

University Senate

Proposed: March 5, 2010

Adopted: March 5, 2010

without dissent

**RESOLUTION TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EASTERN AND ASIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
TO
DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EASTERN, SOUTH ASIAN, AND AFRICAN STUDIES**

WHEREAS the Department of Middle Eastern and Asian Languages and Cultures has undergone significant changes since 2005, leading to an increase in the number of its faculty as well as an expansion and changed regional orientation of its scholarly research activities, and

WHEREAS the regional expertise in the Department encompasses South Asia and now Africa, and

WHEREAS the Department's earlier primary focus on languages and cultures has broadened to include increased attention to the social sciences as well, especially comparative colonialism, nationalism, and political theory, and

WHEREAS the Department will further benefit from its established interactions with the three regional Institutes for the Middle East, Asia, and Africa,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the name of the Department be changed to the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies to reflect its changed orientation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be forwarded to the Trustees for their approval.

Proponent: Education Committee

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF MIDDLE EAST & ASIAN LANGUAGES & CULTURES

Professor Nicholas Dirks
Vice President
Low Library
Columbia University

1 November 2009

Dear Nick,

I am writing to you to formally request a change in the name of our department.

The Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures had been expanded in the last few years in two ways – in terms of faculty and the research interests of its members. It was formerly primarily a department for the study of the Middle eastern Languages and Cultures, with a strong emphasis regionally on the Middle east, and correspondingly on Islamic cultures. In the last few years, the department has had numerous appointments in South Asia and Africa – with plans to make further appointments to strengthen these areas. Two senior appointments in Middle east and Islamic studies have also been made; but these two scholars work on Law and Social Sciences. Overall, the intellectual profile of the Department has been substantially changed, without sacrificing its conventional strength as a leading department on Middle Eastern and Islamic studies. In view of these changes, the department has been reflecting on the need for a change in its name – to reflect more accurately both the regional spread of its interests and the scholarly research fields of its members. In the last two semesters, the department had wide-ranging discussions about its name change, considering various suggestions. In its last meeting the Executive Committee of the Department decided unanimously to suggest to the University that its name should be changed to Department of Middle eastern, South Asian and African Studies. This would reflect with accuracy the specific regions in which the department now has expertise: the change from 'languages and cultures' to the more general 'Studies' is meant to reflect the fact that apart from scholars working on languages and literatures in these regions, it has others whose primary fields of interest are in the social sciences and history.

I hope the University will accept this name change, and allow us to formally introduce the new name.

With best wishes,



Sudipta

Sudipta Kaviraj
Chair, Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures
Columbia University.