

ITEM 128-1001-R0705 Proposal

MINOR IN CENTRAL AND SOUTHWEST ASIAN STUDIES

Program Description

- 1. Briefly describe the proposed new program. Please indicate if this is an expansion of an existing program; a new program; a cooperative effort with another institution, business or industry; and on-campus or off-campus program. Attach any formal agreements established for cooperative efforts.**

We propose the creation of an undergraduate minor in Central and Southwest Asian studies.¹ No such program exists in Montana. The proposed minor would represent an expansion of The University of Montana-Missoula's existing *Central Asia and Caspian Basin Program* currently housed in the Department of Geography. A Central and Southwest Asian studies minor would complement the department's recently established *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Options*, and would enable students in other disciplines to pursue a formal regional-studies minor in an area of considerable academic interest and practical importance.

The proposed minor in Central and Southwest Asian studies would offer undergraduates at The University of Montana-Missoula² an interdisciplinary perspective on Central and Southwest Asian environments, geography, cultures, history, economies, and societies. A Central and Southwest Asian studies minor would also reflect the strengths of the existing faculty. Drs. Jeffrey Gritzner, Sarah Halvorson, Ardeshir Kia, and Mehrdad Kia in the Department of Geography devote much of their teaching and research to courses and topics directly related to Central and Southwest Asia. The minor would also draw upon the strengths and expertise of faculty members in other disciplines within the College of Arts and Sciences (including Geology, History, Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, and Economics), as well as faculty members in the College of Forestry and Conservation and the School of Law.

Other than their historical significance as the Cradle of Civilization and their importance within the world of Islam, Central and Southwest Asia have emerged as two of the most geopolitically and economically important regions in the world today. For example, the regions account for approximately forty-nine percent of current world oil production, possess seventy-four percent of currently identified reserves, and harbor enormous reserves of natural gas. Hence, there is an increasing demand for individuals trained in Central and Southwest Asian studies. It would be the intent of our proposed minor program to create informed, responsible scholars capable of addressing the many fascinating and complex issues associated with the regions. It is also noteworthy that extensive areas of Central and Southwest Asia are geographically similar to Montana, sharing both our problems and opportunities. The University of Montana-Missoula has a great deal to offer, and could benefit from the experience of Central and Southwest Asian societies.

As noted above, the Department of Geography already offers its majors an opportunity to study various aspects of Central and Southwest Asia through undergraduate and graduate option programs. The current curriculum encompasses western China, Mongolia, the five former Soviet Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and

¹Geographers consider Central and Southwest Asia to be slightly differentiated regions within a single cultural realm.

²Although based on The University of Montana-Missoula Campus, cooperative relationships would be established with other campuses within The University of Montana system and throughout the state. For example, the university and city of Great Falls have developed technical and sister-city relationships with Kyrgyzstan, and have worked closely with our *Central Asia and Caspian Basin Program* in recent years.

Tajikistan), Pakistan and Afghanistan, the republics of the southern Caucasus, and the Middle East. The proposed minor in Central and Southwest Asia would build upon the experience and momentum generated by the existing undergraduate option in Geography, as well as by existing academic-exchange relationships, established sister-city relationships, and a rapidly expanding array of political and economic relationships. The minor would be administered by the Department of Geography; would be available to students campus-wide regardless of major; and would organize existing, regularly taught courses in such a way that students who complete eighteen credits of core and content coursework would receive formal academic recognition. The opportunity to minor in Central and Southwest Asian studies would increase the competitive edge of our students.

The goals of the proposed minor program are four-fold:

- To produce top-quality undergraduates with an understanding and appreciation of Central and Southwest Asia as a complement to their majors in other disciplines
- To respond to national and international demand for Central and Southwest Asian expertise to assist in addressing critical issues relating to these regions
- To support The University of Montana-Missoula's stated goal of further internationalizing the undergraduate curriculum
- To support and strengthen the existing formal relationships between The University of Montana-Missoula and academic institutions in these regions (for example, Tbilisi Institute of Asian and African Studies and Kutaisi State University in the Republic of Georgia; Naryn State University in Kyrgyzstan; and The Academy of State and Social Construction in Uzbekistan)

Our program would build upon the existing strengths of The University of Montana-Missoula and promote excellence in undergraduate teaching and research. The program would greatly enhance opportunity for graduate study or for employment in fields such as government, international humanitarian assistance, business, industry, health, and education.

