Proposed New Minor: Academic Component

Please note that minors are approved by the school/college only. For new minors, then, eCAP serves as a notification process and a means of entering the new minor in the Bulletin.

Title of Minor (e.g., Minor in History):

Minor in Persian Cultural Studies

1. Please provide the name, title, email address, and phone number of the primary contact person for this academic program:

Professor Sunil Sharma (sharma@bu.edu; 617 358-6253)

2. Please briefly describe the proposed new minor:

Iran, and more broadly Persian societies, offers an intriguing array of subjects of study in the fields of the humanities and social sciences. Historically Iran played an indispensible role in cross-border circulations of Persianate culture, especially in South Asia, where Persian was the lingua franca. Today Persian is spoken with minor variations by about 110 million people in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan, as well as in diasporic communities around the world. The standard language is commonly called Farsi, but also Dari and Tajiki, depending on the cultural context.

The proposed minor in Persian will seek to deepen understanding of Iran’s diverse cultural traditions and distinctive location in and its complex connections to the Middle East and the world. Literature continues to play a central role in Persian society and is closely integrated with a range of disciplines. Grounded primarily in the study of literature, the Persian minor will equip students with analytical skills and knowledge to examine, write, and talk about Persian literary texts in their historical, political, and cultural contexts. Students can pursue advanced language study as an option through electives and directed studies. Minoring in Persian at BU will be enriched by various events, lectures, and activities focused on Iran and Afghanistan sponsored by
the BU Center for the Study of Asia, Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations, MENA, WLL, and other neighboring colleges in greater Boston, as well as by the recently-renovated Arts of Iran Gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts.

3. Please provide a rationale for the proposed new minor:

After several years of sustained work and investment in Persian studies in the Department of World Languages & Literatures (WLL), five factors combine to make a Persian minor both desirable and possible: a stable set of instructors and courses in Persian language and literature; a large and growing student demand; the sizable Persian and Persian-American student body at BU; international recognition of the significance of Persian in the contemporary moment; the increasing importance of Persian in the academic fields of Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Studies; BU’s commitment to Afghanistan and hosting the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies. With two Persian faculty members (one full professor and one senior lecturer, Sharma and Tabatabai) and two other Middle Eastern studies professorial faculty (Micallef, Litvin), WLL now offers five semesters of standard Persian language study, which are designed for and proven to be appealing to heritage learners, two literature courses open to students with no knowledge of Persian, as well as several courses on Middle Eastern literature or film in which Persian is a major part. These course offerings are supplemented by an exceptionally strong set of faculty (Chehabi, Haeri, Barfield, Fetvaci, Anderson, and Heimarck) and offerings in various related fields that broadly encompass Iranian studies in anthropology, history, history of art and architecture, religion, international relations, and women’s studies.

The minor’s focus on language, literature, and culture fits with the strategic plan of CAS, which recommits itself to the humanities and humanistic approaches. By encouraging students to think beyond nationalist frames and to explore various topics on the Middle East as a part of their electives, it also facilitates inter-Middle Eastern dialogues. This way, it will further fulfill the shared goals of building enrollments across the MENA curriculum and making best possible use of instructional resources to offer undergraduates exceptional academic opportunities, effective advising, and expert mentoring.

The proposed Persian minor offers an intellectually coherent program of study. Students will be required to take at least two courses focused substantially on Persian literature, a vital entry point for understanding the cultures of Iran and/or Afghanistan. Students with native or near-native proficiency in Persian will be exempt from the language-course requirement but
instead will be required to take additional courses on Persian literature or electives selected from the approved list in consultation with the advisor.

4. Please list the requirements and courses for the proposed new minor: (denoting new courses in bold print)

As in other WLL minors, students take six courses with a grade of C or higher as requirements. Students without prior knowledge of Persian should take four vertically integrated semesters of language—LZ 111, LZ 112, LZ 211, and LZ 212—before arriving at the minor level (in other words, these four courses are prerequisites and do not count toward the minor). Students may include up to three approved transfer courses from other colleges and universities or study-abroad programs and must take a minimum of three courses toward the minor on the Charles River Campus. In this case, students must take two of their electives from offerings in WLL.

It should be noted that BU does not currently have a study abroad site or formal exchange program with Iran, but there are non-BU Persian language/culture programs like the Eurasian Regional Language Program (ERLP) and the State Department’s Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) in Tajikstan, under whose auspices BU students have previously engaged in intensive Persian language study and could be confidently recommended to minors.

The six courses that would constitute a minor in Persian Cultural Studies would be distributed as follows:

1. TWO CAS LZ language and literature courses:

   - **CAS LZ 303** Advanced Persian (offered biennially in the fall semester)
   - **CAS LZ3 380** Persian Epic and Romance (in English translation) (offered biennially in the fall semester but can offer annually according to demand)
   - **CAS LZ 381** Rumi and Persian Sufi Poetry (in English translation) (offered annually in the spring semester)
   - **CAS LZ 470** Topics in Persian Literature (offered as needed)
   - **CAS LZ 491/2** Directed Studies in Persian (offered as needed)

2. FOUR elective courses:
Courses on Iran and the Middle East from various departments across CAS and CFA may be selected with advisor’s prior approval. Existing courses include:

