CULTIVATION FROM WITHIN: EXPANDING ASIAN STUDIES
AT THE COLLEGE OF SAINT BENEDICT
AND SAINT JOHN’S UNIVERSITY

P. Richard Bohr
History, College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University

Richard Bohr teaches the two-semester East Asia survey as well as upper division courses on modern China and Japan. He directs the Asian Studies program.

The ASIANetwork Exchange is a conduit for information about the development of Asian Studies on our member campuses. There are both common and unique features to each collegiate Asian Studies story. Bohr describes the long range planning for Asian Studies at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, ASIANetwork members. The next issue of The ASIANetwork Exchange will include an index of program descriptions that have been published in the newsletter.

History of Asian Studies at CSB/SJU

The College of Saint Benedict (CSB), chartered in 1887 by Benedictine nuns in central Minnesota, is one of the first Midwestern colleges for women. Neighboring Saint John's University (SJU) was founded by Benedictine monks in 1857. CSB/SJU are now coordinate colleges with a common core curriculum, identical degree requirements, and a single academic calendar. With 260 professors, CSB/SJU enrolls 3600 students from 43 states and twenty foreign countries.

The monastic communities on each campus form the center of Benedictine life and thought in North America. The academic-monastic interaction enlivens the Benedictine commitment to the liberal arts as “the center of disciplined inquiry and a rich preparation for the professions, public life, and service to others in many forms of work.”

CSB/SJU not only sustains the Benedictine appreciation of Asian approaches to the divine and to human community, but enjoys historic ties to Asia. In the early 1930s, monks from Saint John’s Abbey helped to
establish Fu Jen University in Beijing (now part of Beijing Normal University). Benedictine sisters pioneered women’s education at Fu Jen; they also established a convent and provided education, medical care, and social work in central China.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a five-year grant from the Northwest Area Foundation funded a collaboration with nearby St. Cloud State University to provide a minor and major in Asian Studies. Upon expiration of the grant, CSB/SJU continued to offer courses in areas where faculty had Asia-related expertise.

The approaching “Pacific Century” is creating a multidimensional world forged through unprecedented East-West interchange. Our graduates must integrate humanistic learning and professional preparation if they are to become multicultural “Asia Hands” in the new millennium. Consonant with this goal is CSB/SJU’s resolve “to promote new understanding of the roles of gender and cultural differences within human civilization and cultivate skills for using that knowledge in one’s own life.”

Asian Studies curriculum

Within this context, the Asian Studies Program was created in October 1995. The program integrates curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular dimensions.

The Asian Studies minor is supported by ten faculty with expertise in East and South Asia. They teach twenty-two courses in languages (Chinese and Japanese), literature, art, history, philosophy, political science, and religion.

The semester courses are supplemented by January Term classes in subjects such as Chinese art and calligraphy and Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy of nonviolence, as well as study tours examining “The Many Faces of Japan” or “The History and Practice of Medicine in China.” Guest presentations by Benedictines with experience in Asia and their visiting Buddhist colleagues are another resource.

Interchange with Asia

Coursework is complemented by study abroad opportunities. CSB/SJU’s exchange program with Sophia University, Tokyo, was established in 1971, and is now more accessible to students through the financial

CONTENTS

1 P.R. Bohr, Cultivation from Within: Expanding Asian Studies at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University
4 1999 Pre-conference Program/Tour
5 1999 ASIANetwork Conference Program
8 1998-1999 ASIANetwork Members
10 1999 ASIANetwork Freeman College in Asia Participants
11 ASIANetwork Consultancy Advisory Program
12 C. Ess, The Internet and the Web: How Asia-Friendly?
15 R. Kipp, Book Review: The Myth of Continents
16 1998-1999 ASIANetwork Board of Directors
19 Correspondence
20 K. Loveall, Building Relationships at Huazhong Normal University
22 Study Abroad Programs
23 A. Chittick, The Asian Studies Program at Eckerd College
25 ASIANetwork Campus and Program Network
26 E. Vogel, The Challenge of the Rise of China
28 E. Benard, Pre-Embarkation and Disembarkation: Preparing for Study in Asia and Return
30 1998 ASIANATWORK Freeman Fellows Report on the Web
31 M. Miller, V. Siu, D. Goldblatt, Inside/Out: Western Gardens in China, Chinese Gardens in the West
36 Individual Donations to ASIANetwork
37 T. Amoloza, M. N. Samuel, P. Gabriel, C. Romarate, Popular Culture of South and Southeast Asia
39 L. Lucas, S. Hua, Crisis and Opportunity for Asian Studies: The Social Sciences in the Study of Asia
40 Positions Open

