

Japanese Studies

Section 1 Mission, vision, and goals

Mission: The interdisciplinary Japanese Studies program offers students curricular opportunities to deepen their appreciation for and knowledge of various aspects of Japanese culture, primarily through the study of language, literature, history, politics, and religion. It also offers the wider campus community co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities to explore Japanese culture. The Japanese Studies program is staffed by a Director and six full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty, and is supported by additional faculty and staff throughout the campus community who are committed to expanding awareness and knowledge of Japan. The program offers both a major and a minor. The mission of the Japanese Studies program reflects the College's Mission Statement by "...bring[ing] students to mastery of a particular area of study within a general framework that is both interdisciplinary and international in perspective."

Vision: With the long standing commitment of four contributing faculty members, and the recent addition of two tenure track faculty appointments, the Japanese Studies program is poised to significantly strengthen the curricular offerings for the major and minor, and to increase the number of students enrolling in Japanese Studies-related courses, and the program's visibility on campus. In both the short and long term, we will build on our existing programmatic strengths focused on Japan. With increased recognition of the importance of Asia (particularly China) in domestic and international affairs, we envision long-term expansion of the Japanese Studies program to include curricular focus on China, resulting in an Asian Studies program. Further, considering the demographic changes in our state and of our student body, an ancillary vision includes development of Asian American / Hmong-focused course offerings.

Goals: Hire additional faculty members to staff current and future curricular needs, at a minimum one additional faculty member in each of two academic disciplines not covered in the present Japanese Studies curriculum—Economics / Management, and Art and Art History—whose focus would be on Japan and / or China. Subsequently hire additional faculty to staff the development of the China-focused part of an envisioned Asian Studies program. Also, provide development opportunities for existing faculty members so that they may directly participate in the program or play a supportive role in a broader context of education about Asia.

1.2 Programs

There are presently fourteen Japanese Studies majors and two Japanese Studies minors. With implementation of the language requirement, the numbers of students studying Japanese language, and subsequently declaring either a Japanese Studies major or minor, has increased. Several courses in the program fulfill general education requirements, particularly the Non-Western Cultures and Historical and Philosophical Studies requirements. Both declared majors and students enrolled in Japanese Studies courses are

active in the Gustavus Anime and Manga Society, the Japanese Club, and the Asian Culture Club.

1.3 Support relationships

The Japanese Studies program is dependent on contributions from faculty whose appointment is in academic departments on campus, and recognition by their primary department faculty colleagues of the importance of Japanese Studies to the respective faculty members' professional and personal interests, as well as to the Gustavus curriculum.

Due to the recent addition of the second Japanese language position, the two faculty members of the Department of Modern Languages, Literature, and Cultures are now able to offer Japanese Studies courses taught in English. These courses, however, will have the "MLC" designation, which does not denote any particular major or minor. Because few students would look for courses under the MLC designation during registration, cross-listing these courses with other appropriate departments and programs will be important for ensuring a healthy enrollment in these courses. It is important to note that these Japanese studies courses are, by definition, interdisciplinary and thus cut across departmental lines.

Section 2 Strategic Review

2.1 Strategic issues

The Japanese Studies program has depended on the unwavering commitment, energy, and curricular innovations of affiliated faculty members. Courses routinely enroll capacity if not beyond, but as is the case with all interdisciplinary programs many Japanese Studies courses are staffed by only one person. If for whatever reason that person is unable to teach that course, we are faced with reworking program requirements for students already in the program or a gap in the program.

While our curricular emphasis has been on Japan, student interest in China will inevitably increase. Some of our courses presently include a China focus, but given faculty teaching responsibilities it is virtually impossible to develop those segments into regularly-offered, stand-alone courses. An increased institutional emphasis on China is encouraged as long as it does not move resources from our College's focus on Japan, for which there will always be a demand for understanding and interest among students.

In public statements during the past few years, Japanese government officials have articulated their belief that the appeal of Japanese "pop culture" among certain groups throughout the world will be a vehicle for Japanese business to gain entry to foreign markets, and to enhance the image of Japan abroad. Indeed, many students are attracted to the Japanese Studies program because of their interest in *anime* (Japanese animation)

Japanese *manga* (comics), and Japanese film. They may also have prior experience in martial arts. While this has brought students to the program, it can also make them very focused (if not narrowly specific) in what they want to study related to Japan.

Currently, the course that most resembles the breadth of a gateway course for study in the program is taught only during J-Term; as such it does not count for credit toward the major or minor. Nor, with exception of the Senior Thesis requirement that students write as an Independent Study, do we offer a capstone experience for majors. Both courses should be developed and offered regularly to strengthen the academic experience of majors. Majors are also required to study in Japan for a minimum of one semester to develop their Japanese language proficiency and to take Japan-related courses not offered at Gustavus.

Given the general knowledge of Japan (or / and China) and expertise of certain cultural aspects, faculty have offered outreach and expertise on Asia to the off-campus community. We can enhance this role.

Majors should be encouraged to present their research at conferences that sponsor student sections. As the majority of Japanese Studies majors research and write their Senior Thesis during the spring semester, this would require shifting their academic schedule or requiring that all majors write their Senior Thesis in the fall semester.

Applications for external foundation support are labor intensive and time consuming, and put us in competition with much more developed Japanese Studies / Asian Studies programs (even in our own state) that have benefited from consistent institutional support. Therefore, success in these efforts is hardly guaranteed.

2.2 Barriers

Lack of time for faculty members to develop courses, lack of open teaching slots for faculty to teach new courses, and lack of funding to conduct research in Japan are all barriers that confront development and higher quality of the Japanese Studies program.

The outdated way of listing the Japanese Studies program and its related courses in the College catalog has become increasingly problematic. The catalog has failed to make an important distinction between Japanese language / literature education offered within the Department of Modern Languages, Literature, and Cultures and the interdisciplinary Japanese Studies program.

Section 3 Strategic Initiatives and Recommendations

The following strategic initiatives for the Japanese Studies program are in accord with all of the strategic initiatives of Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan, “Engage with the World to Make A Difference.”

Hire additional faculty to enhance Japanese Studies course offerings. In future years, hire additional faculty to broaden course offerings to emphasize China, leading to the development of an Asian Studies program.

Encourage cross-listing and other measures to provide students with additional motivation to consider taking (particularly MLLC-designated) Japanese / Asian culture courses.

Provide financial resources for all declared and prospective Japanese Studies majors to participate in a study abroad program in Japan.

Provide financial resources for Japanese Studies majors to undertake language training through summer intensive language programs.

Provide financial resources for students to present their research at academic conferences.

Provide financial resources for faculty to conduct research in Japan, and to attend conferences, workshops, and seminars in Japan.

Provide financial resources for Japanese Studies faculty to serve as academic interviewers for the Japan English Teaching (JET) Program.