Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Director, Tarik Elseewi, Film and Media Studies
Jakobina Arch, History
Arash Davari, Politics
Brian Dott, History
Krista Gulbransen, Art History
Donghui He, Chinese
Hitomi Johnson, Japanese
Charles McKhann, Anthropology
Lauren E. Osborne, Religion
Elyse Semerdjian, History
Yukiko Shigeto, Japanese
Akira R. Takemoto, Japanese
Xiaobo Yuan Anthropolgy and Religion
Jonathan S. Walters, Religion (on sabbatical, 2022-2023)

Wenqing Zhao, Philosophy (on sabbatical, Fall 2022)

Affiliated Faculty:
Shampa Biswas, Politics
Gaurav Majumdar, English

The Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Program (AMES) aspires to create a better understanding of Asian and Middle Eastern cultures and their place in the world through interdisciplinary course offerings. The program offers three majors: Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (SAME).

For descriptions of the majors, please refer to the Chinese, Japanese and SAME sections of this catalog.

AMES 105-106 Special Topics: Beginning Level
4 credits
The course explores selected topics in Asian and Middle Eastern studies at the beginning level. Any current offerings follow.

AMES 200 Special Topics: Summer Seminar in Chinese Studies
2 credits
Course offered at the Whitman Summer Studies in China program. Taught in China over a period of six weeks by the Whitman faculty member who is resident director. The course explores selected topics in Chinese studies and incorporates classroom and field studies. Prerequisite: admission to the Whitman Summer Studies in China program. Any current offering follow.

AMES 200 ST: Religion and Sacred Space in China
Summer 2023
2 credits
This course will explore the proliferation of religious publics and sacred spaces in contemporary China, which saw a revitalization of religious life following Reform and Opening Up. Combining lectures with student-focused discussions of readings from contemporary studies of Chinese religion, the course will examine the trajectories of diverse religious traditions in China, focusing on those most relevant and active in Yunnan Province — including Tibetan and Han Buddhism, Islam, Daoism, Christianity, and Chinese folk religion. Students will learn about the histories of these traditions and their contemporary iterations, as well as explore themes such globalization and localization, spiritual revival, and the relationship between the Chinese state and religious institutions. We will pair these academic engagements with field trips to urban religious spaces in Kunming, as well as an extended road trip to sites of sacred assemblage and pilgrimage in Yunnan. These will include Tibetan and Han Buddhist monasteries, local deity temples, ancient grottoes depicting an eclectic mix of Buddhist and Daoist art, and a Chinese Catholic church, among others. Prerequisites: One academic year of Chines language coursework; admission to the Whitman in China summer program.
AMES 201-204 Special Topics: Intermediate Level
4 credits
The course explores selected topics in Asian and Middle Eastern studies at the intermediate level. Any current offerings follow.

AMES 221 Silk Roads Field Course
Not offered 2022-23 2 credits
This course looks in depth at selected sites along the silk roads of Asia, both in the classroom and during a field trip. One hour per week throughout the semester, and a field trip to Asia over the spring break. Students will explore the past and current situations of specific sites to be visited during the field trip through pre-trip readings and research presentations, keep a detailed journal during the field trip, and give a multimedia or poster-style presentation of a researched aspect of the trip to the college community near the end of the semester. Students must apply for the course, and pay a course fee to be announced. Corequisites: Biology 121 and History 121.

AMES 301 Special Topics: Advanced Level
4 credits
The course explores selected topics in Asian and Middle Eastern studies at the advanced level. Any current offerings follow.

365 Confucius’ Analects
Spring Zhao 4 credits
This course is a close reading of the Analects, a seminal text in the Confucian tradition. As a class, we will explore the philosophy of the Analects and ways of reading the Analects as philosophy. We will also practice writing one’s own philosophical commentary for the Analects following examples of historic Chinese philosophers. May be elected as Philosophy 365.

AMES 411, 412 Individual Projects
Fall, Spring Staff 1-4 credits
Directed individual study and research. Prerequisites: appropriate prior coursework in Asian and Middle Eastern studies and consent of the supervising instructor.