1. Mission statement and overview of the department

The Department of Languages & Cultures of Asia (LCA) focuses on research and teaching in the Asian Humanities, with particular emphasis on cultures, literatures, religions, and languages. Our mission is to engage in wide-ranging humanistic scholarship that transcends the boundaries of language, geographic region, nation, and religious identity and to impart the significance of a humanistic study of Asia to students, as well as to other members of the university and beyond. This mission of the department promotes Asian humanities as something not merely to learn about but also, and more importantly, to learn from.

The LCA major encourages a systematic, humanistic engagement with Asia. It provides multiple entry-points for students with diverse backgrounds and interests and demands a breadth of geographic and disciplinary commitment to Asian materials within the larger rubric of the humanities. LCA offers a flexible curriculum for students to shape disciplinary and other depth specialties according to their interests and future plans. Finally, the major requires an advanced culminating experience with other majors that focuses on solidifying and extending critical and interpretive skills to a wide range of human cultural expressions and traditions. Two major tracks are available: 1) Asian Languages and 2) Asian Humanities. Majors will be prepared not only for advanced academic work in Asia-related fields, but also for a truly wide variety of careers that demand basic skills in writing, close reading, multi-sided interpretation, reflection on current problems, and projection of future outcomes. Study abroad opportunities in almost every part of Asia are also encouraged and facilitated by the department.

Languages

The following languages are offered regularly during the academic year: Arabic, Filipino, Hindi, Hmong, Indonesian, Persian, Sanskrit, Thai, Tibetan, Turkish, Urdu, Uzbek, and Vietnamese. Other languages may also be taught at advanced levels through independent study with faculty. Language instructors are continually trained in the latest theoretical and pedagogical aspects of second-language acquisition, applying the most effective and enjoyable teaching techniques in the classroom.
In the summer, LCA proudly serves as departmental host to four intensive summer language training institutes. Students acquire the equivalent of an academic year’s instruction during these intensive eight-week courses. Altogether, more than 30 Asian languages are offered through the following summer programs.

- **Arabic, Persian, and Turkish Language Immersion Institute** (APTLII)
- **Baltic Studies Summer Institute** (BALSSI)
- **South Asia Summer Language Institute** (SASLI)
- **Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute** (SEASSI)

The department considers language learning and teaching to be essential tools for any serious study of Asia and the best way to encounter Asia directly. We highly encourage all students to take advantage of LCA’s language course offerings.

**Research**

LCA students and faculty engage in and promote the study of Asia as a constituent part of global realities and trends. Connected histories and reflexive implications are the hallmarks of our research. We are committed to a new vision of Asia in which reflections on, and solutions to, human conflict and problems emerge equally from the expressive and imaginative creations of Asia as from anywhere else. The departmental website contains pages for the faculty that list their publications and their fields of interest.

In most cases, undergraduates pursue research in LCA as part of a senior honors thesis project (LCA 681/682). In some cases, directed study courses (LCA 699) that incorporate original research can be arranged at the discretion of a supervising faculty member. Finally, occasional opportunities arise for undergraduate research in LCA through programs such as Undergraduate Research Scholars.

### 2. Frequently Asked Questions

**How do I declare the LCA major?**

Though not absolutely required, you should set up a 15-30 minute appointment with the undergraduate advisor to discuss your interests and plans and to go through the major requirements. At that meeting, you simply complete a **Major Declaration form**. If you are certain that you are ready to declare, you may simply complete the student part of the declaration form and leave it for the undergraduate advisor, who will follow up by email.

**How do I get honors in the major?**

As with many majors, honors in LCA requires completion of a year-long senior thesis (LCA 681/682) under the supervision of a faculty member in the department. In addition, you must maintain a 3.5 GPA in courses taken for the major. Students interested in honors must also complete the **Honors in the Major Declaration form** with the undergraduate advisor. Consult the **Undergraduate Catalog** for the official guidelines.
How do I get distinction in the major?

