

# **Developing Taiwan Studies Teaching Programme in Europe and the United States: the experience of SOAS University of London and University of Texas at Austin**

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## **I. Foreword**

Over the last two decades, the overseas Taiwan Studies field has seen a rapid expansion in the scope of its institutions and the size of its research community. There are now over a dozen active Taiwan studies programmes or Centres on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>3</sup> One of the critical moments in the development of this dynamic field in Europe was the establishment of the European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS) in 2004. The EATS annual conference is held at a different European city each year and plays a key role in creating a community of scholars that work on Taiwan across different disciplines.<sup>4</sup> The counterpart of EATS in North America is the North American Taiwan Studies Association (NATSA), a graduate-student operated organization that was founded in 1994 and has continued to be vibrant in the new

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<sup>3</sup> In Europe these include: the SOAS Centre of Taiwan Studies, the University of Nottingham's Taiwan Studies Programme, the University of Tübingen's European Research Centre on Contemporary Taiwan, the Taiwan Research Center at the University of Ljubljana, the Taiwan Studies Programme at St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, the Vienna Centre for Taiwan Studies at the University of Vienna, the Taiwan Research Programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the Research Unit on Taiwanese Culture and Literature at Ruhr-Universität Bochum, the European Studies Association of Taiwan Studies, the University of Heidelberg's Institute of Chinese Studies' Taiwan Lecture Series. In North America these include: the Center for Taiwan Studies at University of California, Santa Barbara, the Taiwan Studies Program at University of Texas at Austin, the Taiwan Studies Program at University of Alberta, New Directions in Taiwan Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, the Taiwan Studies Initiative under the Centre for East Asian Studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Taiwan Studies Faculty Chair at University of California, San Diego, the Taiwan Studies Postdoctoral Research Associate in Taiwan Literature at Washington University, St. Louis, the Taiwan Democracy Project at Stanford University, and the Taiwan Studies Program at the University of Washington.

<sup>4</sup> For more on the European Association of Taiwan Studies see its website: <http://eats-taiwan.eu/>

millennium. More recently the World Congress of Taiwan Studies has been established, with the initial conferences held at Academia Sinica in 2012, SOAS in 2015 and back to Academia Sinica in 2018.

The vast majority of Taiwan Studies centres and programmes concentrate on organizing academic events, such as conferences or workshops. Publications are often produced from revised versions of these conference papers, contributing to the growing numbers of books in the field. Rigger showed how Taiwan studies academic book publications rose from minimal levels in the mid 1980s to impressive numbers by the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>5</sup> Sullivan found similar rising trends in publications on Taiwan in journal articles as well.<sup>6</sup> In Europe there are now two academic book series that publish extensively on Taiwan, the Routledge Research on Taiwan Series and the Harrassowitz *studia formosiana*. In the United States, from the 1980s onward a number of US publishing houses, including Indiana University Press, M. E. Sharpe, Duke University Press, Hawaii University Press, and Columbia University Press, became known as more friendly to Taiwan-related subjects. However, the ending of the M.E. Sharpe Taiwan in the Modern World series suggested the trend in North America has become less optimistic in the post 2000 period.<sup>7</sup> Two recent important publication related developments for the field are the establishment of the *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* and Brill Book Series in Taiwan Studies in 2018.

In Europe, several Taiwan programmes have attempted to develop Taiwan Studies teaching courses, yet they have tended to be isolated courses not well integrated into existing academic programmes. More importantly, the majority have not been long-lasting. For example among the eight UK universities that have introduced Taiwan focused courses, only one was still offering courses in 2017-18 academic year.<sup>8</sup> In North America, there has been a proliferation of Taiwan courses in higher education institutions over the past decade. Based on an ongoing survey conducted by NATSA, more than 100 Taiwan-related courses, defined as having at least one-third of its content on Taiwan or Taiwan-China relations, have been offered in 50

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<sup>5</sup> Rigger 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Sullivan 2011.

<sup>7</sup> This was one of the indices that Murray Rubinstein used to suggest a crisis in Taiwan Studies in his keynote speech at the European Association of Taiwan Studies Conference in Madrid in 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Taiwan courses have closed at the University of Leeds, London School of Economics, Sheffield, Cambridge, Westminster, Oxford, and Nottingham.

universities in the US and Canada.<sup>9</sup> The survey also shows that these courses are taught in a wide range of departments or interdisciplinary programmes.<sup>10</sup>

What have distinguished SOAS University of London (SOAS) and the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), however, are the facts that they have not only developed Taiwan focused courses in multiple disciplines, sustained continuity over an extended period of time, but also established Taiwan Studies degrees. Ostensibly different in several important aspects, such as basic structure, trajectory of development, and institutional status, these two programmes nonetheless share a number of particularly meaningful commonalities. The purpose of this paper is to compare the experiences of these two institutions in developing such comprehensive Taiwan Studies teaching programmes.<sup>11</sup> We first review the origins of these unique teaching programmes, their distinct development trajectories and key features. Next we offer comparative analysis on how they were able to not only survive but expand their offerings and thrive in an academic environment that normally tends to be hostile to such niche appeal programmes. Finally we discuss some of the remaining challenges facing these teaching programmes.

We argue that with the right design, firm commitment, and long-term funding support Taiwan studies teaching programmes can be viable and have an important contribution to the field. Many of those that have taken our Taiwan courses at the postgraduate level have gone on to further studies, embarked on non academic careers utilizing the knowledge thus acquired, or, in the cases of those who have received Ph.D. degrees, secured university teaching positions. Taiwan courses at the undergraduate level fill a significant gap in the university curriculum on East Asia. Given that Taiwan has historically been a meeting place of different geopolitical and cultural matrixes, these courses broaden the horizon of the students' knowledge and instil in them a stronger sense of global connectedness.

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<sup>9</sup> We would like to express special thanks to the NATSA Taiwan Studies syllabi collection team for sharing with us its preliminary findings.

<sup>10</sup> These academic units include: Art History, Anthropology, Architecture, Chinese, Conflict Studies and Human Right, East Asian Studies, Economics, Geography, Global and Area Studies, Government, History, International Affairs (Relations/Studies), Film and Media Studies, Literature, Medicine, Museum Science, Political Science, Public Health, Radio-Film-Television, and Religion.

<sup>11</sup> An alternative comparative case in Europe to UT Austin is the Research Unit for Taiwanese Literature and Culture at Bochum University due to their focus on Taiwan literature and culture and both of them are embedded in an Asian Studies Department. However, one of them has managed to develop a fully-fledged Taiwan Studies degree programme whereas Taiwan Studies in Bochum has become less active since the early 2000s.

The recent surge of Taiwan Studies in higher education institutions in both Europe and North America may be appropriately viewed as a post-Cold War phenomenon, driven by a different set of dynamics. Importantly, the notion of soft power has come to exert visible impact on policies of public diplomacy adopted by many countries. Taiwan has joined this trend with vigor and flair in recent years. Prompted by the immediate goal of increasing international visibility, various Taiwanese government agencies have offered project sponsorships for academic and non-academic institutions and have met with positive responses in Europe and the United States. On the one hand, faced with declining resources and budget difficulties, academics in these places have been actively seeking external financial support for research and program development. On the other hand, Taiwan's energetic creative industry, unique geopolitical position, and impressive efforts in pursuing progressive values such as democracy and LGBTQ rights, moreover, offer abundant materials for courses with a niche appeal. The auspicious convergence of goals and interests have played a key role in the building and thriving of the Taiwan Studies teaching programmes at SOAS and UT Austin.

