

2016-2017 Yearly Assessment Report

College of Arts & Sciences (CAS)

1. Identifying Information

Program: Middle East Studies

Program Type: Minor

College Division: Social Sciences

Submitter: Lindsay Gifford, Assistant Professor and Interim Director, lagifford@usfca.edu

2. Mission Statement

The Middle East Studies program does not currently have a mission statement.

- Has this statement been revised in the last few years? No.

3. (Optional) Program Goals

No separate Program Goals exist for the Middle East Studies Program.

- Have these goals been revised in the last few years? No.

4. Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Upon completion of a minor or the BAIS Regional Concentration in Middle Eastern Studies, students will:

- 1) Demonstrate an understanding of the major issues and problems facing the greater Middle Eastern/North African region and be able to relate this knowledge to a broader global context.
- 2) Gain the conceptual and analytical tools to understand how politics, economics, history, international relations, and culture shape Middle Eastern national and regional dynamics.
- 3) Achieve an intermediate-level proficiency in a Middle Eastern language.

- Have these PLOs been revised in the last few years?

These PLOs were submitted to the College April 14, 2017. Prior to this date, no PLOs existed for the Middle East Studies Program.

5. Brief Summary of Most Recent Assessment Plan

No prior assessment plan exists.

6. Academic Program Review

- Date of most recent Academic Program Review's External Reviewer Visit: No prior visit.
- Date of most recent Action Plan Meeting: There are no existing records for an Action Plan meeting for the minor. One Board meeting is held per year, with the most recent taking place on March 21, 2017.
- Brief summary of the most recent Action Plan: None.

7. Methods

- What did you do with regard to assessment of your program in 2016-2017?

We collected student work products from THRS 373 *Introduction to Islam*, HIST 270 *Sex and Transgression in the Islamic World*, and THRS/POLS 380 *Social Justice in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. For THRS 373, we selected questions focusing on the Middle East region from the Midterm and Final Exams and aggregated student responses as correct/incorrect. For HIST 270, we generated an average student score for each of four student work products: a reaction paper, an analytical essay, a book review, and a final paper. For THRS/POLS 380, we generated an average student score for each of three student work products: two critical response papers and a final paper.

- What were your questions?

Question 1: To what degree do our students retain political, historical, religious, and cultural knowledge about the Middle East region?

Question 2: To what degree do our students apply critical thinking in generating analyses of political, economic, historical, religious and cultural processes for the Middle East region?

- How are these questions related to your most recent Academic Program Review and/or Action Plan?

N/A. There is no prior Academic Program Review or Action Plan to date.

- What PLOs are these questions related to?

PLO #2 Gain the conceptual and analytical tools to understand how politics, economics, history, international relations, and culture shape Middle Eastern national and regional dynamics.

- What direct and/or indirect methods did you employ?

THRS 373 Introduction to Islam

Students were asked a series of basic questions identifying religious, geographical, historical, and sociocultural information pertinent to the history of Islam and the Islamic world. Questions were formatted as multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, mapping, matching, and visual (photo) recognition. The instructor kept a record of how many students were able to answer each question correctly/incorrectly. In order to answer these questions correctly, students must retain and produce political, historical, geographical, religious and sociocultural knowledge about the Middle East region.

HIST 270 Sex and Transgression in the Islamic World

Students were asked to write a series of essays using translated primary historical sources from the Middle East region to think critically about Middle Eastern bodies, sexuality, and gender in politico-historical context. Primary sources included medical manuals, legal codes and literary works. Students needed to present information using hallmarks of critical thinking and analysis, including clarity, depth, breadth, synthesis, precision, and logic, as well as demonstrate facility with academic writing style and argumentation (thesis, analysis, and conclusion). Students were provided with a clear rubric.

THRS/POLS 380 Social Justice in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Students were asked to write four Critical Response Papers throughout the course of the semester answering a question related to historical, political, cultural or theoretical issues in Israel-Palestine, as well as reflect on the student's own position vis-à-vis the conflict. In order to successfully complete the assignment, students needed to synthesize course readings and present a reasoned academic argument acknowledging the effects of their own position and biases – hallmarks of critical thinking. Assessing two critical response papers allows us to see student progress over time. For the midterm paper, students needed to select a current sociopolitical event in Israel-Palestine and collect data on the event's coverage in various media sources. Students completed a comparative analysis of the ways in which various media sources portray a single event using discourse and textual analysis.

