

Syllabus for History/EA 255: East Asian Civilization

Professor: Viren Murthy (vmurthy2@wisc.edu)

Meeting Times: Tuesday-Thursday 4:00pm-5:15 pm in room Humanities 1111

Office Hours: Wednesdays 5:35 to 6:35pm and Thursday 5:20-6:20pm

Office: Humanities 4108

TA: Baiyi Du (baiyi.du@wisc.edu)

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the political, intellectual and cultural transformations in East Asia from ancient times to the present. We will draw on resources from the disciplines of history, political science, anthropology and international relations to examine the changes taking place in this region, often referred to as East Asia.

Throughout the course, we will examine why and to what extent it makes sense to think of East Asia as having a single cultural, political and economic dynamic. At different times, the area has been seen to be unified based on different characteristics, such as Confucianism and Chinese writing system, tribute system, trade, Buddhism and numerous other factors. We will study each of these aspects and understand how people of the region themselves grasped their identity, as well as question the benefits and disadvantages of thinking about East Asia as a geographical entity today. We will keep the above questions in mind as we tackle world historical themes such as the formation of the Chinese state, the emergence of writing and literature throughout the region and the rise of revolution and hopes for radical change that became a major historical force especially during the twentieth century.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will understand in depth a major geographical region of the world, one that is becoming increasingly prominent in recent years.
2. Students will study how regions and geographical boundaries are imagined differently in various historical periods.
3. The lectures and the class assignments will encourage students to analyze writings about history and construct arguments about East Asia.
4. Students will also learn about how interdisciplinary thinking can help conceive problems in new ways. For example, by examining how political ideologies change through time, students will be able to analyze politics and philosophy historically. At the same time, by studying how people wrote history in different epochs for different purposes, students will grasp the political implications of writing history.

Accommodations for Students with Disability

Please notify the instructor during the first week of the semester if you have a documented requirement for accommodation in this course. If you have any questions

about this or require any assistance, feel free to contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center at 263-2741.

Credit Hours and Policy

This is a 4-credit course and there will be the equivalent of 4 hours per week instruction (each 50 minute segment of lecture and discussion counts as one hour according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour of lecture. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for exams for this class.

Academic Misconduct:

We deal with academic misconduct severely. Papers with any plagiarized content will receive an "F" with no chance for a rewrite. If you directly copy more than five words in a row without citing their source, or if you include interpretations and conclusions that are not your own without citing their source, you are committing plagiarism even if you paraphrase. These principles must guide you whether your source is from printed or electronic sources and whether an author's name is listed or not. Chat GTP and other AI related sources should likewise not be used without citation.

Requirements:

Participation: Coming to class/discussion session, paying attention to lectures/discussions, writing reading responses: 15%

Quizzes: 20%

Mid-Term Exam: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

Paper: 15%

Grading Scale:

90-100 A

86-89 AB

78-85 B

74-77 BC

67-74 C

60-67 D

Below 60 F

Assignments, Quizzes and Exams:

The content of this class is organized around Tuesday and Thursday lectures. You are expected to come to class and complete the assignments, which the instructor or the TA will check.

Participate in the discussion sections with the TA. This is part of your participation grade.

You will be expected to post based on the readings and reflect on what you have been learning. Each post should be approximately 250 words and is an important part of your grade. These posts are due on every Monday and Wednesday by 5pm.

There are two quizzes, two exams and one paper in this class. The quizzes will be short answer, true/false or multiple choice and done online. The mid-term exam will be an in-class exam combining short answer and essay questions and the final exam will be a cumulative exam, which will consist of essay questions. They consist of open questions, which should give students an opportunity to express what they have learned over the semester. The questions for this exam will be given to you in advance, and you will write the answers in class.

All students will write a paper, (5-7 pages, 10-15 pages for honors, Times Roman Font 12, double space) on a topic of your choice. Below I list some possibilities, but am open to any topic that is related to East Asia:

How did Confucianism change when it was introduced into Japan and Korea?
What was Laozi's critique of Confucianism? How would you respond to this critique?

How would you think about the contemporary Chinese or Japanese economic and political policies historically?

Why does Japan still have an Emperor System? What is its function and how did it change during the 20th Century?

Compare the history of women in China, Japan and Korea during the 20th Century.

What were the origins of the Korean War?

The North Korean economy seemed to be doing well during the 1950s, what caused this to change later, after the 1970s?

Notice that each of the above topic poses a question to which there might be different answers. You are encouraged to choose your own topic, but there must be something controversial about your subject. In other words, people should be able to disagree with your position, which will require you to formulate an argument. When you formulate a thesis make sure you consider whether someone could disagree with it. It is only then that your thesis is controversial and worthy of a sustained argument.

Students are encouraged conduct some research on primary sources for this paper, but the bulk of the project can be based on secondary works, i.e, books and articles about the topic, many of which you will read for class. The secondary sources should help you find

your position, by asking simple questions, such as do you agree with the author's position? Why or why not? In many cases, the discussion questions that the instructor provides during the lectures could also serve as a springboard for a paper. The instructor will elaborate more about the paper in a lecture. It is also highly advised that students consult the TA or the instructor as they are developing their ideas for the paper.