## **II. Programme Origins and Development**

### **SOAS**

At the time the SOAS Taiwan Studies Programme was established in 1999 Taiwan was much less visible in European campuses compared to the United States.<sup>12</sup> At this point there was very little coverage of Taiwan in European courses. Where Taiwan did feature it tended to be on the margins of Chinese Studies. For instance, at SOAS courses on Chinese politics or economics had at most a week covering Taiwan.

When the SOAS programme was established a conscious decision was made to keep it separate from the China Centre and Department. Instead, reflecting its initial social science focus, it was located in the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. This reflects an overall trend in European Taiwan Studies in which social sciences have tended to dominate in areas such as conference panels, courses and publications.<sup>13</sup> In the first year of the Taiwan Studies Programme at SOAS preparations were made both for its inaugural conference and for the

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<sup>12</sup> For earlier discussions of European and North American Studies see Fell 2008; Ohlendorf 2011.

<sup>13</sup> This trend corresponds closely to the second phase of Taiwan Studies in the United States proposed by Cheng and Marble 2004. The Taiwan Studies Programme at UT Austin focused in this article, however, is primarily humanities oriented.

first teaching course focused on Taiwan. The course titled Contemporary Taiwan: The Evolution of a New Development Model was introduced for the 2000-2001 academic year. It was a co-taught year-long course for postgraduates that included sections on Taiwan's history, domestic and external politics, society, and economic development. This course ran for five years through to 2004-2005 and represents the first period of the SOAS Taiwan teaching programme.

### Tables 1-3 here

Table 1: Student numbers for SOAS Taiwan courses 2005-2018

	2005 -6	2006 -7	2007 -8	2008 -9	2009 -10	2010 -11	2011 -12	2012 - 2013	2013 -14	2014 -15	2015- 16	2016 -17	2017 -18
Govt and Politics in Taiwan	6	3	1	4	2	4	7	8	15	11	11	11	19
Society and Culture	7	3	N/R	6	6	3	4	6	8	7	6	6	8
Economics	2	3	1	5	3	3	5	5	6	8	Closed		
Film	14	8	6	18	16	10	12	6	5	12	14	15	18
Hokkien	3	4	N/R	2	12	5	11	8	N/R	N/R	11	8	5
Taiwan's Political and Economic Development (UG)						10	12	16	13	20	11	23	10
North East Asian Politics: Japan, Korea and Taiwan							5	18	13	16	18	13	15
Taiwan Law												5	3
MA Taiwan Studies (full)	1	2	0	2	0.5	2.3	3.3	1	4	3	3	5	1

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Note 1: In 2010-11 Government and Politics in Taiwan was closed and a new yearlong course Taiwan's Politics and Cross-Strait Relations was introduced

Note 2: From 2016-17 the undergraduate course was redesigned and renamed Taiwan's Politics and International Relations

Table 2

Most Common nationalities taking SOAS Taiwan courses (36 nationalities)

Ranking	2000-2016 (481)	2000-2005 (40)	2005-2010 (122)	2010-2016 (319)
1	UK: 119	Taiwan: 11	UK: 30	UK: 81
2	China: 74	UK: 8	Taiwan: 22	China: 64
3	Taiwan: 54	HK: 4	Italy: 20	Taiwan: 21
4	Italy: 37	Japan: 4	France: 9	HK: 21
5	USA 31	USA: 3	China: 9	USA: 20
6	HK 28	Germany: 3	USA: 8	Japan: 18
7	Japan 27	Thailand: 2	Japan: 5	Italy: 17
8	Germany 18		Germany: 4	Singapore: 13
9	France 16		HK: 3	Germany: 11
10	Singapore 14		Singapore/Canada 3	Korea: 7

Note 1: Data does not including Hokkien course

Note 2: Does not include data for 2016-18

Table 3: Most common degrees for students taking SOAS Taiwan postgraduate courses

Ranking	2000-2015 (404)	2000-2005 (40)	2005-2010 (122)	2010-2016 (242)
1	MA Chinese Studies (96)	MA Chinese Studies (18)	MA Chinese Studies (96)	MA Taiwan Studies (55)
2	MA Taiwan Studies (76)	MA Pacific Asian Studies (15)	MA Taiwan Studies (21)	MSc Asian Politics (37)
3	MSc Asian Politics (41)	MSc Asian Politics (2)	MA in Global Cinemas and the Transcultural (10)	MA Chinese Studies (30)
4	MA Pacific Asian Studies (41)		MA in Global Media and Postnational Communication (9)	MA Pacific Asian Studies (19)
5	MA in Global Cinemas and the Transcultural (19)		Erasmus (8)	MSc Politics of China (18)
6	MSc Politics of China (18)		MA Pacific Asian Studies (7)	MSc International Politics (10)
7	MSc International Politics (12)		Intercollegiates (3)	MA in Global Cinemas and the Transcultural (9)
8	Erasmus (12)			MSc International Management for China (7)
9	MA in Global Media and Postnational Communication (11)			MA Theory and Practice of Translation (7)
10	MA Japanese Studies (9)			MA Japanese Studies (6)

Note 1: Data does not including Hokkien course and does not include undergraduates.

Note 2: Does not include data for 2016-18

The trends in student numbers taking the SOAS Taiwan Studies courses are shown in Tables 1 to 3. The numbers of students taking Contemporary Taiwan fluctuated, ranging from 12 in its first year to 7 in the final year. One factor was that it was not a core course for any degrees and given the extensive range of course options available on interdisciplinary area studies degrees; there was always a degree of uncertainty on student numbers. The first major change in the teaching programme came in 2005-6 when the Contemporary Taiwan course was replaced with three term-long specialized courses. These were Government and Politics in Taiwan, Society and Culture in Taiwan, and Economic Development of Modern Taiwan. These courses were located in the Politics, China and Inner Asia, and Economics Departments respectively. Thus unlike the original course, they were taught using a more disciplinary approach, so for instance, the Government and Politics course was designed to understand Taiwan's political development through a range of comparative politics theories and frameworks. In addition, the China and Inner Asia Department introduced a year-long Elementary Hokkien course available for both undergraduates and postgraduates, and also a new term-long course Modern Film from Taiwan and the Chinese Diaspora. This expansion of courses made it possible to introduce the MA in Taiwan Studies from 2006-7, the first such postgraduate degree in Europe or North America.<sup>14</sup> Students taking the full degree were required to take all four of the new specialised courses, along with a further yearlong course (or two half units). The Hokkien course was available as an optional course. In addition, students on the MA degree need to write a 10,000 word dissertation on a topic closely related to one of the core Taiwan courses.

