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:
Edward Said, Orientalism (1978)
Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe (2000)
Lydia Liu, Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity (1995)
Lydia Liu, ed. Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations (1999)
Philip Kuhn, Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times (2008)

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 three of weeks 2-10 you should plan to write a 2-3 page critical reaction paper for the assigned readings, though you must turn in at least one paper by week 5. 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 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 short general reflections on the reading by all members of the class. Designated individuals will take turns facilitating the discussion that follows.

Schedule of Classes:

Week 1 January 7 Introduction: What is particular about Asian Studies?

Week 2 January 14 Orientalism/Occidentalism

Readings for January 14:

Additional optional readings for your reference:

Week 3 Jan 21 Intellectual Mappings: What is Asia? What is East? What is West? *(Kyle)*

Reading for January 21:

Week 4 January 28 Thinking about Asian Studies, Area Studies, and Multiculturalism *(Kuan)*

Readings:
• 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 February 4 Asian Traditions/Asian Modernities/Postmodernities *(Dylan)*

Readings:

Week 6 February 11 Translation and Transnational Circulations *(Cheng Feng)*

Readings:
• 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;”
  • Q. S. Tong, “The Bathos of a Universalism: I.A. Richards and His Basic English;”

Reference: • Shuang Shen, “Lu Xun, Cultural Internationalism, Leftist Periodicals and Literary Translation in the 1930s,” pp. 63-81

Week 7 February 18 Postcolonial Approaches *(Avi)*

Readings:
• Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe.

Week 8 February 25 Transnational Peoples, Histories, and Identities *(Lee)*

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

• Adam McKeown, Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders (Columbia, 2008).
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March 4  Traveling Texts and Transculturation  
(*Kimberly and Shuangting)

Reading:

Week 10  
March 11  Rethinking the Global  (*Katherine)

Reading:

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. **If the book’s perspective is global, your paper should explicitly address the question of the place of Asia/Asians within it.**

•Vukovich, Danie. China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the PRC (2012)
•David Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (2005)
•Emma Teng, *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography* (2006)
•Jacob Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Shoots* (2009)
•Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (2001)
•Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (1993)
•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)