

History Major Field

ASIA

Field Description

Including Asia and the Islamicate World, the Asia Field in the History Department encompasses the histories and cultures of 65% of the world's population from North Africa in the West to Japan in the East and India in the South. In fact, though, Asia is a funny word for what we teach; the term is both too big and too small. The Asia field is represented by a curriculum designed by three faculty members – Professor Kyoungjin Bae, Professor Nurten Kilic-Schubel and Professor Wendy Singer – who teach a range of interconnected courses based on their own academic fields, but also looking more broadly at topics we think are important for students to know. Professor Bae has developed a series of courses on pre-modern and modern East Asia, which focuses on the transmission of technology, material culture and the environment. Professor Kilic-Schubel teaches the history of the Islamicate World – the places where Muslims live or have lived in the past or that are influenced by Muslim art, architecture, culture, and philosophy. In addition, she also teaches courses specifically on women and gender. Professor Singer, an historian of India, is especially interested in comparative histories of the modern Asian world. She teaches courses on India but also Asian International Relations, Asian Migrations, Civil Disobedience and Global Crises. However, she too is interested in the Islamicate world, which built medieval empires in India that established some of India's greatest artistic achievements and continue to influence language and society today. Seen through these lenses, Asia is more than a geographical space, religio-cultural block or collection of countries. It is a site for dynamic transnational and cross-cultural networks, interactions and tensions, and a space produced by complex histories through which we can understand global transformations.

The courses in the Asia Field, therefore, give students the opportunity to study a variety of topics that relate to one another but also explore different themes and methodologies. As a group, the Asia faculty share interests that transcend specific courses – for example, a commitment to fighting the Western-centric language and ideas that dominate many social science fields. Indeed, for this reason, some courses taught by other faculty in the History Department or visiting faculty who share these interests and experiences may also count toward the Asia Field.

Students interested in the Asia Field in History are encouraged to study a language at Kenyon such as Chinese, Japanese or Arabic and to study abroad. Some students focus their study in this field. However, many of our students take courses with all three “Asia” faculty members and discover the connections between them.

Courses

HIST 160 – Modern East Asia
HIST 161 – East Asia to 1800
HIST 156 – Modern India
HIST 166 – History of the Islamic World
HIST 258 – Ottoman Empire
HIST 264 – History of the Modern Middle East
HIST 263 – Imperial China
HIST 345 – History of the Indian Ocean
HIST 352 – Family and State in East Asia
HIST 358 – Imagined India: Film and Fiction
HIST 365 – Middle East through Film and Fiction
HIST 371 – Colonial Body Politics
HIST 390 – Modern Iran
HIST 454 – Asians in Diaspora
HIST 458 – Gandhi and Civil Disobedience