The new course structure ran from 2005 through to 2010 and thus represents the second period of the Taiwan teaching programme at SOAS. The recruitment pattern following the introduction of the new specialised courses was mixed. The total number of students taking Taiwan courses showed a significant rise with 40 in the first five years (2000-2005),

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<sup>14</sup> An English language Master of Taiwan Studies was established at National Chengchi University in Taipei at about the same time, but later the degree title was changed to International Master of Asia Pacific Studies. While a number of Taiwanese universities have opened postgraduate programmes, the majority of them specialize in literature and language studies; the only other comprehensive Taiwan Studies degree programme in Taiwan we are aware of is at Chang Jung University.

compared to 122 in the second period (2005-2010). At the level of individual courses though, the picture did not look so promising. Student numbers were particularly poor for the Economics course. In contrast, Modern Film from Taiwan was initially by far the most popular. The low point for the teaching programme came in 2007-8 when two courses did not run and two courses only ran with a single student each.

The MA Taiwan Studies degree has remained a small niche programme. Although there are quite healthy numbers of applications, in the early years students taking the full degree fluctuated between two or none.<sup>15</sup> However, since all the core courses were available on a wide range of other degrees, what mattered was whether sufficient students could be attracted to take Taiwan courses from these other programmes.

The next major change in the SOAS Taiwan teaching programme came following the addition of a Senior Teaching Fellow in Taiwan Studies sponsored by Taiwan's Ministry of Education in 2009-10. This made possible three major areas of expansion. Firstly, from 2010-11 the single term Government and Politics in Taiwan course was replaced by a year-long course Taiwan's Politics and Cross-Strait Relations. This allowed for much greater in-depth coverage of both Taiwan's domestic politics and external relations. This was made a compulsory core course for the MA Taiwan Studies degree and a core course for the new MSc Politics of China degree from 2011-12, and made available on a range of other postgraduate degrees. Secondly, the first undergraduate course was created in 2010-11 titled Taiwan's Political and Economic Development. The year-long-course is based in the Politics Department but was designed like the old Contemporary Taiwan to have quite a broad social science appeal. This co-taught course incorporated political history, domestic politics and external relations, as well as economic development. The third expansion was the creation of a new year-long comparative course North East Asian Politics: Japan, Korea and Taiwan. The first half of the course looks at the three North East Asian democracies using comparative politics frameworks, while in the second term the focus switches to comparative political economy.

From Table 1 to 3 we can see that the newly expanded course structure proved to be very successful. Firstly, if we look at the total number of students in the third period (2010-2016)

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<sup>15</sup> SOAS has tended to receive about 10 MA Taiwan Studies applications per year.

compared to the second (2005-10), we can see a large rise from 122 to 319 students. The new year-long Taiwan Politics and Cross-Strait relations course has developed into one of the most popular courses with 15 taking the course in 2013-14 and 19 in 2017-18 and it also attracts significant numbers of auditing students. The undergraduate course has also been popular, gaining the record for the highest numbers of any Taiwan course with 23 taking the class in 2016-17. Finally, the North East Asian Politics course has proved to be the most popular course on average numbers. What has been especially interesting about this course is that it has attracted students that originally had a focus on Japan or Korea, but by taking the course they became increasingly interested in comparative analysis with Taiwan. There has even been a small increase in the numbers taking the MA degree, with 5 in 2016-17.

Another way we can get a sense of the popularity of the Taiwan courses is to compare their numbers with similar regional disciplinary courses. For example there were 11 students taking Taiwan's Politics and Cross-Strait Relations in 2014-15 and 2015-16, while there were 12 and 14 students taking the domestic politics of China course, and only 4 taking the new Japan politics course. Similarly a comparison of the popular Taiwan film course and the China Film and Theatre course reveals very similar numbers. Naturally there are less students taking MA Taiwan Studies than MA Chinese Studies, however the numbers tend to be similar to those on MA Korean Studies. In other words, if we consider the relative size of Taiwan to China, Korea and Japan, the numbers opting to take Taiwan courses and degree at SOAS is quite impressive.

## **UT Austin**

The Taiwan Studies Programme was formally launched at UT Austin in 2009, as one of several area programs in East and South Asia within the Department of Asian Studies. It contains two distinct components: one at the postgraduate level, the other at the undergraduate level.

### *Postgraduate level*

Historical factors have played a role in shaping the direction in which UT's Taiwan Studies Programme has developed, particularly in relation to its emphasis on doctoral student training. In 1979, when the Taiwan Studies as a whole was still in an embryonic stage, the late Professor Jeannette Faurot organized the first large-scale international symposium on Taiwan literature at UT. This landmark event was followed by four books on Taiwan literature, authored or edited by

UT faculty, and published by prestigious presses in the three ensuing decades. Roughly in the same period, several UT graduates returned to Taiwan, and subsequently emerged as significant players in the rise of Taiwan New Cinema in the 1980s, and in the institutionalization process of Taiwanese literary studies within Taiwan's own academy, a particularly vibrant phenomenon in the post-martial law period.<sup>16</sup> The above has made UT's Asian Studies a "center" of sorts in the sub-field of Taiwanese literary studies in the West.

As luck would have it, the founding of the Taiwan Studies programme at UT coincided with a new search in its host department, and provided a sound justification for the hiring of a second China literature faculty with a strong interest in Taiwan. The Asian Studies Department at UT, therefore, becomes one of the few graduate institutions that places equal weight on China and Taiwan in its study of modern Chinese literature and culture. This shift of focus has been reflected in the creation of the following graduate seminars: "Cultural Formations in Modern Taiwan" (Fall 2009), "Modern Institution of Literature: China and Taiwan" (Spring 2011); "Literary/Cultural Scholarships: Modern China and Taiwan" (Fall 2012, Spring 2018); "Literary Fields: Modern China and Taiwan" (Spring 2014).

The impact of this new orientation has been manifested in a number of concrete ways. First of all, we see this in the student numbers. Before the founding of the Taiwan Studies Programme, there were 3 Ph.D. students at UT specialized in literature and film of Taiwan, and doctoral students working on China-focused topics were twice as many. With strong, better coordinated efforts at recruitment and acquiring funding, 5 new graduate students interested in Taiwan joined the programme in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2015, increasing the total number of Taiwan-focused doctoral students from 3 to 8. A new admission with five-year financial package has just been issued in Spring 2018 to an outstanding applicant proposing to study Taiwan literature. Secondly, conscious efforts have been made to help doctoral students develop original research projects that promise to shed light on significant historical transformations. Two dissertation projects that were completed in 2015 and 2016, for example, dealt with filmmaking in Taiwan's post-New Taiwan Cinema era and the tension-ridden reception of Korean popular culture in Taiwan since the early 2000s. The same big-picture approach underlies research for two other dissertations, evident in their very

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<sup>16</sup> Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao (焦雄屏) and Ray Jing (井迎瑞) in the promotion and archive building of Taiwan New Cinema; and Liou Liang-ya (劉亮雅) and Ying Feng-huang (應鳳凰) in feminist-postcolonialist criticism and bibliographical studies of contemporary Taiwanese literature.

titles: “Rhetoric of the Lyrical: Written Vernacular Chinese and Lyrical Prose Writing in Taiwan, 1960s-1990s” and “The 1990s Gender Progressiveness In The Post-Martial Taiwan.”

