

Department of Asian Studies, University of Haifa

The Department of Asian Studies was established in 2002 with the aim of promoting research on contemporary Asia; granting students in-depth academic knowledge; and preparing them for careers related to Asia in areas such as economics, business, diplomacy, education, media and public relations, tourism and research. The department currently grants BA and MA degrees in Asian Studies. The department's rich general course offerings include history and culture, society and economy, politics and international relations, psychology, philosophy and art of Asia, student exchange programmes with universities in Asia, as well as a specialised business in Asia programme.

Asia is home to the ancient civilizations of China, India and Japan, and more than half of the human population. The sweeping transformations of Asian societies over the past two generations in particular, have granted them and economic and political importance, to the point that the twenty-first century is frequently referred to as “the Asian century”. In a few years, the Chinese economy is projected to surpass that of the United States to become the world's largest economy, and together with other Asian powers, such as India, Japan and South Korea, the continent is already exerting a tremendous influence in world politics and culture as well.

Israel maintains diplomatic, economic, military, technological and scientific relations with most Asian countries, as well as a lively flow of tourism. In the last two decades such exchanges have flourished following the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and India, China, Vietnam, South Korea and Mongolia. While the importance of Asia to Israel and the Middle East is growing, knowledge of contemporary Asia in Israel remains inadequate. A better understanding of the politics, society and economy of Asian states is needed for Israelis to succeed in a region where we are relative newcomers.

The Department of Asian Studies at the University of Haifa has aimed to remedy this situation. It promotes an interdisciplinary understanding of Asia through modern languages, social sciences and the humanities. In 2012 we started a BA programme “Business in Asia”, and a joint MA programme with the faculty of Law – “Law and Business in Asia”, to teach and train a qualified body of graduates with much needed expertise in the Asian continent. The BA programme offers students an internship with key Israeli institutions and companies that work with Asia, such as the Israeli Institute of Export.

The department holds numerous academic and public events on Asia current affairs, including academic conferences, workshops, and public lectures, exhibitions and cultural events.

We are proud of offering a unique opportunity to our students to understand and experience Asia through student exchange agreements with East Asian universities, such as Xiamen University (China), Shanghai Normal University (China), Chengdu University (China), Waseda University (Japan), Doshisha University (Japan), and Akita University (Japan).

We are a young and vibrant department, which has a vigorous research culture, whose faculty makes significant contributions to scholarship in a wide range of areas:

- Dr. Nimrod Baranovitch (PhD., University of Pittsburgh), responsible for Chinese Studies, head of “Law and Business in Asia”: culture, society and politics in contemporary China
- Dr. Michal Daliot-Bul (PhD., Tel Aviv University), responsible for Japanese Studies: contemporary Japanese media, culture and society; translation of a number of novels from Japanese to Hebrew.
- Dr. Yoram Evron (PhD., University of Haifa), head of “Business in Asia”: China's military and national security, foreign policy, science and technology, and China-Middle East relations.
- Professor Rotem Kowner (PhD., University of Tsukuba): modern Japanese history and culture
- Dr. Arik Moran (PhD., University of Oxford), responsible for Indian Studies: Indian history, Himalayan studies, South Asian oral traditions and social memory in the subcontinent.
- Dr. Guy Podoler (PhD., Hebrew University), responsible for Korean Studies: contemporary Korean history, commemoration and construction of historical memory in South Korea, Korea-Japan relations.
- Dr. Shakhar Rahav (PhD., University of California at Berkeley): modern Chinese history, particularly the intersection of politics and culture; intellectuals and politics.
- Dr. Ornit Shani (PhD., University of Cambridge), Head of the Department: Indian democracy, citizenship, identity politics and Hindu nationalism

What some of our graduates are doing:

- Established the Economic Trade Office for Israel in Beijing
- Working in the Consular Section of the Israeli Embassy
- CEO of Netafim in Japan
- Consultant to Asian companies seeking Israeli technology in the fields of medicine and agriculture
- Travel guide in South and East Asia
- Tourism sector, both in Israel and Asia
- Diamond trader in Hong Kong, China and Southeast Asia
- Managing China operations of an Israeli high company

More information: <http://asia.haifa.ac.il/index.php/he/>
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