

INTERNATIONALIZING THE CURRICULUM: BROADENING STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

“Students have different motivations for coming to the Asian studies program:

some are curious about life in another country, others are looking to complement their studies in art, history, and the other majors. Some students take classes in Japanese culture to better position themselves for industries that are strongly based in the Japanese market, like computer technology and the video gaming industry. In all these cases, students gain a great deal of knowledge that helps them understand the cultures of the countries of Asia, which in many ways, can be totally different from the cultural experience of the West. For students to expand their views, to understand the positions and feelings of people from other parts of the world—this is an important benefit.”

—Hideo Watanabe

*Assistant Professor (Japanese Language and Culture),
Department of Languages and Cultures, and Faculty,
Asian Studies*

Joshua H. Steele

Senior, Asian Studies and Philosophy



Originally from Charlottesville, Virginia, Joshua Steele moved to Seattle, Washington after high school to pursue a music career. While out west, he discovered the resources of the local international district and became intrigued by the Japanese language.

“There was something in the language that struck me as being musical, very fluid and inviting,” he explains. “That, combined with the artistic qualities of the written form made it very appealing to me.”

After initiating a study of Japanese language on his own, he realized that “I had an interest in going further with my studies and learning more than I could by myself.” Returning to the East Coast, he enrolled at William Paterson University specifically to take classes in Japanese.

Joshua arrived at William Paterson and started studying Japanese under the direction of Professor Hideo Watanabe. Gradually, as he made his way through the entire six-course Japanese language sequence, his interest in Japan expanded from language to encompass the history, culture, and society of the country. When the Asian studies program became officially recognized as a major, he found he couldn’t pass up the opportunity to complete a degree in this area. The major, encompassing courses in language, history, culture, and politics of the region in a multidisciplinary approach, offered Joshua the chance to round out his knowledge with a broad view of Asia as a whole.

“I am very happy to be in the Asian studies program,” he says. “All of the teachers I’ve been in contact with have been extremely knowledgeable about their subjects, and perhaps just as important, they are very personally interested in the topics at hand and generous in sharing that knowledge with their students.”

Now double majoring in Asian studies and philosophy, Joshua sees a great deal of value in studying both the language and culture of the region. “If you’re going to get a sense of a culture that is beyond anything you’ve previously known,” he explains, “it’s important to learn as much as you possibly can—to look at it from all the different angles that exist, including linguistic, historical, societal, and cultural aspects.”

“It seems now more than ever,” he adds, “that a healthy understanding of Asia is important for our current and future East-West relations.” After completing the program, Josh looks forward to further intensifying the skills he gained in the program by pursuing work as a language teacher and translator.

アジアの理解*

“AN UNDERSTANDING OF ASIA”

is a central goal of William Paterson University’s broad-based and multidisciplinary Asian studies major.