Building on its accumulated strength, UT’s Taiwan Studies Programme envisions itself as a training ground for the next generation of scholars in Taiwanese literature and culture.

Judging from the success in the timely completion of Ph.D. degrees (2008, 2015, and 2016; with 2 more dissertation oral defenses scheduled for Spring and Summer of 2018), and the increasing number of high-caliber applicants the programme has been receiving in the last few years, it seems that the programme is on track to achieve this goal.

### Undergraduate level

In 2009, a proposal to establish a Taiwan Studies Track as part of the Asian Studies Major at UT Austin was submitted to different levels of the university bureaucracy (College of Liberal Arts, Executive Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs of the University of Texas System, Faculty Council). The proposal was approved, and an undergraduate degree programme in Taiwan Studies, likely the first of its kind in any place outside of Asia, was officially added to the 2010-2012 Catalogue of the university.

In order to supply the Taiwan Studies majors with sufficient courses to meet their degree requirements,<sup>17</sup> the core faculty of the Taiwan Studies Programme began to actively recruit tenured and tenure-track faculty in various departments at UT to develop new Taiwan-focused courses at the upper-division undergraduate level. The efforts were very well received, resulting in an impressive number of new Taiwan courses being taught in the next ten years. Before 2009, only two Taiwan-focused courses, “Chinese Fiction from Taiwan” and “Taiwan: Colonization, Migration, and Identity,” were regularly taught at UT in every

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<sup>17</sup> The requirements of the degree are summarised as follows:

At least three hours of Taiwanese history.

- A three-hour Asian studies course related to South Asia.
- Asian Studies 378.
- Fifteen additional hours in Asian studies courses related to East Asia as follows:
  - at least six hours of courses related to Taiwan;
  - three hours related to China;
  - three hours related to Japan;
  - three hours of upper-division coursework in Chinese language or in Asian studies related to East Asia

In addition, students must complete two years of Chinese language to fulfil the foreign language requirement. Students should focus on the traditional characters used in Taiwan in these courses.

two or three years.<sup>18</sup> By Spring 2018, however, a total of 29 undergraduate Taiwan courses on 16 different topics have been offered by UT faculty in six different departments (Asian Studies, History, Government, Radio-TV-Film, Art History, and Asian American Studies) from three Colleges (Liberal Arts, Communication, and Fine Arts).<sup>19</sup> The full list of Taiwan courses run between 2009-Spring 2017 is displayed in Table 4 and the most recent courses since Fall 2017 are shown on Table 5.

**Table 4**

**Taiwan Courses at UT-Austin, Fall 2009-Spring 2017**

	Semester/year	Course title	Crossed-listed department
1	Fall 2009	Literature and Film from Taiwan	Asian Studies
2	Fall 2010, Fall 2011, Spring 2014, Spring 2016	Taiwan: Colonization, Migration, and Identity	History, Asian Studies Asian American Studies
3	Fall 2010, Spring 2012	East Asian Auteurs: Hou Hsiao-hsien, Tsai Ming-liang, and Jia Zhangke  (Chinese Auteurs: Hou Hsiao-hsien, Tsai Ming-liang, and Jia Zhangke)	Radio-Television-Film Asian Studies
4	Spring 2011, Fall 2013	Modernization in East Asia: China and Taiwan Compared	History, Asian Studies
5	Spring 2011	Goddesses and Heroines: Images of Women in China and Taiwan	Art History, Asian Studies
6	Fall 2011, Fall 2013	Chinese Fiction from Taiwan	Asian Studies
7	Fall 2011	Envisioning (Post)coloniality: Taiwan and the Cultural Imaginary	Asian Studies
8	Spring 2013, Spring 16	War and Peace in East Asia: China, Japan, and Taiwan	Government, Asian Studies
9	Spring 2013	Global Chinese Literature, Taiwan, Hongkong and US	Asian Studies
10	Fall 2013	Art in Colonial Taiwan	Art History, Asian Studies

<sup>18</sup> Other than these, similar to most other universities, Taiwan was frequently taught at UT as a component of general courses on China or East Asia.

<sup>19</sup> The majority of them taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty members at UT Austin; only 3 courses were taught by Visiting Lecturers and 1 by a Ph.D. candidate.

11	Fall 2013	Chinese Auteurs: Taiwan New Cinema	Radio-Television-Film Asian Studies
12	Spring 2014	Popular Culture: Taiwan and South Korea	Asian Studies
13	Fall 2015	Taiwan: Coloniality/Postcoloniality	Asian Studies
14	Fall 2015	Translating Taiwan Cinema	Radio-Television-Film Asian Studies
15	Fall 2016	State Building in China and Taiwan	Government, Asian Studies
16	Spring 2017	Ethnic Politics in Taiwan and Asia	Government, Asian Studies

**Table 5**

**Taiwan Courses at UT-Austin, Fall 2017- Spring 2018**

	Semester/Year	Course title	Crossed-listed department
1	Fall 2017	Taiwan: Coloniality/Postcoloniality	Asian Studies
2	Fall 2017	Chinese Auteurs: Edward Yang, Tsai Ming-liang, and Jia Zhangke	Radio-Television-Film Studies
3	Fall 2017	State Building in China and Taiwan	Government, Asian Studies
4	Fall 2017	Chinese Fiction from Taiwan	Chinese, Asian Studies
5	Spring 2018	Taiwan & Mexico (tentative title)	Government, Asian Studies
6	Spring 2018	Modernization in East Asia: China and Taiwan Compared	History, Asian Studies



Seven of the topics listed in the tables have been taught multiple times (nos. 2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 13, and 15 in Table 4), typically with growing enrolment figures. In fact, the majority of these courses were fully enrolled at the number proposed by the instructors. By and large, three to four Taiwan-focused courses are offered in every academic year, and the average student enrolment is around 22 (the lowest enrolment figure is 9; the highest 44).

At the outset, there was some apprehension about the sustainability of this model. More specifically, there were concerns about whether the pool of faculty interested in developing Taiwan courses would shrink. Fortunately, this has turned out not to be the case. Efforts at recruiting faculty members to develop and teach new courses on Taiwan have persistently met with enthusiasm. Three more new courses, on the topics of history of food and healing in Taiwan, cross-strait relations, and contemporary Taiwanese media, will be added to the list in the next two or three years. As a result, whereas Taiwan Studies remains a very small degree program—7 students have claimed as Taiwan Studies majors since 2010, and only 3 have already graduated (in 2011, 2012, and 2015)—the number of students who have taken the Taiwan courses is quite large. From Fall 2009 to Spring 2018, a total of 671 undergraduate students at UT have studied some aspects of Taiwan in an extensive, systematic, and in-depth manner in the classroom environment.

### **Comparing Taiwan Teaching Programmes at SOAS and UT Austin**

SOAS and UT Austin have provided two very different models. To make a meaningful comparison of these two teaching programmes, it is necessary to look at not only their structure, institutional status, and trajectory of development, but also the enabling conditions and what they ultimately share in common.

