The course **What is Asia?** is designed to provide participants with a critical introduction to the study of Asia. While the course will introduce participants to the histories and cultures of the region we will explore how the term ‘Asia’ is defined by different geo-political players at different times.

Often ‘Asia’ is conceptualized by perceptions that are products of colonialism and imperialism. Mystified as Shangri-La or demonized as economically challenged or challenging, Asian nations are now facing the effects of globalization. In the light of this development, the concepts of nation state and transnationalism have gained a new dimension that we will explore in our discussions.

**Course Requirements**

1. Preparation and participation in class discussions. (20%)

2. Two written reports and short oral presentations on topics related to course readings and regional/disciplinary interests (20%).

3. Four quizzes (40%).

4. One final book review of six pages (double spaced) (20%).

**Attendance** is important. Please inform the instructor in advance if you have to miss a class. After two unexcused absences, 2% of the grade total will be lost for each class missed.

**Presentations**: Each participant will give two presentations. One presentation will be related to the course book and reading assignments, the second presentation will cover the book each participant has chosen for the book review. The presentations will be 5-10 minutes long and will provide background information to the readings.

**Book review**: Each participant will choose a book in the respective discipline/region of interest, based on consultation with the instructor. The book review should be a critical analysis of the sources and methodology that the author uses to answer a specific question or make a specific argument. Briefly explain the state of the field in your introduction; then summarize the content but do not make the summary the central part of your review. Instead, describe what question(s) the author wants to answer and whether the approach s/he chose is successful. What is the most important contribution of the work? Does the author introduce a new idea/ theory/ new information/ new analysis? Can you recommend the book? For which audience is the book important?
Required Reading

The following text is available for purchase at Black Sun Bookstore (on Hilyard Street, next to Sundance Supermarket and the restaurant ‘Taste of India’):


Further readings are available in a reserve folder in the Copyshop on 13th Street.

Course Outline

Part I: Defining Asia

Week 1

1/8    U 1. Introduction: Where is Asia?

1/10   H 2. Report and Book Review Topics;
(Colin Mason, *A Short History of Asia*, 1-10).

Week 2


Before the Eurocentric Myth: Technology and Trade

1/17   H 4. Revisiting Mercator, Marx, and Weber

Week 3

1/22   U 5. Before Imperialism: Elements of a Common Cultural Matrix
Confucianism: Short reports (Representatives, practices of Confucianism)

QUIZ 1
Short video clip on the Dhobi (washermen) caste in Mumbai. (Video *Dhobighat*; DVD 1875)

1/24   H 6. Buddhism
Short reports (Representatives, practices of Buddhism; Silk Road)
(Mason, pp. 13-44; 61-71; Frances Wood, *The Silk Road. Two Thousand Years in the

Week 4

1/29 U 7. The Mongols
Short reports (Pax Mongolica; Mongol rulers; Marco Polo)

1/31 H 8. Islam
Short reports (Beliefs and practices of Islam; Sufism; Islamic Art)

Week 5

2/05 U 9. Neo Confucianism
Short reports (Representatives of Neo Confucianism)

QUIZ 2

Part II. Orientalism, Nationalism, and Identity

2/07 H 10. Southeast Asia

Week 6

2/12 U 11. India

2/14 H 12. Japan
Short reports (Meiji restauration)
(Carol Gluck, “The Invention of Edo”, in Stephen Vlastos (ed.), Mirror of Modernity:

Week 7

During this week, visit both, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art and the UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History.


QUIZ 3

2/21 H 14. Reports on the museum collections: China, Japan, Korea, and the Pacific Northwest

Week 8

2/26 U 15. China and Chinese Diaspora
Short reports: May 4th Movement


Week 9

3/4 U 17. Class visit Prof. Lamia Karim
(Mason 183-192)

3/6 H 18. Asia today

QUIZ 4

Week 10


Which (geographic) region and which discipline (such as anthropology, geography, political science, environmental studies, gender studies) is covered by the book? Explain

3/113 H 20. Book review reports

**Week 11**

3/18 U Book Review due 12.00 in 317 MCK.