Extra Credit Assignments:

In addition to the above assignments, this class offers a unique opportunity to learn outside of class and receive extra-credit points. The extra-credit assignments require listening to specific talks and writing responses to them. The instructor and the TA will announce which lectures can receive extra-credit. The responses should be approximately 500 words and should accomplish three things: 1) They should state what the main point of the speaker was and how it relates to some of the themes discussed in class. 2) The responses should explain how the speakers defended or supported their respective arguments or main points. 3) Students should give reasons why they agree or disagree with the speaker. Each extra credit assignment is worth up to 2 or 3 points, depending on the level of difficulty. These points will be added to the student's total score at the end of the semester and so the extra credit assignments can make a significant impact on one's grade.

Required Texts:

Charles Holcombe, *A History of East Asia: From the Origins to the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025 (third edition). The book will be made available to you by the University Bookstore in some form.

Other readings will be available on the Canvas.

Readings are an essential part of the learning experience. Please do the readings before you come to class.

Tentative Schedule:

(Instructor may alter dates and readings during the semester)

Week 1 Introduction: What is East Asia and Beginning of

Jan. 20: Introduction to the Course: Defining A Region
Holcombe 1-12

Jan. 22: East Asian Writing Systems: Reflections on a Debate
John De Francis, *Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy*, Chapter 3

I. Pre-modern East Asia

Week 2 The Formative Era, Philosophical Classics

Jan. 27: Confucianism
Holcombe 31-45
Confucius, *The Analects*,

Jan. 29. Daoism
D. C. Lau Trans., 59-80
Lao Zi, Tao Te Ching (Daode jing), D. C. Lau Trans., 57-87
Chuang Tsu (Zhuangzi), pp. 23-50, 96-111

Week 3 The Unification of China and the Early Japan and Korea

Feb. 3: Qin Emperor's Unification and the Age of Cosmopolitanism-up to Tang
Holcombe pp. 45-74
Jia Yi "Faults of the Qin"
Yuri Pines, "The Messianic Emperor: A Look at the Qin's Place in China's History"

Feb. 5: Early Korean Kingdoms and Yamato Japan
Holcombe 84-96
Farris, *Japan to 1600*, 1-27

Week 4 Early Buddhism and the Sui-Tang Unification

Feb. 10: Early East Asia and the Spread of Buddhism
Holcombe, 74-84
Robert Buswell, "Thinking about Korean Buddhism"

Feb. 12: Documentary on Tang Dynasty
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uW09R7hqG8>
Quiz 1 given online by 5:15 pm due by 11 pm

Week 5 Japanese and Korean Responses to the Tang

Feb. 17: Sui-Tang Dynasties in Relation to Korea
Holcombe 98-123

Feb.19: Japanese and Korean Responses to the Tang
Holcombe, 123-134

II. Early Modern East Asia: Transformations from the 10th to 16th Centuries

Week 6 Song Dynasty and Early Modernity

Feb.24: Song Dynasty, Koryo and Mongols
Holcombe 136-154
Tackett, *Origins of the Chinese Nation*, Chapter 1
Birth of the Early Modern World

Feb. 26: Early Modern China and Korea
Holcombe 173-193
Woodside, *Lost Modernities*, 1-17
Dorothy Ko essay on footbinding
Quiz 2 given by 5:15 pm due by 11 pm

Week 7 Early Modern East Asia/Mid-Term

March 3: Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi
Holcombe 193-204
Wakita Osamu, State Formation
Haboush, 1-23
Midterm Exam Questions given in class

March 5:
Mid-Term Exam (in class)

III. Modern East Asia and State Formation

Week 8: Tokugawa and the Opium War

March 10: Tokugawa Intellectuals
Ogyu Sorai, Motoori Norinaga (essays)
Oliver Ansart, “Rituals as Utopia”

March 12: Opium War and Chinese Modernity
Holcombe 226-244
Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing*, Chapter 11

Week 9: Meiji Restoration and Modernization in East Asia

March 17: Meiji Restoration
Holcombe 250-234
Amy Stanley, “Enlightenment Geisha”
Optional:
Barker: “Origins of the Meiji Restoration”

March 19: Self-Strengthening Movement and Sino-Japanese War
Holcombe 234-244
Elman, Self-Strengthening Essay

Week 10 The 1911 Revolution

March 24: Sino-Japanese War and Russo-War
Essays on the Tonghaks

March 26: Film on Xi Jinping
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4ew0cbG1IU>

Week 11: Spring Break March 28-April 5

March 31: No Class

April 2: No Class

Week 12 Pan-Asianism and the Chinese Revolution

April 7: 1911 Revolution, Lu Xun and the May Fourth Movement
Read Lu Xun, “Diary of a Madman” and “The True Story of Ah Q”
Holcombe 268-282.

April 9: Pan-Asianism and World-War II
Yoo Sung-Lee “An Jeung Gun’s on Peace in Asia”

Week 13 Mao, the Chinese Revolution and Hong Kong Reaction

April 14: Mao, 1949 Revolution and the Communist State
Holcombe, 306-308.
Meisner, *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait*, 161-193

April 17: Mao and the Cultural Revolution and Korean War
Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins* (Introduction) Postwar Korea and Postwar Japan
Holcombe, 321-329

Week 14 Postwar Korea and Postwar Japan

April 22: Postwar Japan and Historical Revisionism
Simon Avenell, “From to the ‘People’ to ‘Citizen’”

April 24: Post-Korean War and the Developmental State
Holcombe, 339-354

Essay on Park Chung-hee
Park Chung-hee on nationalism

Week 15 Korean and Chinese Struggles for Democracy

April 28 Neo-Liberalism and the New Left in Post 1990 China
Wang Hui essay on June 4th

Final exam questions will be circulated.

April 30: Final Exam in class

Final paper due May 3, 5pm.

All extra credit assignments due on the last day of class