Over a period of 18 years (2000-2018) and three different phases, the Taiwan Programme at SOAS evolved from a single co-taught year-long course to its current range of courses of six postgraduate and two undergraduate modules. Although the overall programme is managed by the Centre of Taiwan Studies, the courses are divided between those based in disciplinary departments and those in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures. Graduates either move on to further studies, or use what they learnt in a wide range of non academic careers such as in the media, think tanks, and government service.

Taiwan Studies Programme at UT developed within a shorter time span (2009-2018). Structurally speaking, it is embedded within the Department of Asian Studies as one of several area programmes (South Asia, Japan, Korea, etc.). The doctoral students in the Programme normally spend six to eight years to complete the degree, and receive “Ph.D. in Asian Cultures and Languages (ACL),” which are “designed for students who intend to pursue a career in scholarly research and university teaching on Asia.” Undergraduate students of the Programme, upon graduation, receive a BA in Asian Studies, with a Taiwan Studies concentration. They can declare the major in any year of their college programme, as long as they fulfill the course and language requirements (see footnote no. 17). Nearly all Taiwan Studies students are double-majors or even triple-majors (claiming multiple majors is extremely common for UT undergraduate students).

Evidently, the fundamental differences between these two programmes have a great deal to do with their individual academic contexts. In SOAS the teaching focus has mainly been on students on one year MA/MSc postgraduate programmes. By contrast, at Austin, as is the case in many North American universities, MA programmes have become increasingly a bridge between BA and Ph.D., providing additional time for students to make career decisions, while greater resources are poured into undergraduate and doctoral programmes. It is remarkable; however, despite the fact that they are targeting at different levels of student population, these two teaching programmes share some significant common features. On the one hand, the numbers of majors in both programmes are relatively small. On the other hand, both have achieved impressive accomplishments in offering a large number of high-quality courses on Taiwan, and demonstrated strong capability in organizing or facilitating public events and academic activities about Taiwan. The latter point will be further addressed in the next section. The former claim is readily supported by the total numbers of students who have taken the Taiwan courses offered in these two programs: 640 at SOAS (from 2000 to 2018), and 701 at UT Austin (from 2009 to 2018).

Here, again, different environmental factors set in. Course offered at SOAS have tended to be permanent, run on an annual basis and generally are taught by the same faculty each year. At UT Austin, because the Taiwan courses are “oursourced” to faculty in various departments and colleges on campus, the inventory is much larger (16 different topics so far), the contents more diverse, and there is an inherent unpredictability in the curricular pattern (only a few “core courses” are offered on a regular basis). Such differences are easily explained by the

institutional context. Whereas it takes considerably longer time to get new courses officially approved in the UK higher education system, it is extremely common for university faculty in the US to propose different course topics on a yearly basis. In addition, at UT Austin, because its course content pertains to global culture, the Taiwan course can be used to fulfil a general elective requirement for undergraduate students in most disciplinary departments.<sup>20</sup> There are also incentives for faculty members to offer such courses: they can enrich individual scholars' teaching portfolios, while providing opportunity for them to explore new areas of research. As a matter of fact, several faculty members have pursued a specific Taiwan-related research either during or after teaching the course.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the consistently robust enrolments of these Taiwan courses are positively perceived by the departments in which they are originated.<sup>22</sup>

### III. General Contributions

As argued in the foregoing section, besides from the training of future scholars in Taiwanese literature at UT, the large number of solid, college-level Taiwan courses that the Taiwan Studies Programmes at SOAS and UT Austin have continued to offer ought to be considered their most significant contribution. Its impact may even outweigh that of their MA and BA degree programmes *per se*. As all students who have taken these courses, whether as majors or not, are likely to spread the seeds of knowledge about Taiwan after they graduate.

Another tangible contribution is the vibrant communities these two programmes have created through organizing or facilitating Taiwan-related public events and academic activities. Such communities raise the visibility of Taiwan at both local and translocal levels; and they are inevitably products of continual efforts over multiple years, an effect that is difficult to attain by institutions that only host Taiwan-related events during the award periods of short-term grants.

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<sup>20</sup> The Taiwan courses can easily be identified as carrying the “Global Culture” flag, one of the six “Skills and Experience” flags used to mark courses recognized by the university as eligible for meeting the elective hours requirements.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Yun-chianh Sena, a Chicago-trained pre-modern Chinese art historian, has proposed a new book project on “Reversing Colonialism: Art and Identity in Minnan Taiwan under Japan” after teaching two courses on related subjects for the Taiwan Studies Programme. Lu Xiaobo used the course development grant to collect data for his course “State Building: China and Taiwan” and worked on a book manuscript on a closely related subject.

<sup>22</sup> While these Taiwan courses are always cross-listed with the Department of Asian Studies, they are considered to be “originated” in the departments to which the instructors belong.

Finally, it is particularly noteworthy that, despite their tiny numbers, the core faculty in both of these Taiwan Studies Programmes have produced an impressive number of monographs, series, readers, and sourcebooks while dedicating themselves to the programmes' day-to-day operations. That many of these publications have been adopted as textbooks at universities worldwide is certainly an important contribution to the field.

### **Academic Events Programme**

#### SOAS

The distinguishing point about SOAS has been the way that the events programme has been designed to complement and support the Taiwan teaching programme. Firstly, the Taiwan Studies Seminar Series runs with approximately weekly events throughout the regular terms. As much as possible the seminar themes will be closely related to the core courses, so politics, social, cultural, modern history, and film related topics dominate the seminar speaker themes. Moreover, the public seminar events tend to be held on the days that Taiwan teaching is concentrated on. A similar approach was adopted with the Understanding Taiwan through Film and Documentaries screening series. The themes of the screened films again tend to be closely linked to the core courses. Not only will the students be encouraged to join in the seminar and screening Q&A sessions but also these events will feature in the next class discussions. In the first class at the start of the academic year new students are informed that that over the year they will meet many of the key authors of the field and from their course reading lists. SOAS also tries to make sure that some of the events programme is linked to current affairs. For example, there has been a long series of pre and post election roundtables. Similarly, SOAS has tried to attract politicians and cultural figures with practical experience to come as speakers and interact with students. For example, SOAS has organized a series of closed door sessions where both serving and out of office government ministers have direct interaction with students. Similarly, numerous film makers have been invited to London to discuss their work following the film screenings.

Apart from the term time seminars, SOAS has aimed to run one annual conference each year on a different theme, but again the expectation is that they will be closely linked to one of the core courses. Many of the conferences have been small publication oriented workshops, but SOAS has tended to allow the postgraduate students to join these. For instance, when SOAS organized a conference on Taiwan's social movements that included scholars and activists in 2014, postgraduate students were invited to join. After joining the conference a number of

students went on to develop their dissertation topics on this social movement theme and some even used interview data from the conference participants. One particularly influential conference was the hosting of the World Congress of Taiwan at SOAS in 2015. This allowed our students the opportunity to engage with most of the key figures in the field.