2. Summarize a needs assessment conducted to justify the proposal. Please include how the assessment plan was developed or executed and the data derived for this effort.

Since 1992, Central and Southwest Asia-related courses have been offered on a regular basis on The University of Montana-Missoula Campus. As faculty members, we have observed increasing interest and enrollments in our courses at all levels. For example, *Islamic Civilization* (HIST 283/284H)³ consistently has enrollments in excess of 100 students. Sixty-five students enrolled in *Central Asia* (AS/HIST/LS 109) when it was first offered in 1998. Enrollments in *Central Asian Culture and Civilization* (AS/GEOG/HIST/LS 214S), *Cultures of Central Asia* (AS/GEOG/HIST 295), *Central Asia and Its Neighbors* (AS/GEOG/HIST 295), and other lower-division courses have similarly been large and exceeded our expectations. *Artistic Traditions of Central Asia* (AS/GEOG/HIST 395) regularly draws over sixty students; and enrollments in *The Middle East* (GEOG 213S) are now approaching fifty students each term that it is offered. Enrollment for the first-time offering of *The Silk Road* (AS/GEOG/HIST 295) during the Autumn Semester 2002 was forty-four. This course is expected to be the 100-level gateway course

³The Requirements for a Minor section of this proposal includes revised course titles and numbers. Although cross-listings are still under discussion, all courses listed in the requirements section are taught by members of the Geography Faculty.

required for all students pursuing the proposed minor. What was taught as *Advanced Regional Geography: Central Asia* (GEOG 408) in the late 1990s, and is now *Central Asia Seminar* (GEOG 460), would be redesigned to serve as a capstone course for the undergraduate minor.

Over the past decade, there were many formal and informal discussions among University of Montana-Missoula faculty members regarding state and national needs in Central and Southwest Asian studies education. During this time, there were changes in the university faculty—from retirements, as well as with new hires with research and teaching interests in Central and Southwest Asia. We feel confident that we have adequate faculty and staff expertise already in place to justify this proposal and support the proposed minor. Additionally, the world events of 2001 captured national and international attention and further underscored the relevance of these regions for American citizens.

In 2001, an *ad hoc* University of Montana-Missoula faculty committee responded to growing course enrollments and the felt need for a Central and Southwest Asia studies program with a Title VI grant proposal that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. In the spring of 2002, the faculty committee was awarded a grant for \$162,000 to support the development of a cohesive program in Central and Southwest Asian Studies. This grant has supported the development of new courses; modifications of course content in existing courses; expanded language offerings in Arabic and Persian; and faculty development. Several other major grants have followed, and the total for all grants related to the region now approaches \$3 million. In 2005, undergraduate and graduate *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Options* in Geography were approved by the Academic Standards and Curriculum Review Committee (ASCRC), the Faculty Senate, and the Board of Regents of Higher Education. At the request of the ASCRC, the core University of Montana-Montana faculty is now taking steps to create a coherent minor in Central and Southwest Asian studies that could be pursued by students in other disciplines.

The attractiveness of The University of Montana-Missoula as a place to study Central and Southwest Asia is most clearly reflected in the large number of students who are drawn to our courses. We already offer a range of courses that resemble the course offerings of notable Central Asia or Eurasian programs on other university campuses (for example, Harvard University, Indiana University, and the University of Washington). Our program currently provides students with an opportunity to study and research the ecology, natural resources, geography, history, cultures, language, religion, artistic traditions, and institutions of Central and Southwest Asian countries. The broad, interdisciplinary nature of the proposed minor in Central and Southwest Asian studies would add to our competitive edge and consolidate the strong interest of both geography majors and others into a coherent minor.

Our proposed minor program has the potential to: (a) develop a national reputation; (b) be nationally competitive for substantial interdisciplinary contracts and grants, as well as financial support for overseas research by our students; (c) attract teachers and researchers of the highest caliber to available faculty positions; and (d) attract outstanding, highly motivated students from Montana, the nation, and beyond.

