**MEMORANDUM (draft)**

**DATE:** March 1, 2018

**TO:** Committee on Curricular Planning (CPC)

Committee on Appointment and Promotion (CAP)

**FROM:** Asian American Studies Working Group

(Leylah Ali, ART; Rashida Braggs, AFR; Sandra Burton, DANC; María Elena Cepeda, LATS; Cecilia Chang, CHIN; Sam Crane, PSCI; Amal Eqeiq, ARAB; Antonia Foias, ANSO; Kim Gutschow, ANSO & REL; Man He, CHIN; Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, REL & LATS; Vivian Huang, WGSS; Amy Holzapfel, THEA; Lama Nassif, ARAB; Shinko Kagaya, JAPN; Cornelius C. Kubler, CHIN; Bernie Rhie, ENGL; Omar Sangare, THEA; W. Anthony Sheppard, MUS; Karen L. Shepard, ENGL; Jason Josephson Storm, REL; Dorothy Wang, AMST; Scott Wong, HIST; Emily Vasiliauskas, ENGL; Li Yu, CHIN)

**SUBJECT:** Proposal to found an Asian American Studies Program

**Action Requested**

We request that the College hire one new faculty member (1.0 FTE) who specializes in Asian American Studies (field open, rank open) to start in 2019-20.

**Rationale**

For over three decades, Asian American students and their allies at Williams have been fighting for the robust presence of Asian American Studies on campus--whether in the form of a program, a major, or a concentration. Various actions have been taken over the decades to draw attention to this lack: educational forums, a [change.org](http://change.org/) petition, more traditional forms of visible activism (some students picketed at a Homecoming football game in 2013), meetings with various administrators, and so on. For a few years now, multiple student organizations have organized panels on Claiming Williams Day to draw attention to the absence of an Asian American Studies program on campus, the latest being the “I Am Asian American Campaign.”

The absence of an Asian American Studies Program means that the voices of Asian American students, faculty, and staff are not being represented and heard, thus creating a stronger need in them to be intellectually, culturally, and politically reflected and represented. Research in ethnic studies has found the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans as a white normative racializing strategy that takes a toll on the health of our Asian-identified students. The absence of an Asian American Studies program also reinforces the impression to students, faculty, and staff that Asian American studies is not considered an intellectually important part of the curriculum. Brown, Pomona, and Wellesley all have programs in Asian American Studies. The College has programs in Africana Studies (now a department), Latina/o Studies, and Jewish Studies but, despite the fact that Asian American students comprise the largest group among ethnic minority students and that Asian American Studies is a recognized intellectual discipline with academic departments, academic journals, and Ph.D. programs, there is yet to be an Asian American Studies Program at Williams.

We request that the College hire one new faculty member (1.0 FTE) who specializes in Asian American Studies (field open, rank open). We believe that such an appointment, combined with existing faculty resources, would allow us to offer a credible interdisciplinary program in Asian American Studies with a five-course concentration. Although we have two Asian Americanists on campus now, both Dorothy Wang and Scott Wong are under obligation to teach courses for their home units, namely American Studies and History respectively. They have consistently offered Asian American studies courses in the past decade but their course offerings are not enough to sustain a concentration. Vivian Huang, a specialist in Performance Studies who joined Williams in Fall 2017 was hired in WGSS and she is under no obligation to teach Asian American Studies courses. She is also an untenured faculty and very junior.

The next section provides one possible version of what the requirements for such a concentration could look like. We are basing this concentration structure on existing models on campus (e.g. the LATS model, the JWST model, etc.).

**Possible Curricular Structure**

Because the two current Asian Americanists on campus need to offer courses to serve the curricular needs of their own home unit, and the fact that when these faculty go on leave (for example, Dorothy Wang is currently on a three-semester leave; she will also be chairing American Studies in 2020-2022, an administrative duty that will likely further reduce the number of courses she can offer), there is no guarantee that their FTEs will be filled by visitors specializing in Asian American studies, the curriculum has to consider two factors: sustainability and flexibility. The following curricular structure aims to maintain sustainability while providing enough flexibility.

The Concentration in Asian American Studies requires five courses: one gateway course, two core courses, and two electives. If more upper-level core courses become available in the near future with the growth of the Asian American Studies program, there is also a possibility to require a 400-level seminar course or a capstone course as most concentrations do at Williams.

