

2018-2019 Yearly Assessment Report

College of Arts & Sciences (CAS)

1. Identifying Information

Program: Middle Eastern Studies

Program Type: Minor

College Division: Social Sciences

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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. Our website states the following goals for the minor:

“Our program introduces students to the historical, religious, and political trends that have shaped the Middle East. Drawing upon diverse and comparative perspectives, the minor facilitates a broad understanding of the Middle East that takes into account the complexity and richness of the region. The minor enables students to understand the historical contributions of the Middle East to human civilization and the importance of the Middle East to international politics today.”

- 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 on April 14, 2017. Prior to this date, no PLOs existed for the Middle East Studies Program. The PLOs 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, such as an exit survey. We will continue to discuss with the Faculty Advisory Board as to whether Middle Eastern

language study (Arabic or Hebrew) should be a required Program Learning Outcome – we recognize that this is an important goal for students and scholars of the Middle East but also recognize that it may be a deterrent to pursue the regional minor.

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 in Spring 2019.
- 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 and Israel-Palestine*. 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 midterm 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 and Israel-Palestine

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	31	0.84	Good
(18) Ottoman Empire ends 20th Century	26	0.70	Below Average
(20) Baghdad, Capital of Abbasid Empire	28	0.76	Average
(21) Damascus, Capital of Umayyad Empire	25	0.68	Below Average
Locate Syria on map	33	0.89	Good
Locate Tunisia on map	30	0.81	Good
Locate Libya on map	31	0.84	Good
Locate Egypt on map	34	0.92	Excellent
Locate Afghanistan on map	33	0.89	Good
Locate Iraq on map	33	0.89	Good
Final Exam			
(1) Identify Rumi	34	0.92	Excellent
(2) Identify Ibn Abd al-Wahhab	30	0.81	Good
(6) Identify Ali	29	0.78	Average
(9) Identify Hussein	31	0.84	Good
(12) Identify Ayatollah Khomeini	30	0.81	Good

(13) Battle of Karbala	31	0.84	Good
(22) Ta'ziyeh Ashura Passion Play	33	0.89	Good
(42) Salafi Reformist Islam	30	0.81	Good
(45) Muslim Brotherhood f. Egypt	36	0.97	Excellent
(48) Blue Mosque	36	0.97	Excellent
(47) Dome of the Rock	36	0.97	Excellent

Course 3: THRS/POLS 380 Social Justice and Israel-Palestine

Work Product	Average Score (n=40)	Average Percent	Assessment Rubric
Critical Response Paper 1	9.21	0.921	Excellent
Critical Response Paper 4	9.08	0.908	Excellent
Midterm Paper	89.2	0.892	Good

- What surprised you?

The results of each of the assessment tools were very positive, with a few minor areas for improvement. The two Below Average indicators in THRS 373 indicate that students still had not internalized their knowledge about the Umayyad and Ottoman empires by the midterm exam date. The transition to overall Good and Excellent scores for the THRS 373 final is encouraging. Student familiarity with Middle Eastern geography is Good overall at the midterm point. The consistently high scores in THRS/POLS 380 were also slightly surprising and show a generally flat trajectory throughout the semester.

- 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 and two a Below Average score. In THRS 373, only one question on the midterm resulted in excellent student retention on introductory material for Islam, with six questions resulting in good student retention, one average score and two below average scores. This indicates that students had some difficulty with detailed questions about the Middle East at the semester midpoint. The final exam shows a marked improvement, with four questions demonstrating excellent student retention on introductory material for Islam, with six questions demonstrating good retention and only one average at the end of the semester. 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 as they become familiarized with the region and approach mastery of the material.

For THRS/POLS 380 a generally flat to slightly declining 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 91%. The more substantial midterm paper shows that students gain facility with critical analytical writing

throughout the semester, with an average score of 89%. While the results are more-or-less flat overall, there is a slight downward or V-trend (92-89-91) which could indicate some difficulty with the longer midterm paper and/or fatigue with heavier academic workloads throughout the semester.

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 third assessment report for Middle Eastern Studies. The results show achievement of the program learning outcome at a good or excellent level on average. A few assessment questions show average or below average student retention in THRS 373, which can be improved through greater emphasis on these items related to Islamic empires.

We will work to develop a Program mission statement at our annual Board Meeting.

- 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 in Spring 2019. More holistically, we may reflect on the overall minor curriculum since students who take HIST 388 Islamic Empires as an elective would have this type of knowledge reinforced, while students who choose other electives such as FYS Engaging Political Islam or SOC 390 Islam, Politics and Society may be at a disadvantage in terms of historical knowledge, but at an advantage in terms of knowledge about how Islam intersects with politics and society in the Middle East, Muslim world, and diaspora. Perhaps the assessment questions here are too granular to capture these nuances in the overall curriculum.

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

Middle Eastern Studies has begun to consider changes and updates to improve the curriculum. The formerly required course History of the Modern Middle East was discontinued and has been replaced by the new required course ANTH 270 Mideast Peoples & Culture. With the addition of new faculty, new electives have been offered such as FYS Engaging Political Islam, SOC 390 Islam, Politics and Society, and BAIS 390 Turkey between Europe and the Middle East. We have also considered substitutions to better reflect the diversity of the Middle East such as through courses on Christianity (Who is Jesus?) and Muslim Spain (Muslims, Christians and Jews in Medieval Spain). The board will discuss formalizing these changes at our annual meeting and we will continue to monitor Program Learning Outcomes in light of the data generated in this report.

Curriculum Map:

Middle Eastern Studies PLO x Courses Curriculum Map

PLO	Fulfilled By
1	HIST 389, THRS 373, POLS 349, POLS 354, HIST 270, HIST 310, HIST 388, INTD 390, POLS/THRS 380, THRS 210, THRS 333, THRS 376, THRS 390
2	HIST 389, THRS 373, POLS 349, POLS 354, HIST 270, HIST 310, HIST 388, INTD 390, POLS/THRS 380, THRS 210, THRS 333, THRS 376, THRS 390

PLO x ILO Curriculum Map

PLO	Aligns with ILO
1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7