An added benefit derived from a minor program in Central and Southwest Asian studies would be that all students at The University of Montana-Missoula would have access to one of the finest Central and Southwest Asian educational opportunities available in the nation. Montana citizens and organizations would similarly have access to an outstanding cadre of regional experts, educators, and researchers. The work and outreach conducted by this group would provide a wealth of information, enabling Montanans and other U.S. citizens to better understand national- and foreign-policy decisions affecting Central and Southwest Asia and exercise responsible citizenship.

3. Explain how the program relates to the Role and Scope of the institution as established by the Board of Regents.

As noted in the Role and Scope of The University of Montana-Missoula, the university has established a unique role in international programming. The proposed minor in Central and Southwest Asian studies would relate well to the objectives expressed in the Role and Scope statement. Further, the proposed *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor* shares the university's goal to develop an informed, educated, and culturally aware citizenry that is prepared to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, engage in lifelong learning, and lead productive lives in an increasingly diverse global society.

The proposed *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor* would also embody the fundamental mission of The University of Montana-Missoula to encourage members of the university community to explore and develop international and interdisciplinary perspectives in their programs and activities, and to understand the power and influence of globalization.

The traditions of promoting global awareness and responsible global citizenship would be enhanced and expanded for students through the proposed minor. There is little doubt that the proposed *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor* would result in a net increase in the number of undergraduate Montana students with valuable international training.

4. State what effect the proposed program will have on the administrative structure of the institution, if any. Also, indicate the potential involvement of other departments, divisions, schools or colleges.

The proposed *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor* should have no impact upon the administrative structure of the institution, in part owing to the existence of the undergraduate *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Option* already offered by the Department of Geography. The principal difference between the proposed minor and the option would be that the former would be available to students in disciplines other than Geography. The strengths of The University of Montana-Missoula in Central and Southwest Asia would attract additional students to the university, with attendant increases in research funding and productivity. Grant obligations include the development of additional courses without corresponding increases in the number of faculty members available to teach them. Hence, there would be an initial increase in faculty workload, but the increase would affect few faculty members, and those potentially affected have accepted responsibility for the increased load.

A steering committee composed of permanent faculty members in the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Forestry and Conservation, and the School of Law who are involved in teaching and/or research related to Central and Southwest Asia has been created to coordinate the development of the proposed new program. A faculty member in the Department of Geography would serve as the academic advisor for students enrolling in the proposed *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor*.

We are currently engaged in the pursuit of external sources of funding, chiefly through grants, to support our program. In the future, new faculty and resources would be welcomed to enhance the program and better serve the students.

5. Describe the extent to which similar programs are offered in Montana, the Pacific Northwest, and states bordering Montana. How similar are these programs to the one herein proposed?

As noted above, no undergraduate major or minor programs in Central and Southwest Asian studies exist in Montana. No states adjoining Montana (North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, or Idaho) offer undergraduate major or minor degrees in Central and Southwest Asian studies. A broad, interdisciplinary Eurasian program offering major and minor undergraduate degrees is available at the University of Washington. Our proposed program is similar to that at the University of Washington in that both focus upon providing undergraduates with solid language training and a broad interdisciplinary understanding of Central and Southwest Asia. However, our proposed program is fundamentally different in that we are expanding our interdisciplinary approach beyond the humanities and social sciences to include the environmental sciences. Students from a wide array of disciplines would have the opportunity at The University of Montana-Missoula to develop their own particular interests within the broad scope of our program and course offerings.

6. Please name any accrediting agency(ies) or learned societies that would be concerned with the particular program herein proposed. How has this program been developed in accordance with the criteria developed by said accrediting body(ies) or learned society(ies)?

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is the principal body responsible for the accreditation of institutions of higher education in the seven-state Northwest region, including The University of Montana. The content and objectives of the proposed minor are reconciled with the accreditation criteria described in the commission's *Accreditation Handbook*.⁴

Given the broad interdisciplinary nature of the proposed *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor*, there are several learned societies that would relate well to the program, including:

- Academic Society for the Studies of International Affairs
- American Geographical Society
- American Schools of Oriental Research
- Association for the Advancement of Central Asian Research
- Association of Asian Studies
- Association of American Geographers
 - Asian Geography Specialty Group
 - Middle East Specialty Group
 - Russia, Central Eurasian, and Eastern European Specialty Group
- Central Asian Studies Association
- European Association for Middle Eastern Studies
- Middle Eastern Studies Association
- National Council for Geographic Education