A key element of the SOAS postgraduate programme is the research dissertation. One way the Taiwan programme tries to help students prepare for this is to encourage them to join the MA panel at the EATS conference. For example, six of the SOAS Taiwan Studies students were selected to present their preliminary research project at the EATS conferences in Poland (2015) and Switzerland (2018). Joining such a conference allows students to not only get feedback on their research design but also the experience of being on the same agenda as the leading Taiwan studies scholars in Europe and to meet Taiwan Studies students from other universities. The Centre follows this up with the free annual SOAS Taiwan Studies Summer School. This is normally a four day event with a series of lectures and student research presentations. Students planning to do their dissertations on a Taiwan topic are encouraged to give brief presentations and will receive feedback from the teaching team as well as their SOAS and non SOAS peers.

### *UT Austin*

While with less frequency as compared to the weekly events sponsored by the SOAS Taiwan Studies Programme, major symposia, workshops, and film festivals were organized by UT's Taiwan Studies Programme throughout the last decade, which brought to UT campus more than thirty US, Asia and Europe based scholars who specialized in Taiwanese literary studies, as well as such distinguished writers as Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇), Huang Chun-ming (黃春明), Chu Tien-wen (朱天文), and Liu Ke-hsiang (劉克襄) and film critic/producer Peggy Hsiung-ping Chiao. These activities were closely tied to the literature-focused graduate sector of UT's Taiwan Studies Programme, and served to keep its doctoral students abreast of the latest cultural and theoretical discourses in the field.

Unlike SOAS, however, UT does not have a Centre of Taiwan Studies. As a result, a lot of public academic events on Taiwan have been organized by members of the extended Taiwan Studies team across campus. A prominent example is Prof. Lin Tse-min in the Government Department, whose "Taiwan and Asia Series," supported by a grant from Taiwan's Ministry

of Foreign Affairs, has brought to UT distinguished scholars and public figures in Taiwan's political scene.

In retrospect, the major international conference "Taiwan Literature in East Asia: Methodology and Comparative Framework" that the Programme organized in June 2011 was a landmark event. It ushered in a period of steady increase in Taiwan-related activities on UT campus, initiated by a network of UT faculty coalesced around the Programme and interested in promoting Taiwan studies. These activities were sponsored by multiple sponsoring agents, both externally and internally, which included the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, Taiwan's Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and National Central Library, and UT's own China Endowment, Institute of Historical Studies, Perry-Castañeda Library, Graduate Studies Office, School of Fine Arts, and the Julian Suez Excellence Endowment in Chinese. In all these cases, the Taiwan Studies Programme played an essential facilitating role, supplying these events with interested and knowledgeable audience and participants, as well as personnel support.

## **Publications for Teaching**

### SOAS

A further distinguishing point of the SOAS programme has been the attempt to promote publications that will be useful for teaching on its Taiwan courses. For example, a number of Taiwan conferences have led to book publications that were widely used on SOAS courses such as Chang, Fell and Klöter edited *What has Changed: Taiwan Before and after the Change in Ruling Parties* and the Ash, Garver and Prime edited *Taiwan's Democracy: Economic and Political Challenges*. The establishment of the Routledge Research on Taiwan book series, edited by the CTS Director Dafydd Fell, has further contributed to promoting publications of such teaching relevant books. For instance, his *Government and Politics in Taiwan* is the core textbook for two of the SOAS courses, while other books in the series such as Schubert and Damm's *Taiwanese Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* are also used extensively on SOAS courses. Another such teaching related publication has been the Hokkien textbook compiled over a decade by SOAS Professor Bernhard Fuehrer with Yang

Hsiu-fang (楊秀芳).<sup>23</sup> This is now being used for the first time after SOAS reintroduced the course in 2015-16.<sup>24</sup>

#### UT Austin

Several books on modern Taiwanese literature published by UT faculty in decades preceding the Taiwan Studies Programme—Carver and Chang’s edited *Bamboo Shoots after the Rain: Contemporary Stories by Women Writers of Taiwan* and *Chang’s Literary Culture in Taiwan: Martial Law to Market Law*—have regularly appeared in reading lists for college-level courses dealing with literature written in Chinese. This tradition has been maintained since the Programme’s establishment. *The Columbia Sourcebook of Literary Taiwan*, which makes available to English readers for the first time many useful research materials from the literary history of colonial and contemporary Taiwan, for example, is co-edited by the Director of the Programme, Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang; and *A Passage to China: Literature, Loyalty, and Colonial Taiwan* (Harvard East Asian Studies, 2017) is co-edited/authored by another member of the Programme, Tsai Chien-hsin.

#### **IV. What Are the Winning Strategies?**

Can we view the SOAS and UT Austin Taiwan Studies teaching programmes as successful?

At its most basic level the fact that the programmes have not only survived (unlike many other institutions that stopped offering Taiwan courses after a few trials) but also progressively expanded their size and scope, is an achievement. The numbers of students taking courses in both places have increased over time, with very positive student feedback. What is more, evidences suggest that considerable recognition has been given to both programmes. The founder of the SOAS Taiwan programme, Professor Robert Ash, has been awarded the Prize of the French Taiwanese Cultural Foundation (2008) and the ROC Friendship Medal of Diplomacy (2012) for his contribution to the field. The SOAS Taiwan teaching team has come second in the University Director’s Teaching Prize and is nominated on an annual basis. Doctoral students at UT Austin have been awarded prestigious fellowships, which included Fulbright Scholarship, Chiang Ching-kuo Dissertation

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<sup>23</sup> Bloom 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Fuehrer 2016.

Fellowship, and the Harrington Fellowships. One of these students has been elected in 2016 as the President of the North American Taiwan Studies Association (NATSA). In a 2014 statement prepared for External Review the Chair of the Asian Studies Department wrote: “our Taiwan Studies doctoral program is unique and has no real external competition.” That over the past few years the Programme has increasingly attracted top-notch graduate students as well as Visiting Scholars may serve as testimonial to this claim.

There are, needless to say, some inherent constraints to all Taiwan Studies programmes. As previously pointed out, in spite of their structural differences, Taiwan Studies Programmes at SOAS and UT Austin share something in common in their general contributions to the field; and the same can be said about the strategies both programmes have adopted to overcome those constraints.

### **Securing External Funding**

One of the most fundamental challenges for all Taiwan studies programmes around the world has been short-term funding. SOAS and UT Austin have been fortunate to have enjoyed continuous external funding since the start of their programmes in 1999 and 2009 respectively. This funding has been mostly in three year funding terms and has covered both academic events and teaching projects. Such long-term funding was particularly valuable in the initial phases of the programmes, as without such external funding it would have been harder to convince the university administration and the departmental curricular committees to approve the opening of niche appeal degrees and courses.

