

2017-2018 Yearly Assessment Report

College of Arts & Sciences (CAS)

1. Identifying Information

Program: Middle Eastern Studies

Program Type: Minor

College Division: Social Sciences

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

2. Mission Statement

The Middle East Studies program does not currently have a mission statement. Program meetings will address this lacuna, as well as working with Michael Jonas.

- 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.

- 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. The PLOs need to be updated to reflect that specific languages are not required to complete the minor, although we prefer that students study Arabic or Hebrew.

5. Brief Summary of Most Recent Assessment Plan

We received positive feedback on our PLOs and Assessment design. We will work this year on creating a Program Mission Statement, and discuss implementing an Indirect Assessment tool. Through the last academic year Assessment process, we realized that our 3rd PLO was actually not an official requirement (Achieve an intermediate-level proficiency in a Middle Eastern language). We have thus removed this requirement from our PLOs and will update the PLOs with the College. We will also be holding discussions with the Faculty Advisory Board as to whether Middle Eastern language study (Arabic or Hebrew) should be a required Program Learning Outcome.

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 February 26, 2018.
- 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*, 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 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.

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	1.00	Excellent
(18) Ottoman Empire ends 20th Century	26	0.76	Average
(20) Baghdad, Capital of Abbasid Empire	32	0.94	Excellent
(21) Damascus, Capital of Umayyad Empire	26	0.76	Average
Locate Syria on map	30	0.88	Good
Locate Tunisia on map	31	0.91	Excellent
Locate Libya on map	32	0.94	Excellent
Locate Egypt on map	34	1.00	Excellent
Locate Afghanistan on map	32	0.94	Excellent
Locate Iraq on map	29	0.85	Good
Final Exam		0.00	
(1) Identify Rumi	32	0.94	Excellent
(2) Identify Ibn Abd al-Wahhab	31	0.91	Excellent
(6) Identify Ali	26	0.76	Average
(9) Identify Hussein	30	0.88	Good
(12) Identify Ayatollah Khomeini	31	0.91	Excellent
(13) Battle of Karbala	31	0.91	Excellent
(22) Ta'zīyah Ashura Passion Play	34	1.00	Excellent
(42) Salafi Reformist Islam	31	0.91	Excellent
(45) Muslim Brotherhood f. Egypt	33	0.97	Excellent

(48) Blue Mosque	34	1.00	Excellent
(47) Dome of the Rock	34	1.00	Excellent

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	9.24	0.924	Excellent
Critical Response Paper 4	9.41	0.941	Excellent
Midterm Paper	91.6	0.916	Excellent

- What surprised you?

The results of each of the assessment tools were very positive, with a few minor areas for improvement. The consistently high scores in THRS/POLS 380 were also slightly surprising.

- 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?

The majority of the work products evaluated for assessment generated an evaluation of Good or Excellent, with only two assessment questions generating an Average score. In THRS 373, six questions on the midterm resulted in excellent student retention and testing on introductory material for Islam, while another two questions resulted in good student retention, with one average score. Similarly, the final exam shows nine questions demonstrating excellent student retention on introductory material for Islam, with one question demonstrating good retention and one average. 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.

For THRS/POLS 380 a slow growth trajectory is noted from the first Critical Response paper with an average score of 92%, to the final Critical Response paper with an average score of 94%. The more substantial midterm paper shows that students gain facility with critical analytical writing throughout the semester, with an average score of 92%.

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 second assessment report for Middle East Studies. The results show achievement of the program learning outcome at a good or excellent level. A few assessment questions show average student retention, which can be improved through greater emphasis on these items.

We will work to clarify the PLOs with regard to language study and to develop a Program mission statement.

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

Gathering assessment data is difficult and stressful for faculty during the Fall semester. We may work in the Spring or Summer to reduce this stress. Since we are an interdisciplinary program, this fact also makes it more difficult to demand data from affiliated faculty who have heavy workloads in their respective departments. We may also institute an Indirect Assessment for graduating students in an exit survey.

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

Middle Eastern Studies will submit updated PLOs as a result of this and last year's assessment report in which we were notified that language study of Arabic or Hebrew are recommended, but not required. We will continue to monitor Program Learning Outcomes in light of the data generated in this report.