2
assistance of the recently established Fr. Neal Henry Lawrence, OSB, Scholarship and the traveling scholar­
ship in honor of Minnesotan, Walter F. Mondale.

The exchange with Southwest China Normal
University, near Chongqing began in 1988. At least 25
CSB/SJU students, accompanied by two faculty
directors, spend fall semesters at Southwest China
Normal University, and last fall the institutions began to
exchange faculty.

The English as a Second Language program with
two Tokyo colleges has drawn students and faculty to
the study of Asia. Since 1989, CSB/SJU has hosted
summer ESL programs for 800 Japanese students, CSB
with Shirayuri Women’s (Catholic) College, and SJU
with Bunkyo College (also for women). Twenty faculty
have participated and now incorporate Asia in their
semester courses. Of the more than 100 CSB/SJU
students who serve as ESL counselors, many have
enrolled in Asian Studies and Japanese language
courses, visited Japan, and found employment there
after graduation. In addition, area families who have
offered weekend homestays to the Japanese students
have developed interests in Japan and Asia.

Shirayuri College and Bunkyo College students
also study on our campuses during the academic year.
They enroll in Asian Studies courses, participate in
Asia-related activities, and contribute to the growing
Asian constituency of the student body. Here too, faculty
exchanges with the Japanese colleges are being
explored.

Pottery Program

An imaginative link with Asia is our Pottery Pro­
gram, the creation of master potter, Richard Bresnahan,
a 1976 SJU graduate, who studied Japanese pottery
for three years with the Nakazato family, master potters
for thirteen generations. Bresnahan grafts Pacific Rim
pottery elements with indigenous Minnesota materials.
The program draws together Asian and American
interns, emerging artists, and visiting professionals.

Student activities

One pillar of student initiative in a Pacific future is
the Asian Students Association (ASA), a group of 125
students whose annual Asian New Year celebration
draws over 1000 attendees. Under the theme of
“Prelude to the Pacific,” during the 1998-1999 academic
year, ASA has invited area professionals to speak on
Asia-related career opportunities.

A second pillar of student involvement is the China
Club, composed primarily of students who have studied
in China. The club has organized kendo and tai chi
demonstrations and lectures on Chinese art, music, and
the concept of justice in Chinese history, the latter
featuring Annping Chin and Jonathan Spence, Yale
University.

Career opportunities in Asia

The Asian Studies Program works with the Intern­
ships and Career Services to find professional opportu­
nities in Asia. We cooperate with Minnesota firms such
as the 3M Company as well as community resources
like the Minnesota Council on Asian-Pacific
Minnesotans (which provides services to 113,000
Asian-Minnesotans) and the Minneapolis Institute of
Arts, which has expanded its Asian holdings from four to
twenty-two galleries.

Recent graduates have located Asia-related
professional opportunities. One is an intern at the
American Embassy in Beijing, and another has man­
gered a factory in south China. Each year several
graduating seniors teach English in the Japan Ex­
change and Teaching (JET) Program, and students who
have studied in China have returned to teach in
Chongqing and elsewhere in China.

Faculty development in Asia

The CSB/SJU faculty and administration have
focused on strategies to secure the Asian Studies
institutional base and to expand the program. To this
end, CSB/SJU made a Strategic Initiatives Fund grant in
1997 to support a summer study tour of Japan, Taiwan,
Hong Kong, and China. Seven faculty from the depart­
ments of Chemistry, English, History, Management,
Music, Nutrition, and Theater traveled under the
guidance of Stephen Burmeister-May, Director of
International Education.

