in various social, philosophical, religious, historical, and political contexts as well as its role in regards to urbanization and globalization. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major, this class will allow for a deeper understanding of social phenomena between the classes and sexes within the Asian world. This course will be helpful in identifying cultural themes and social mindsets that make up the Asian region.**

- One of the following ANTH

- 314 - *Globalization & Religion*

This course focuses on the way in which globalization has an impact on various regions in regards to a religious identity. Delving into various areas of each affected culture, this course examines the implications of globalization for peoples social, religious and cultural identities. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major, this class will help identify trends and changes in countries experiencing globalization. This could be particularly helpful when discussing the spread of Christianity and Islam in Asia or the clashes between neighboring religious cultures, such as the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Northern Afghanistan in 2001 by the Talib government.**

- 360 - *Globalization & Transnationalism*

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we have begun to understand the true implications of globalization. As countries and subsequently their populations begin to interact, cultures collide and new practices emerge. This course examines the consequences on sovereign nations involved in globalization especially in regards to cultural interaction and the redefinition of identity. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major, this class will help identify trends in globalization that bring countries of the world closer and allow for more development. It will also look at the reasons for conflict within and among various states. This could be particularly helpful when discussing immigration, the spread of culture, and government alliances between Middle Eastern and Asian countries.**

- RELI 338 - *Tibetan Buddhist Culture*

Various aspects are introduced that describe the relationship Tibetan Buddhism has to India, it's birthplace. This course also focuses on various parts that make up the culture, religious practice and history of Tibetan Buddhism. This course explains not only the religious realm of Buddhism, but also gives incite to Tibet's long and drawn out nation building struggle for sovereignty in the region. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major, this will help round out the religious aspects of this interdisciplinary major by providing information on a non-Abrahamic religion practiced by many in Asia. It will also provide an example of nation building in an Asian country that parallels the nation building found in the Middle East.**

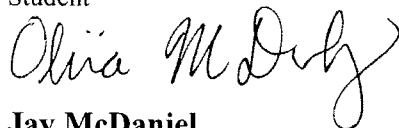
- POLI 400 - *Research Methods*

Because of the need for a Senior Capstone Experience, *Research Methods* in the political science department will provide the methods needed to find and research a topic for a senior thesis. **Within an Asian and Middle Eastern Studies interdisciplinary major, this class will help with researching and writing a senior thesis using methods to compare and measure various aspects of politics, culture, religion and socioeconomics in developing Middle Eastern and Asian states.**

A final grade for the Senior Capstone Experience will be given on successful completion of an appropriate length thesis to be graded by the student's advisory board.

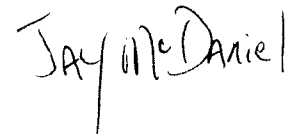
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