Approaches to Asian Studies

Asian Studies 612 is a foundational theory/methodology course that is required for Asian Studies M.A. students, and helpful for graduate students studying Asia in a variety of disciplines and contexts. Class readings introduce key theoretical frameworks, issues, and methodological approaches broadly relevant to the study of Asia across disciplines. The course emphasizes both the development of theoretical literacy and the close reading and analysis of texts. Writing assignments are designed to contribute to articulateness in class and build proficiency in written interpretation and argument.

Weekly class assignments and discussions focus on current interpretive issues and debates that inform the interdisciplinary study of Asia. All classes and assignments (including short papers as specified below) are required, as is active and informed participation in class discussion. The books that are listed below have been ordered in the bookstore and will be on reserve in the Knight Library. Various articles are accessible on Blackboard, as indicated in the course syllabus.

Books:
Elaine Yee Lin Ho and Julie Kuehn, *China Abroad: Travels, Subjects, Spaces* (2009)

Requirements: All students should plan to attend all classes and complete all reading and written assignments on time. Informed and engaged participation in discussions is a minimal requirement for graduate level credit and a necessary requirement for intellectual community
among members of the class. For any four of weeks 2-10 you should plan to write a 2-3 page critical reaction paper for the assigned readings. This paper should present, frame, and evaluate the readings in terms of the critical interpretive issues the readings raise (if there are multiple readings, you need to group and tie them together thematically, rather than comment on them serially). *These reaction papers must be turned in at the start of the class for which the reading is assigned.* A final paper is due on March 12. This will be a longer critical book review of a recent controversial book relevant to Asian Studies (please choose from the list of suggestions at the end of this syllabus. Alternatively, you may choose a book yourself as long as you discuss your choice with me in advance).

Classes will begin with general reflections on the reading by all members of the class. Designated individuals will take turns facilitating the discussion that follows.

Schedule of Classes:

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<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>January 8</th>
<th>Introduction: What is particular about Asian Studies?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>Orientalism/Occidentalism</td>
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*Readings for January 15:*


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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Jan 22</th>
<th>Intellectual Mappings: What is Asia? What is East? What is West?</th>
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*Reading for January 22:*


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<th>Week 4</th>
<th>January 29</th>
<th>Thinking about Asian Studies, Area Studies, and Multiculturalism</th>
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*Readings for January 29:*


• Bruce Cumings, “Boundary Displacement: The State, the Foundations, and Area Studies during and after the Cold War,” in *Learning Places*, pp. 261-302.


**Week 5**  
**Asian Traditions/ Asian Modernities/Postmodernities**

*Readings for February 5:*


• Elaine Yee Lin Ho, “China Abroad: Nation and Diaspora in a Chinese Frame,” in *China Abroad*, pp. 3-21.

• Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, “Postmodern Gandhi,” in *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays: Gandhi in the World and at Home*, pp. 1-59.

**Week 6**  
**February 12  Translation and Transnational Circulations**

*Readings for February 8:*

• Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice*, pp. xv-99.

• Lydia Liu, ed., *Tokens of Exchange*: read first five pages of introduction, then pp. 127-185 and 331-374. Includes:
  - Liu, “Legislating the Universal: The Circulation of International Law in the Nineteenth Century;”
  - Alexis Dudden, “Japan’s Engagement with International Terms;”
Week 7  February 19  Postcolonial Approaches HsinChin

Readings for February 19:

• Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, pp. 1-46; 149-179; 237-255


Week 8  February 26  Transnational Histories and Identities

Readings for February 26:

• Philip Kuhn: *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times*


Week 9  March 5  The Status of Law in the Question of Modernity

Reading for March 5:


Week 10  March 12  Gender in the Redefinition of Tradition and Modernity

Readings for March 12:

• Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (1998)

• Lydia Liu, ed, Rebecca Karl, and Dorothy Ko, eds, *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*
DEADLINE FOR FINAL PAPERS: MARCH 14, noon, under my office door (375 McK)

Suggested books for final papers

The following books have been chosen because they have stimulated scholarly debate on issues relevant to Asian studies, because they are both interesting and substantial in terms of their research/interpretive approach, and because they intersect in important ways with themes raised in our class. Your assignment is to write a thoughtful book review that conveys the ways in which the particular book enters into a scholarly discussion of particular issues concerning the conceptualization of Asia or an issue relevant to the study of regions within Asia. This involves introducing the book in context and presenting the topic, argument and general methodology/approach. You should conclude with a considered discussion of the strengths, weaknesses, and contributions of the book.


Emma Teng, *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography* (2006)


Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (2001)


Theodore Huters, *Bringing the World Home: Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (2005)

Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (2005)


Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire* (1998)