In meetings with Asian colleagues, tours of fac­
tories, universities, health care facilities, temples, and
private homes and through participation in cultural
events, the group studied:
1. Asian approaches to teaching the liberal arts.
2. The role of the arts, business, politics, foreign policy,
health care, medicine, nutrition, and population growth
in a comparative East-West context.
3. The future relationship between the United States
and the “Greater China” of the PRC, Hong Kong, and
Taiwan.
4. The impact of Confucianism, Buddhism, communism,
capitalism, and democracy on changing Asia.
5. The regional and global interdependence of the
Asian economies.
6. The importance of Asia’s past achievements and
present challenges to the world’s future.

Since our return, the tour participants have devel­
oped thirteen Asian content departmental and core
courses. Some of these courses may be included in the Asian Studies minor.

Planning for Asian Studies

In 1996, CSB/SJU launched a three-phase process to develop a long range plan for Asian Studies. Phase one included a systematic inventory of Asia-related resources and interests across the academic and monastic sectors.

Phase two assessed future needs. The assessment was supervised by a sixteen member Planning Committee representing a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

In phase three, the Planning Committee analyzed the results of the needs assessment, discussed its findings at "Friends of Asian Studies dinners," and made specific recommendations.

Recommendations

The committee made the following recommendations to broaden and deepen Asian Studies at CSB/SJU.

1. Explore ways in which Asian Studies can complement the core curriculum.
2. Work with the Office of Cultural Programs to introduce more cultural events from Asia.
3. Reestablish curricular cooperation with St. Cloud State University.
4. Provide direction and training for increasing numbers of faculty.
5. Consider ways in which the Benedictine global network of monastic communities might broaden student exchanges in Asia.
6. Find ways for the Asian Studies program to enhance multiculturalism by helping to recruit more Asian and Asian-American students.

ASIANetwork

Convinced that networking with like-minded liberal arts institutions will help our planning process, CSB/SJU joined the ASIANetwork. We are already benefiting from hands-on curricular and programmatic suggestions in the ASIANetwork Exchange and at the annual conference. We look forward to participating in the collaborations and faculty development opportunities central to the ASIANetwork.

Contact: P. Richard Bohr, History, Asian Studies, College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, 37 South College Ave., St. Joseph, MN 56374; Tel.: 320/363-5918; Fax: 320/363-6099; <rbohr@csbsju.edu>

1999 ASIANetwork CONFERENCE
PRE-CONFERENCE PROGRAM/TOUR
THE PUGET SOUND: EXPLORING THE ASIAN PRESENCE IN THE GATEWAY TO THE PACIFIC RIM
FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 1999: 9 A.M. - 4 P.M.

You are cordially invited to participate in a pre-conference tour designed to introduce you to the significant Asian presence in the Puget Sound region.

Tacoma's Korean community and Seattle's multi-faceted International District are just two stops on the tour, which may also include art and history museums, such as the Wing Luke Museum, that have significant holdings related to Asia. Participants will have lunch in the International District of Seattle before returning to the Sheraton Tacoma Hotel well before the opening dinner of the ASIANetwork Conference.

The tour is designed as a "break even" proposition. Tour members will be selected on a "first-come" basis, with a minimum number needed. Participants will receive confirmation of the arrangements.

Participants are invited, but not required, to read National Trust Guide, Seattle: America's Guide for Architecture and History Travelers (1998), published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Registration must be made directly with Michael Bartanen, (Communication, Pacific Lutheran University), Chair of the tour. The Pre-conference Program registration is separate from registration for the ASIANetwork Conference.

Registration deadline: March 15, 1999
Payment due: $45 on the day of the tour

For further information and/or to register for the tour, please contact:
Michael Bartanen, 3302 N. 19th, Tacoma, WA 98406; Tel.: 253/759-0674; <Bartanen@nwlink.com>