

13 October 2021

Dear colleagues:

I am an affiliated faculty member for the Center for East Asian Studies, but I write on behalf of only myself as an individual faculty member. I write to express my concerns about the proposed discontinuation of the MA in Contemporary East Asian Studies. My reasoning is similar to my view on discontinuation of the MA Latin American Studies degree, opposition to which several of my colleagues from the Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies expressed last week. In short, shuttering this degree will diminish KU's profile in international scholarship while not resulting in meaningful costs savings.

Foremost, I am baffled by KU's apparent retreat from area studies scholarship, especially but not exclusively East Asian studies. Kansas increasingly depends on exports to Asia of beef, grain, aircraft, software, higher education, and other goods and services for its economic prosperity. We are recovering from a global public health and economic crisis due to a virus that originated in Asia. Ignorance has bred elevated fear, hostility, and violence against people of Asian ethnicity in the US. Recently China has rattled sabers toward Taiwan, and the US government has identified China as a global security threat and restructured defense and intelligence arrangements accordingly. Global financial markets have recently shuddered in response to impending insolvencies of several giant Chinese property companies. To leaven these grim events, the Korean television series *Squid Game* is apparently the most streamed television show ever. Now would seem to be a time to increase KU's investments in research and teaching on East Asia, not a time to retreat by shuttering degrees and demoting area studies to the dingy cellars of disparate KU units.

Also, I have a personal interest in this degree because I think that greater knowledge about East Asia is critical to my future as a professional and as an informed citizen, and as a member of a family that includes members of Japanese and Chinese ethnicity. I have invested in three semesters of Chinese language classes at KU (with CHIN 208 to take in the spring) to acquire intermediate Chinese language proficiency. I have also taken for credit three graduate-level courses at KU on Chinese history, politics, and literature to apply toward the requirements for this degree, to which I had intended to apply after completing the language requirement. Alternatives to this degree – such as an MA in East Asian language and culture or an Asian concentration within an MA in global studies – are much less attractive for a variety of reasons. I am also concerned that this degree may be discontinued prematurely before its global studies equivalent is fully developed and approved.

Sincerely,



Christopher Anderson