Gateway Courses (can also count as core course):

* HIST 284 “Introduction to Asian American History” (or another introductory course on Asian American history by Scott Wong)
* AMST 128 “Reading Asian American Literature” (or another introductory course on Asian American literature by Dorothy Wang)
* One introductory course offered by the new faculty member to be hired

Core Courses (can also count as elective)

* AMST 215 “Experimental Asian American Writing” (Wang)
* HIST 384 “Selected Topics in Asian American Studies” (Wong)
* ENGL 354T “Asian American Literature: Fiction and Creative Nonfiction” (Bernie Rhie) (Professor Rhie is not a trained Asian Americanist, but he is willing to contribute this course to the concentration on a regular basis, possibly every other year. There is no guarantee that he will be able to keep offering this tutorial or any other Asian American literature course due to his teaching obligations in ENGL.)
* WGSS courses on Asian American performance and/or theatre offered by Vivian Huang (e.g. WGSS 225 “Gender and Sexuality in American Theater”, WGSS 316 “Feeling Queer and Asian”) (Note that Professor Huang’s appointment is in WGSS and she is under no obligation to teach Asian American Studies courses.)
* Three courses by the new faculty member to be hired (If this new faculty member needs to serve another department or program, then the number of core courses this person offers for Asian American Studies can be reduced to one or two per year, though such a case would not be ideal.)

Elective 1

one approved course on race or ethnicity, as listed in the “Race, Ethnicity and Diaspora” category in American Studies or any other courses focusing on the issue of race or ethnicity in America or elsewhere

Elective 2

one approved course on the anthropology, art, history, literature, linguistics, music, politics, religion, or sociology of an Asian country or the Asian diasporas

(The following faculty have confirmed that they are willing to contribute their current or future courses to this requirement: Cecilia Chang, CHIN; Kim Gutschow, ANSO & REL; Man He, CHIN; Shinko Kagaya, JAPN; Aparna Kapadia, HIST; Cornelius Kubler, CHIN; Joel Lee, ANSO; Christopher Nugent, CHIN; Anne Reinhardt, HIST; W. Anthony Sheppard, MUS; Eiko Maruko Siniawer, HIST; Jason Josephson Storm, REL; Li Yu, CHIN.)

**Enrollment Issues**

Courses that focus on Asian American studies have had robust enrollments in the past two decades at Williams. Below are the enrollment figures in the past four years:

Spring 2018:

AMST 382 “Asian/American Film and Video” (Kim) **20 students** (cap 19)

WGSS 316 “Feeling Queer and Asian” (Huang) **22 students**（cap 20）

DANC 214 “Asian-American Identities in Motion” (Tarah) **10 students** (no cap)

Fall 2017:

AMST 125 “Introduction to Asian American Studies” (Kim) **11 students** (cap 20)

ENGL 354T “Asian American Literature: Fiction and Creative Nonfiction” (Rhie)

**12 students** (cap 10)

HIST 384 “Selected Topics in Asian American Studies” (Wong) **20 students** (cap 25)

WGSS 225 “Gender and Sexuality in American Theater” (Huang) **6 students** (cap 20)

Spring 2017:

AMST 128 “Reading Asian American Literature” (Wang) **15 students** (cap 15)

Fall 2016:

(No Asian American studies courses offered)

Spring 2016:

AMST 304 “Asian American Literature and Visual Art” (Wang) **15 students** (cap 15)

Fall 2015:

HIST 284 “Introduction to Asian American History” (Wong) **41 students** (cap 40)

Spring 2015:

AMST 215 “Experimental Asian American Writing” (Wang) **6 students** (cap 15)

AMST 219 “Introduction to Asian American Literature (Schleitwiler) **7 students** (cap 25)

HIST 384 “Selected Topics in Asian American Studies” (Wong) **28 students** (cap 25)

Fall 2014:

(No Asian American studies courses offered)

As can be seen from the above enrollment figures, whenever there are Asian American studies courses offered, the enrollments are robust which indicates strong student interest. It is important to note that students taking these courses are not only Asian American students. These courses serve the general diverse student body just as the other ethnic studies courses do. As we know from the example of Africana Studies and Latina/o Studies, the presence of more core faculty in a program also builds more student enrollment in classes. So the enrollment-faculty relationship is self-reinforcing, not a one-way street.

What can also be inferred from the above data is that due to the lack of an Asian American Studies Program, currently there are not enough courses to sustain a concentration. A program is also needed to better coordinate the courses offered and to advise students who are interested in pursuing the concentration. A minimum of 2 FTE devoted to the program with help from existing faculty resources on campus is needed to sustain an Asian American Studies concentration.

**Summary**

We hope that the new program would eventually become independent, like Africana Studies, Latina/o Studies, or Jewish Studies. Depending on who is hired, it might be possible to have an independent program from the very beginning. But if that is considered to be problematic, then for the first few years, some members of the Asian American Studies Working Group would be willing to temporarily serve in an advisory role for this program. If this staffing request is approved, Professor Dorothy Wang who is on leave during 2018-19 and 2019-20 is willing to serve on the search committee.