- AH 313 Early Modern Islamic Art & Architecture
- AH 314 After Genghis Khan: Art and Architecture in Central Asia and Iran
- AH 428: Seminar in Islamic Art (usually Kings, Heroes and Lovers: Arts of the Book) or Painting and calligraphy
- AH 539 Muslim Societies (also AN548, HI 596, IR 515, RN 563)
- AN 347 Afghanistan
- AN 319 Anthropology of Muslim Cultures and Politics
- AN 320 Women in the Muslim World
- AR 343 Anatolian Archaeology
- HI 230 History of Media in the Middle East
- HI 381 History of Modern Iran, 1900-Present (also IR397)
- HI 382 Turko-Persia in the Twentieth Century (also IR328)
- HI 385 History of Premodern Iran (also IR 329)
- HI 389 Americans and the Middle East
- IR 382 Understanding the Middle East
- IR 509 Islam in Middle East Politics
- IR 706 Iran and the Middle East
- XL 223 Introduction to Comparative Literature: Middle East
- XL 315 Film and Identity in the Islamic World
- XL 342 Travel Writing and the Muslim World
- XL 343 Alexander the Great in the East (new course)
- XL 470 Topics in Comparative Literature (topics vary)
- CFA MH 331/431 Music and Mysticism in Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and Iran

5. Please provide the projected enrollment for the proposed new minor and the basis of that projection:

8-12 students in the first year, increasing to 15-20 in subsequent years.

These numbers are based on the fact that most all of our students in the Persian language and literature courses have expressed an interest in doing this minor.

6. Please provide the bulletin copy (exactly as it will appear) for the proposed new minor including program goals/outcomes [NOTE: this bulletin copy is in a final form and cannot be changed]:

4
The minor in Persian Cultural Studies is for students who seek to acquire a strong grasp of Persian culture and Iran’s literary, historical, political, literary, and artistic importance around the world, especially in Asia and the Middle East.

Requirements:

In addition to completion of CAS LZ 212 or equivalent assessment of proficiency, six 4-credit courses with a grade of C or higher. With advisor’s approval, students may include up to three transfer courses from other colleges, universities, or non-BU study abroad programs. Two of the three electives must then be chosen from the WLL course offerings.

1. Two courses on Persian language and literature: CAS LZ 303, CAS LZ 380, CAS LZ 381, CAS LZ 470, or CAS 491/2.
2. Four additional courses with a focus on Iran and/or Afghanistan (to be chosen in consultation with the student’s advisor from relevant offerings in the humanities, arts, and social sciences).
October 5, 2016

Dear members of the Academic Policy Committee:

It is my pleasure to write in support of the establishment of the Minor in Persian Cultural Studies.

The minor serves an evident need, founded in response to repeated requests from the relatively small but enthusiastic cohort of students in Persian language and literature courses. It is well designed, modeled on other successful WLL minors in language and literature (Arabic; Korean) but structured to make use of the many disciplinary perspectives on Persianate culture and Iranian/Afghan politics available throughout CAS and BU. It depends heavily on advising, something the faculty members in Persian are always generous and good at providing.

I share the hope expressed in the proposal that this minor will be good for the MENA Studies major by increasing the engaged student participation in MENA courses and at MENA events, and perhaps drawing some students onward into the MENA Studies major itself. (All of its requirements would also count for the MENA major.)

Having this minor at BU will also serve as a recruiting point for CAS and for Pardee, highlighting both our rich language offerings and our regional studies strength. I can’t wait to start recommending it to students.

In short, I urge you to approve the Minor in Persian Cultural Studies right away. Please do not hesitate to contact me (mlitvin@bu.edu) with any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Margaret Litvin
Associate Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature
Department of Modern Languages and Comparative Literature

Founding Director
Middle East and North Africa Studies Program
Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies
Boston University
TO: Academic Policy Committee

October 2, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Director of the Institute of Muslim Societies and Civilizations, I write in support of the establishment of a Persian Minor in the College of Arts and Sciences. This minor takes advantage of the wealth of resources BU can offer to students interested in study of the Persianate world. Our faculty cover subjects ranging from language, to literature, to current geopolitical concerns. Contemporary Iran stands at a geographic pivot point between the Middle East and Central Asia just as it has always represented a cultural touchstone for the region for centuries. This minor allows students to examine Iran from these many gateways and come away with a multidisciplinary understanding of its longstanding influence.

I strongly recommend that the Committee establish this minor. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Betty S. Anderson
Associate Professor, History Department
Director, Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations
(617)353-8302
banderso@bu.edu
October 2, 2016

Dear Professor Sharma,

Thank you for sharing your proposal for a new minor in Persian studies with me. The proposal is very well designed, and given the number of relevant courses that are being taught regularly at Boston University will attract students. Your endeavors have my full support.

Sincerely,

H. E. Chehabi

Houchang E. Chehabi
Professor of International Relations and History
I approve of the Persian Studies minor. It will be a great addition to the program.

Thomas Barfield
Chair, Anthropology
Dear Sunil,

Thank you very much for putting together this proposal. It looks very strong, and I look forward to contributing to this exciting new minor.

Emine

Emine Fetvaci  
Associate Professor  
Department of History of Art and Architecture  
Boston University

---

Persian Studies minor

Fetvaci, Emine <fetvaci@bu.edu>
To: "Sharma, Sunil" <sharma@bu.edu>
Cc: "Tseng, Alice Y" <aytseng@bu.edu>

Sunil, Sharma <sharma@bu.edu>
Sun, Oct 2, 2016 at 9:50 PM

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ui=2&ik=8fd7447231&view=pt&q=persian%20minor&qs=true&search=query&msg=157883caac363403&simg=157883caac36...