These learned societies have provided lists of other Central and Southwest Asian studies centers and programs in the United States and abroad that have helped us compare our proposal standards and requirements with those of minor programs in Central and Southwest Asian studies elsewhere. Areas considered and compared included the core credit requirements, language requirements, the substantive content of courses, and the number of faculty members with a concentration in Central and Southwest Asian studies. The faculty

⁴ Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, *Accreditation Handbook* (Redmond, Washington: Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, 2003), "Standards and Guide for Self-Study," *passim*.

members involved in our initiative are members, or former members, of most of the listed learned societies, and stay abreast of current thinking and new developments through the related networks.

7. Prepare an outline of the proposed curriculum showing course titles and credits. Please include any plans for expansion of the program during its first 3 years.

As noted elsewhere, the proposed *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor* would be available to all students. It would be offered in conjunction with undergraduate major programs in other disciplines, and would hopefully strengthen ties among these units. Students would declare their intention to minor in *Central and Southwest Asian Studies* to the program's academic advisor in the Department of Geography, who would review their course of study and advise students in planning their course sequences.

The minor would require the completion of *eighteen credits*. Students would be required to complete the following requirements beyond their respective major degree requirements:

Requirements for the Minor

A. Introductory Course (3 credits)

The Silk Road (GEOG 106; 3 credits; offered every semester)

B. Select Two of the Following Four Foundational Courses (6 credits):

The Middle East (AS/GEOG/LS 213S; 3 credits; offered autumn semester)

Central Asia: Peoples and Environments (AS/GEOG/HIST/LS 214S; 3 credits; autumn)

Islamic Civilization: The Classical Age (GEOG/HIST 283H; 3 credits; autumn)

Islamic Civilization: The Modern Era (GEOG/HIST 284H; 3 credits; spring)

C. Select Three of the Following 300- and 400-Level Courses (9 credits):

Central Asia and Its Neighbors (GEOG 345S; 3 credits; offered spring)

Nationalism in the Modern Middle East (GEOG/HIST 386H; 3 credits; autumn)

Iran between Two Revolutions (GEOG/HIST 387; 3 credits; offered spring)

Cities and Landscapes of Central and Southwest Asia (GEOG 402; 3 credits; autumn)

Artistic Traditions of Central Asia (GEOG 457; 3 credits; offered autumn)

Central Asia Seminar (GEOG 460; 3 credits; offered spring)

Independent Study: The Middle East (GEOG 496; 1-9 credits; every semester)

Independent Study: Central Asia (GEOG 496; 1-9 credits; every semester)

Additional courses of relevance (such as courses related to the natural history of Central Asia, wildlife management in Central and Southwest Asia, the archaeology of Central Asia, the impacts of Chinese civilization upon Central Asia, Islam, and legal reform in Central Asia) would be offered periodically by members of the existing interdisciplinary steering committee and other faculty colleagues with an interest in Central and Southwest Asia. It is expected that students would take coursework, and attain a level of proficiency, in one of the following languages that we offer at The University of Montana-Missoula: Arabic, Chinese, Persian, or Russian. The program would also encourage travel and exchange with institutions of higher education in Central and Southwest Asia with which The University of Montana-Missoula has established formal agreements. The Office of International Programs offers a variety of programs in Central

and Southwest Asian countries. Students would be encouraged to plan this minor early in their studies in order to participate in research and study-abroad opportunities.

Proposed Catalogue Copy

The *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor* is available to all students. It consists of eighteen credits. Students selecting the minor are required to successfully complete GEOG 106 and six credits in foundational *Central and Southwest Asian Studies* courses (200-level courses). Students must then complete nine credits of additional coursework at the 300- or 400-level. No language courses are required; however, students pursuing the minor are *strongly* encouraged to meet the university-wide general education foreign language competency requirement by completing at least the second semester of one of the following languages (100 level or higher): Arabic, Chinese, Persian, or Russian. Participation in a study-abroad program is *strongly* recommended.