For the SOAS programme, the external funding has been important in resisting pressures to cut courses with low student numbers. Such challenges emerged at the time when a new course structure was introduced after 2005, as there were a number of years when some course numbers were especially low. It takes time for courses to become well known among students and the school as a whole. Thus without external funding some Taiwan courses could have been cut soon after their initial introduction. Instead, we have seen how courses such as in the SOAS Politics Department have grown in popularity over time. While in many universities Taiwan courses often are run on an irregular basis, with the exception of Elementary Hokkien, SOAS has always run its courses on an annual basis.<sup>25</sup> Thus a key factor in its ability to run courses annually has been long-term funding and this has enabled

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<sup>25</sup> The only other exception was 2007-8 when SOAS did not run Society and Culture in Taiwan.

awareness of courses to be raised. While SOAS relied mainly on Ministry of Foreign Affairs funding in the first decade, it was the introduction of the Ministry of Education (MoE) funded Senior Teaching Fellow in 2009 that was critical in enabling the programme to expand radically. Nine years later as SOAS is coming to the end of the third MoE funding term, it is able to consider course expansion at a time when there is significant school-wide pressure to cut courses.<sup>26</sup>

The Taiwan Studies Programme at UT Austin has also received external funding from the MoE in Taiwan since 2009, and it is now in the last year of the third three-year funding period (2015-2018). The majority of the undergraduate Taiwan courses at UT have benefited directly from this funding, either through its Visiting Lecturer programme during its second term (2012 -2015), or more importantly from the course development grants it has enabled the Programme to offer to faculty interested in designing and teaching new Taiwan courses. These grants have helped faculty in various departments of UT who are originally not Taiwan specialists to conduct necessary research for developing new Taiwan-focused courses. In addition, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, UT Austin adopted draconian measures to downsize the graduate programmes in the Liberal Arts College, it was also this external funding that helped the Taiwan Studies Programme to offer partial student financial aid to relieve this pressure.

As the Taiwan Studies Programme at UT must share the staff and accounting assistance with five or six other programs in its host department, UT agrees to offer one course relief per year for its Director, allowing her to free up some time to undertake the administrative duties. It is also important to note, matching funds have been a condition for the award of the MoE funding, and UT has from the outset agreed to support one to two graduate students in the Taiwan Studies Programme with either TA-ships or other types of university fellowships. Securing such “cost-share” agreement from the host institution is undoubtedly a precondition for the long term funding that makes possible the survival of UT’s Taiwan Studies Programme.

### **Sharing Resources Internally**

A serious challenge for all Taiwan studies programmes is human resources. Most Taiwan programmes rely heavily on a single individual; some of these individuals are even employed

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<sup>26</sup> Other similar niche programmes have been less successful at SOAS. For instance, Georgian and Armenian programmes have been phased out.

on a part-time or on a short term (sometimes even annual) contract.<sup>27</sup> Even today at SOAS only one member of the team is employed full time to work on Taiwan specific projects. At UT Austin, both faculty members in the Taiwan Studies Programme are at the same time the main (and only) China specialists in the Department of Asian Studies, and have the responsibilities of teaching required China courses and supervising Chinese graduate students. With such a small core team there are naturally limits on what can be covered in terms of teaching and dissertation supervision. Both institutions have developed a number of strategies to keep the academic coverage on Taiwan as comprehensive as possible; some aspects of these strategies are strikingly similar.

One method the Taiwan Studies programme at SOAS has adopted is to bring in more colleagues that are employed at SOAS and have a Taiwan research interest to become more involved in the programme activities and potentially bring Taiwan into their teaching. For example, a number of the Taiwan studies team are tenured faculty that contributes to one or more of the Taiwan courses. After a number of years at SOAS, a colleague in the Law School introduced a new postgraduate course “Law, Rights and Society in Taiwan” in 2016-17.

As previously discussed, the majority of Taiwan courses at UT have been taught by faculty in departments other than Asian Studies, where the Taiwan Studies Programme is housed. The situation is therefore fundamentally similar to that at SOAS, except that SOAS has a more permanent inventory of Taiwan courses than UT, where only three core Taiwan courses are taught regularly every two or three years. This strategy seems to yield similar benefits as well. By involving those colleagues in the teaching activities of the Taiwan programme, an expanded team is formed. In the case of UT, some of these faculty also serve on the Ph.D. committees of students in the Programme, others, such as Madeline Hsu and Lin Tse-min, have taken initiatives in applying for grants and organizing Taiwan-related events. By and by, a Taiwan-centred community has come into existence on both the UT campus and SOAS.

### **Integration into Existing Academic Structures**

To maintain healthy enrolments of its Taiwan courses, a key lesson the SOAS programme has learnt has been the importance of integrating the Taiwan courses into a variety of disciplinary and regional area studies programmes. For example, a major reason why the SOAS Taiwan film course has been such consistent performer has been that in addition to

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<sup>27</sup> This is a feature at a number of Taiwan Studies programmes in Europe.

area studies students, it has also attracted students on film studies, literature and critical media degrees. This has meant that even when area studies degrees have had poor years, the film course still performed well. In contrast, the Economic Development course was not integrated into any Economics Department programmes and thus struggled to attract consistently when relying on area studies students. Even more useful has been where courses have been made either core or compulsory courses on degree programmes. In addition to the compulsory courses on the MA Taiwan Studies, a number of courses have become core courses in the post 2010 era. For instance, a factor in why Taiwan's Politics and Cross-Strait Relations has had a higher and more stable intake is its core course status on the new MSc Politics of China. Similarly, the North East Asian Politics core has benefitted by being a core course on the MSc Asian Politics degree programme.

In this respect, there are key differences between SOAS and UT Austin. As one of several area programmes within the Department of Asian Studies, UT's Taiwan Studies Programme is by definition integrated in its host department's institutional structure. To a large extent, the flourish of its postgraduate sector can be attributed to the nourishment it receives from other East Asian and South Asian faculty in the Department. The factors that affect the undergraduate enrolments are not the same as those at SOAS, either. As mentioned earlier, Taiwan courses meet an essential elective requirement (that of Global Culture) for UT's undergraduate students. In addition, as these courses are cross-listed in both the instructors' home departments (History, Government, RTF, etc.) and the Department of Asian Studies, they are able to attract students from both academic units. Except for one of the core courses, "Chinese Fiction from Taiwan," which sets a low closing limit for enrolment because of its language component, and a couple of courses taught by Visiting Scholars that were added to the Schedule at a relatively late time, enrolments for the majority of the Taiwan courses at UT have always been at a satisfactory level, with 20 to 40 students per class; and some courses are even closed for registration before the semester begins. It may be argued that, instead of being integrated into existing degree programs, like what is done at SOAS, the Taiwan courses at UT benefit from the overall academic structure of the university and its special emphasis on Global Culture as part of the general degree requirements.

### **Maintaining Integrity and Overcoming Scepticism**

The post-Cold War world order has rendered obsolete the old types of ideological wars Taiwanese government used to wage on the international stage. With the arrival of the age of the Internet, moreover, the ability of any player to control—let alone to monopolize—the ways messages are received has been drastically reduced, and the emphasis has increasingly been shifted to the scale of attention one is able to draw for one’s messages. With all the benefits of an open society and a realistic understanding of the inherent disadvantages of a moderate-sized political and economic entity, Taiwanese government seems to have been pursuing a public diplomacy that focuses more on branding Taiwan on the cultural front rather than pushing specific political agendas. This has made the work of Western academics interested in promoting Taiwan as an academic subject less hampered by the kind of political interference that has been associated with the Confucius Institutes established on campuses by the PRC. In sum, it is the quality and relevance of these courses, built upon objective stance, intellectual depth, and relevance to contemporary world that allow courses offered by SOAS and UT Austin to effectively compete with the ever growing number of courses vying for student attention on university campuses.