Rubric:

High Priority for Program Discussion	Average	Good	Excellent
Average accuracy below 72%	Average accuracy 72-79%	Average accuracy 80-89%	Average accuracy 90-100%

8. Results

- What were the direct data results?

Course 1: THRS 373 Introduction to Islam

Question	Number Correct (n=37)	Percent Correct	Assessment Rubric
Midterm			
(9) Night Journey of Prophet Muhammad	34	0.92	Excellent
(18) Ottoman Empire ends 20th Century	35	0.95	Excellent
(20) Baghdad, Capital of Abbasid Empire	32	0.86	Good
(21) Damascus, Capital of Umayyad Empire	32	0.86	Good
Locate Syria on map	35	0.95	Excellent
Locate Tunisia on map	31	0.84	Good
Locate Libya on map	33	0.89	Good
Locate Egypt on map	34	0.92	Excellent
Locate Afghanistan on map	35	0.95	Excellent
Locate Iraq on map	33	0.89	Good
Final Exam			
(1) Identify Rumi	37	1.00	Excellent
(2) Identify Ibn Abd al-Wahhab	35	0.95	Excellent
(6) Identify Ali	33	0.89	Good
(9) Identify Hussein	32	0.86	Good
(12) Identify Ayatollah Khomeini	36	0.97	Excellent
(13) Battle of Karbala	36	0.97	Excellent
(22) Ta'ziyeh Ashura Passion Play	36	0.97	Excellent

(42) Salafi Reformist Islam	34	0.92	Excellent
(45) Muslim Brotherhood f. Egypt	37	1.00	Excellent
(48) Blue Mosque	37	1.00	Excellent
(47) Dome of the Rock	37	1.00	Excellent

Course 2: HIST 270 Sex and Transgression in the Islamic World

Work Product	Average Score /4 (n=18)	Average Percent	Assessment Rubric
Reaction Paper	3.41	0.8525	Good
Analytical Essay	3.34	0.835	Good
Book Review	3.31	0.8275	Good
Final Paper	3.48	0.87	Good

Course 3: THRS/POLS 380 Social Justice in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Work Product	Average Score (n=40)	Average Percent	Assessment Rubric
Critical Response Paper 1	8.81	0.881	Good
Critical Response Paper 4	8.94	0.894	Good
Midterm Paper	90.43	0.9043	Excellent

- What surprised you?

Since this is the first year Minors such as Middle East Studies are engaging in assessment, nothing surprised us in particular. The results were overall positive.

- What aligned with your expectations?

We expected that faculty expertise would contribute to student achievement of course and Program learning outcomes, which is borne out by the data.

- What do you understand these results to mean? What are the implications of the data?

All of the work products evaluated for assessment generated an evaluation of Good or Excellent. In THRS 373, five questions on the midterm resulted in excellent student retention and testing on introductory material for Islam, while another five questions resulted in good student retention. Similarly, the final exam shows nine questions demonstrating excellent student retention on introductory material for Islam, with another 2 demonstrating good retention. These results could indicate that over the course of the semester, students gain and retain more knowledge about Islamic religion and its relationship to the Middle East region.

In HIST 270, all four work products generated a result of Good from the assessment rubric. These work products were all written and analytical in nature, and may be more difficult to produce than multiple choice exam questions. Nevertheless, students show a growth trajectory from the beginning of the

semester, with an average score of 85%, through a dip in the middle of the semester, with average scores of 83%, and a rise in the end of the term to an average score of 87% on the final paper. Students thus show growth in their ability to identify and deploy analytical and conceptual tools in their writings about the Middle East.

For THRS/POLS 380 a slow growth trajectory is also noted, from the first Critical Response paper with an average score of 88%, to the final Critical Response paper with an average score of 89%. The more substantial midterm paper shows that students gain facility with critical analytical writing throughout the semester, with an average score of 90%.

9. Closing the Loop

- What might you do as a result of these assessment results? What curricular or programmatic changes might you implement?

This is the first assessment report for Middle East Studies. All the results show achievement of the program learning outcome at either a good or excellent level. This report will serve as a baseline for the program; no action is needed at this time.

- Possible closings of the loop (pick ≥ 1 and briefly describe)

There are no open loops to close as identified by this report.

- Have you or will you submit any course or program change proposals as a result of these results?

Middle East Studies will not submit any course or program changes as a result of this assessment report. We will continue to monitor Program Learning Outcomes in light of the baseline data generated in this report.