8. Assessment Plan

The program advisor would be a faculty member in the Department of Geography. As currently envisaged, the program would initially be administered by a committee composed of four faculty members within the Department of Geography, with guidance from the existing interdisciplinary steering committee. All faculty members who are teaching courses related to the proposed minor would be eligible to serve on the steering committee. The administrative committee would be responsible for dealing with student advising and curriculum issues (for example, approving courses, scheduling, reviewing and adjudicating requests for credit exceptions) and for program assessment. Members of the administrative committee would prepare an annual report on activities, needs, and outcomes (for example, the number of students participating in the option, course enrollments, scheduling, internship, and job placements). This report would be submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Faculty and Staff Requirements

1. Please indicate, by name and rank, current faculty who will be involved with the program proposed herein.

Tenured or Tenure-Track University of Montana Faculty

Jeffrey Gritzner, Professor and Chairman, Department of Geography
 Sarah J. Halvorson, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography
 Ardeshir Kia, Senior Lecturer, Department of Geography
 Mehrdad Kia, Professor, Department of Geography; Director, International Programs; and
 Co-Director, *Central Asia and Caspian Basin Program*

Adjunct Faculty

Samir Bitar, Instructor of Arabic, Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures

As noted elsewhere, several tenured or tenure-track faculty members in a variety of disciplines at The University of Montana-Missoula serve on an existing Central and Southwest Asia steering committee. They include Donald Bedunah (Professor, College of Forestry and Conservation); Marc Hendrix (Professor, Department of Geology); David Aronofsky and Jeffrey

Renz (adjunct professors, School of Law); Terry Weidner (Mansfield Professor of Modern Chinese Affairs); John Klocek (Associate Professor, Department of Psychology); and others.

2. Please project the need for new faculty over the first five-year program. Include special qualifications or training. If present faculty are to conduct the new program, please explain how they will be relieved from present duties.

The University of Montana-Missoula currently has sufficient faculty resources to launch and support the proposed *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor* with the broad array of participating faculty members in the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. The minor program could be instituted and maintained successfully with the resources currently available. The faculty members listed above are already involved in teaching the courses listed. Hence, no special provisions are required to relieve them from their present duties.

3. Please explain the need and cost for support personnel or other required personnel expenditures.

No additional personnel would be required.

Capital Outlay, Operating Expenditures, and Physical Facilities

1. Please summarize operating expenditure needs.

The *Central and Southwest Asian Studies* courses listed above are offered within The University of Montana-Missoula's existing operating budget.

2. Please evaluate library resources. Are they adequate for operation of the proposed program? If not, how will the library need to be strengthened during the next three years?

A U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant awarded to the *Central Asia and Caspian Basin Program* provides funds to strengthen the Mansfield Library holdings with the purchase of books, journals, video films, and other resource materials of direct relevance to the proposed program. A third major Title VI grant, approved in March, 2005, would provide additional resources for the development of the proposed *Central and Southwest Asian Studies Minor*. Additional federal grant proposals have been submitted that, if successful, would similarly support the expansion of Central and Southwest Asian holdings in the library. It might also be noted that University of Montana-Missoula faculty members with teaching and research interests in Central and Southwest Asia have long been active in exploiting available resources to strengthen the library's Central and Southwest Asian collections. They include funds previously made available through the *Asian Studies Program* and the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center, and still made available through departmental library allocations.

3. Please indicate special clinical, laboratory, and/or computer equipment that will be needed. List those pieces of equipment or computer hardware presently available in the department.

No new equipment would be needed to initiate the minor program. With regard to the language-course offerings, the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures possesses a twenty-eight position multimedia computer laboratory and joint forty-position language laboratory with facilities for video and audio individual and group interaction.

Computerized language programs and satellite television are available to supplement class work.

4. Please describe facilities and space required for the proposed program. Are current facilities adequate for the program? If not, how does the institution propose to provide new facilities?

Central and Southwest Asian studies courses are already taught in classrooms and language laboratories on The University of Montana-Missoula campus. No additional facilities would be required.

Evaluation of Proposed Program

1. Please name faculty committees or councils that have reviewed and approved the program herein proposed.

The following bodies have reviewed and approved the proposal:

- Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures
- *Asian Studies Program*
- Academic Standards and Curriculum Review Committee
- The Faculty Senate

2. If outside consultants have been employed, please list the names of these consultants, their current positions and titles. Append copies of their written reports.

Although no outside reviewers have been consulted, the proposed minor was developed in consultation with officials of the U.S. Department of Education.