When academic institutions accept funding from a foreign government, however, there are always complicated implications.<sup>28</sup> An important foundation for the healthy growth of the SOAS and UT Austin Taiwan Programmes is their ability to safeguard intellectual integrity despite reliance on external funding. Both programmes have adhered to academic principles of neutrality and avoided identification with any particular political camp in Taiwan, and these efforts have been successful. In addition, participating parties, including the diplomatic agencies that handle the MoE and MFA grants, have all carefully observed established conventions and proper protocols without crossing the line that separates “soft power” efforts from explicit acts of propaganda.

Owing to the fact that the Taiwan Studies Programme at SOAS is relatively more social-science oriented compared to that at UT Austin, which features a heavy humanities focus, the ways these two programmes approach this issue are also dissimilar to some extent.

#### *SOAS: Balanced, Non-partisan Stance*

Taiwan is a multi-party democracy. A key feature of such a political system is changes in ruling parties. The SOAS programme was started under the KMT government in 1999 and

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<sup>28</sup> The controversies surrounding Confucius Institute is a case in point. See Hughes 2014.

saw its first significant expansion under the DPP government in 2006. Given that the KMT returned to power in 2008 and had a reputation for reverting to cultural and education policies that prioritise Chinese culture, there were concerns that overseas Taiwan studies would lose funding. In fact the next major expansion in the SOAS teaching programme and the establishment of the UT Austin degree came after KMT returned to power in 2008. Thus a key task for any Taiwan studies programme relying on Taiwanese funding has been to maintain political neutrality.

Taiwanese academics are often labelled as belonging to one or other of Taiwan's political camps and such categorization is often applied to overseas scholars working on Taiwan. Given that SOAS has tended to have a large number of political science courses, maintaining a non-partisan reputation has been quite challenging. To run a serious politics focused set of courses requires hosting academic speakers and politicians associated with the main political camps in Taiwan. The way SOAS has dealt with this has been to make sure to prioritise serious academic speakers in the field of Taiwan's political studies and that over any given year there is a good balance of speakers from all major political camps in Taiwan. In other words, it is important that students are exposed to a wide variety of perspectives on Taiwan.

#### *UT Austin: Contextual/Comparative Approaches*

Since UT Austin's doctoral program in Taiwan studies is humanities oriented, the importance of historical lineage, cultural tradition, and artistic genres and conventions outweigh that of some other factors constituting modern society and nation-state. However, it still finds itself confronted with issues ensuing from the shifting disciplinary identity of "Taiwan studies." For historical reasons, the boundary between Chinese and Taiwanese literary studies was rather blurred in North American universities before China opened its doors in the 1980. Prior to that, writers and literary trends from contemporary Taiwan tended to be indiscriminately labelled as "Chinese," at times even receiving greater academic attention than those on mainland China. In recent decades, however, there has been increasing awareness that literary traditions in Taiwan ought to be more appropriately studied separately, within its own contexts. Research directions of literary faculty at UT's Taiwan Studies Programme fully reflect this awareness. Trained as comparative literature scholars, they are interested in finding conceptual frameworks that put into better perspective the intricate literary relations between China and Taiwan. Chang's Introduction to *The Columbia Sourcebook of Literary Taiwan*, for example, emphatically calls for a comparative approach

that situates Taiwan within the East Asian context; whereas the crux of Tsai's new book, *A Passage to China: Literature, Loyalism, and Colonial Taiwan*, is precisely concerned with lineage and interconnectedness as they were manifested in literature from Taiwan's Japanese period.

Echoing their teachers' research directions, doctoral students in the UT Taiwan programme also tend to highlight the situatedness of cultural Taiwan in their dissertation projects. One of them explores the stylistic transformation of prose genres in contemporary Taiwan, tracing its origins to developments in China's Republican era. Another is interested in language politics in recent cinema of the Sinophone world, using the recent revival of localist comedies in Taiwan as a point of departure. A dissertation project that has recently been completed deals with the consumption of "Koreanness" among the Taiwanese populace caught in between the Korean wave and competition in the semi-conductor industry. As future scholars, they promise to carry on theoretical and methodological explorations undertaken by faculty and students in the Taiwan programme at UT Austin.

Faculty teaching the wide-range of undergraduate Taiwan courses at UT Austin started with such topics as literature, film, migration and identity formation, post-coloniality, and gender issues, but quickly expanded to include social sciences topics, particularly in the field of political science. Notably, rather than automatically subsuming Taiwan under the umbrella of China Studies--and echoing their colleagues in literature--these scholars often adopt a comparative approach: juxtaposing Taiwan's democratization and economic developments with those in China, or situating Taiwan within the regional or cross-regional contexts. Viewing Taiwan through the lens of such diverse branches of knowledge yield fresh insights and broadens the students' horizons. This fruitful use of comparative approaches at UT has been very similar to that experienced at SOAS following its introduction of its comparative North East Asian Politics course.

## **V. Conclusion: Future Challenges and Prospects**

In this paper we have shown how both programmes have found key strategies to not only survive but thrive in a competitive and hostile academic environment for niche programmes. Despite this success, we argue there are a number of issues that will continue to challenge such programmes in the future.

Firstly, as we have shown external funding represents both an opportunity and challenge. Such funding has allowed us to develop programmes that would not normally be considered viable in today's financially constrained university environment. However, term-based external funding that is reviewed either annually or every few years without guaranteed renewal poses huge challenges to teaching programmes which require lengthy application process but also to faculty and student retention. For instance, short term teaching contracts are fine as an entry level position, but such faculty will be put off staying due to the lack of tenure track in such positions. Or, as was touched upon earlier, a gap of one semester when the Taiwan grant award period at UT Austin shifted from the calendar year to the academic year in 2014-2015, caused two students to withdraw from the Taiwan Studies degree track for lacking a required course to graduate. For any programme to be institutionalised it will require securing of predictable long-term funding or greater financial self-sufficiency through better student recruitment, otherwise even relatively mature programmes as at SOAS or UT Austin could be under threat if their key figure leaves or retires. In both institutions, teaching programmes were reliant both on short term posts but also tenured faculty who contributed some of their teaching to Taiwan courses. In the latter cases, there is a degree of good fortune in tenured faculty being willing to bring Taiwan into their teaching when they were not hired specifically to teach Taiwan courses and may well be pressured to shift their teaching focus into more financially profitable subjects. When such faculty leave or retire, it is unlikely that they will be replaced by someone that will happen to have a Taiwan focus and so their courses can come under threat.

A final challenge for Taiwan programmes is administration. Running extensive academic events programmes require very time consuming administrative costs. External funders are generally reluctant to subsidise administration. However, for universities administering niche regional centre activities is also not a major priority. Therefore the administration burden tends to fall on academics that are already under a range of regular administration, teaching and publication pressures. This means that in the long-term it will be hard to sustain such high levels of academic event programmes without institutionalised administrative support.

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