You will receive distinction at graduation automatically, if you maintain a 3.5 GPA within the major.

What are the differences between the Asian Languages and Asian Humanities tracks? Which is right for me?

The introductory and capstone requirements are the same for both tracks. The main difference is that the core of the Asian Languages track is fulfilled by taking four language courses in one LCA LANG language, while the core of the Asian Humanities track consists of a series of breadth courses in LCA. The department strongly encourages ALL majors to take one or more of the languages offered in LCA. In some cases, students either find LCA too late or cannot quite fit four language courses in their schedule. The Asian Humanities track, therefore, is primarily for students who for one reason or another cannot or do not want to take an LCA language.

What is the point of the introductory course requirement, if I've already taken a lot of other LCA courses?

The three introductory courses (LCA 100, 101, and 273) are offered primarily as large-format gateway courses to the department and to the major. Many majors discover LCA through these courses that are meant to have broad appeal and easy access. Each of the introductory courses is designed to introduce a transregional overview of Asian humanities through a particular theme: religion, literature, and/or culture. Many other LCA courses focus on a particular region or language. The introductory course requirement is one way to ensure that every student has at least some exposure to Asia in general.

What is the Capstone Seminar in Asian Humanities?

LCA 600, the Capstone Seminar, is intended to be a culminating experience of the major for students from all the regions covered in the department. As with the introductory courses, the capstone also touches on several regions of Asia. The focus and workload, however, are more intense. The course examines approaches to the study of Asia, including theories and methods used, and encourages students to examine collectively how to learn from Asia while learning about it. Because students who have studied different parts of Asia are enrolled together in the course, students also get a chance to learn from others’ experiences and knowledge. The capstone is taught by different LCA faculty from year to year. The precise content thus varies somewhat according the interests and expertise of the instructor, though common readings account for about a third of the subject matter from year to year. Almost no exceptions are given to fulfill the capstone requirement by taking another course.

When should I take the Capstone Seminar?
Ideally, in the Fall of either your junior or senior year. At present, the Capstone Seminar is offered only in the Fall semester. Majors are guaranteed a spot in that course. You must make room for the Capstone Seminar during the fall term of your last or next-to-last year.

Can I study abroad?

Yes, of course! LCA has for many years sent hundreds of students abroad for short-term and long-term programs. The Study Abroad Office handles the details of the various programs and their course crediting, but LCA faculty can help you with crediting questions and advise you on successful programs to meet your interests and schedule.

Can I get credit for a language that I’ve studied before? What are retro-credits?

Yes, but with certain restrictions. The University policy on retro-credits permits students who come to UW-Madison with prior knowledge of a language to earn credits toward their degrees. According to your skill level as determined by a placement exam, you may earn up to 16 credits, called retro-credits, when you enroll in a language level beyond first semester. However, 1) the course taken to earn retro-credits must be your first college course in an LCA LANG and 2) you must take the course before earning 30 degree credits (not including advanced-placement credits) at UW. So, for example, a first-year student who wants to continue a language he/she has already studied contacts the instructor, or the LCA language pedagogy coordinator (Erlin Barnard), or the LCA undergraduate advisor to arrange a placement exam in that language. If the student places into the third semester, he/she earns 8 retro-credits when he/she enrolls in the third semester course. Retro-credits vary according to placement.

Can I get a DARS exception for a course I took in History, Anthropology, etc. that dealt with Asia?

Possibly. If a course has significant Asia content (at least one third) and makes use of approaches consonant with the goals of the LCA department, then a DARS exception to count that course toward the LCA major will likely be granted. The undergraduate advisor will determine whether a particular course can count based on a review of the course syllabus. Ideally, students should get such exceptions pre-approved, i.e., before the course starts or shortly after the term begins, in order to avoid complications when a course does not fulfill LCA’s formal expectations for the major.

Are there particular professions or job opportunities for graduates from LCA?

In Fall 2011, the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates authorized an International Directions Advisor position for students in language-centered majors or who otherwise focus on language. One of the main responsibilities for the International Directions Advisor is to gather information on professional and other post-graduation opportunities specifically for students majoring in language- and area-based departments. The LCA department itself has no resources dedicated
specifically to help students with job placement, internships, volunteer work, or other career-focused activities. Of course, faculty and staff can and do provide information pertinent to careers and additional education, but students are also encouraged to make use of the existing campus offices, such as the Career Services office in the College of Letters & Science, that are dedicated to providing exactly this sort of help.

The mission of the LCA department differs from and complements that of other advising units. We train students to think critically and in various disciplinary modes so that they can apply those general skills to any issue in their lives, including work. In our view, a university education is never just job training. The actual careers of our graduates suggest that the LCA major opens doors in diverse areas, fields, and specializations. Here are some of the actual careers of our graduates: director of Technology Services (UW Library), HIV/AIDS policy analyst (Boston), documentary filmmaker, law firm partner (Chicago), project coordinator (Holocaust museum), writer, social worker, schoolteacher, curator (Philadelphia Museum of Art), psychotherapist (Houston), renewable energy analyst, respiratory therapist, US foreign service officer (State Department), refugee/relief administrator (Oxfam), bishop in the United Methodist Church (Illinois region), consultant at Epic Systems, professors of Buddhist studies, Turkish studies, and South Asian religions, instructors of Indonesian, Thai, Hindi, Urdu, and many more.
3. Requirements for the LCA Major

There are two major tracks in the department: ASIAN LANGUAGES and ASIAN HUMANITIES. Students must fulfill the requirements totaling 30 credits in consultation with the undergraduate advisor. There are no prerequisites for declaring the major, but students must declare in time to take LCA 600 in their senior year.

ASIAN LANGUAGES TRACK

1. 1 Introductory Course – Either LCA 100, LCA 101, or LCA 273
2. 4 Courses in an LCA LANG language
3. LCA 600 – Capstone Seminar in Asian Humanities
4. Electives in LCA and/or LCA LANG courses numbered 300 or higher to bring credits for major to 30

ASIAN HUMANITIES TRACK

1. 1 Introductory Course – Either LCA 100, LCA 101, or LCA 273
2. Either 2 courses from two FIELD categories:
   b. Literature: LCA 201, 206, 279, 300, 311, 312, 314, 357, 373, 374, 401, 403, 404, 413, 524, 571, 576, 579, 610, 615, 666, 671
   c. Culture: LCA 203, 205, 244, 251, 252, 265, 300, 361, 362, 379, 402, 430, 442, 443, 448, 449, 450, 457, 458, 459, 462, 463, 614, 621, 630, 634, 640, 651, 663, 670
   or 2 courses from two AREA categories:
   a. Central and Southwest Asia: LCA 106, 203, 205, 265, 279, 300, 314, 413, 472, 579, 610, 620, 630, 640, 666
   c. Southeast Asia: LCA 244, 300, 361, 401, 403, 404, 438, 441, 457, 458, 620, 630, 666, 671
3. LCA 600 – Capstone Seminar in Asian Humanities
4. Electives in LCA and/or LCA LANG courses numbered 300 or higher to bring credits for major to 30

HONORS IN THE MAJOR

With the permission of the departmental undergraduate advisor, students interested in earning Honors in the Major should complete an Honors in the Major Declaration Form. To earn Honors in the LCA major, students must: 1) complete 36 credits in the major; 2) complete at least 21 credits in intermediate and advanced level courses in the major; 3) earn a 3.5 GPA within the major; 4) take LCA 681 Senior Honors Thesis, after or concurrent with LCA 600; and 5) complete a Senior Honors Thesis.

DISTINCTION IN THE MAJOR

The department will recommend that Distinction in the Major be awarded to any student who completes the major requirements and earns a 3.5 GPA within the LCA major.

Handbook updated September 2011