

History 216
Fall 2001

Modern Asian Civilization

(www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/asia)

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Office Hours: M 10-10:50; T 1-1:50; W 1-1:50

The diverse and vibrant continent of Asia today is at a crossroads. It is home to three of the four remaining “communist” countries in the world, and was until recently a region of unparalleled economic growth. In the last few years, however, much of Asia has become entangled in a financial crisis that has slowed economic growth and revealed serious social problems and tensions. This course is designed to provide a historical perspective on contemporary Asia by examining changes during the complex processes of “modernization” and “Westernization” underway since about 1800, though our focus will be primarily the 20th century. We will examine changes on a country-by-country basis, beginning with Japan, the one Asian country that has historically rivaled the West in terms of military and economic development, and India. A significant part of the course concentrates on China, which has undergone a remarkable transition in the last two hundred years from traditional Confucianism to Maoist communism and now to a form of “market socialism.” We will end the course by examining the turbulent and violent history of Southeast Asia, specifically Vietnam and Cambodia.

The course will introduce and explore several underlying themes of modern and contemporary Asia: tradition; revolution; colonialism and the struggle for independence; the Cold War; nationalism; the international economy; and democracy. We will examine these and other issues through the prisms of gender, class, and nationality. By the end of the course each student will understand, firstly, that history is not just the memorization of dates and facts, but rather the interpretation of the past; and, secondly, that we tend to see Asia and the world through a number of basic assumptions that are not always accurate. Students will take from the class the skills to critically appraise varying historical arguments and to clearly express their own interpretations.

Readings:

- *Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamala Markandaya (Penguin Books, 1998)
- *Family*, Pa Chin (Waveland Press, 1989)
- *Spider Eaters*, Rae Yang (University of California Press, 1997)
- *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, Le Ly Hayslip (Penguin Books, 1990)
- Reserve and online material identified below

Films: you are required to view the Chinese film “Raise the Red Lantern” by the date indicated below. The film is available at the The Teaching & Learning Center (McNut Building) and will be put on reserve close to the required viewing date. You are also strongly recommended to see “Bandit Queen.”

Course Web Page: The course web page is at www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/asia
The page has course readings, summaries of the notes, links to Internet Resources, and other features relevant to the course.

Assignments:

Participation	25 %
2 Papers	15 % each
Midterm Exam	20 %
Final Exam	25 %

Participation: Your 25% class participation grade will consist of in-class quizzes plus Reaction Pieces to the four assigned books, 1-2 pages double-spaced. These are intended to be your reaction to or opinion of the books, not a summary. Students who miss the in-class quizzes can *only* make them up with a legitimate reason. Inform me beforehand if you know you have to miss an announced in-class quiz and we will schedule a make-up.

Exams: There is a midterm (worth 20 %) and a final (worth 25 %). Each exam covers *only* the part of the course for which they are designated, so they are not cumulative. However, the final exam also includes a comprehensive take-home essay question (worth 10 % of the overall course grade) that draws on broader issues dealt with all semester.

Grading: Grades are compiled on a point system. For example, if you make a 90 on the 1st paper assignment (13.5/15) + an 80 on the Midterm Exam (16/20) + 84 on the 2nd paper assignment (12.6/15) + 88 on the final exam (22/25) + 90 on participation (22.5/25) your final grade = 86.6 = 87 or B

CLASS SCHEDULE

Tuesday, August 21. Introduction to the Course

****1st Paper Assignment: In your opinion, what were the main reasons US President Harry Truman decided to use atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945? Do you agree or disagree with his decision? Required Sources (on e-reserve or online):** Paul Fussell, "Thank God for the Atomic Bomb;" William Blum, "Hiroshima: Needless Slaughter, Useful Terror;" and *Extra!* Update, "Media to Smithsonian: History is Bunk;" documents (Stimson diary, 6 June 1945; and President Truman's meeting with advisers, 18 June, 1945); and the course web page link *Basic Information on the Bomb* and *Second Guessing Hiroshima*. Optional sources: Other web page links from the course web page directory and additional sites or material you identify. Refer to the Paper Guidelines for this assignment. **Due: Thursday, September 6.**

Thursday, August 23. Traditional East Asian Culture

- For next class: listen to NPR Report "Noodle Slurpin' in Japan" on the web page

Tuesday, August 28. Traditional Japan Meets the West

- Reading for next class: online reviews of *The Rape of Nanking* by Iris Chang

Thursday, August 30. The Rise of Fascism in Japan

Tuesday, September 4. World War II & the Atomic Bombs

Thursday, September 6. Japan's Postwar Economic "Miracle"

****1st Paper due in class**

- For next class: listen to NPR Report "Visit to War Memorial" on the web page

Tuesday, September 11. Postwar Japan (cont'd) & The Pacific Rim Countries

BEGIN READING *Nectar in a Sieve*; Reaction Piece to the book due September 25

Thursday, September 13. Traditional India and British Colonialism in India

Tuesday, September 18. India's Struggle for Independence

- Reading for next class: online articles about the death of Phoolan Devi

Thursday, September 20. India and Neighbors Since Independence

- For next class: listen to NPR Report "Caste Hanging in India" on the web page

Tuesday, September 25. Discussion of *Nectar in a Sieve*

****1st Reaction Piece (*Nectar in a Sieve*) due in class**

Thursday, September 27. Midterm Exam

BEGIN READING *Family*; Reaction Piece to the book due October 16

**Remember to view "Raise the Red Lantern" by October 16

Tuesday, October 2. Traditional China

Thursday, October 4. China and the West

Thursday, October 11. In-class viewing: "The Girl from Hunan"

Tuesday, October 16. Discussion of *Family* and "Raise the Red Lantern"

****2nd Reaction Piece (*Family*) due in class**

BEGIN READING *Spider Eaters*; Reaction Piece to the book due November 6

Thursday, October 18. The Origins of China's Peasant Revolution

Tuesday, October 23. "Fanshen": "turning over" in China

Thursday, October 25. Maoism in Practice

- Reading for next class: e-reserve articles "Lei Feng, Chairman Mao's Good Fighter," and "Father is Close, Mother is Close, but Neither Is as Close as Chairman Mao'—The Cult of Mao (1964-1965)" from *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang

Tuesday, October 30. The Mao Cult and the Origins of the Cultural Revolution

Thursday, November 1. China's Cultural Revolution

Tuesday, November 6. Cultural Revolution (cont'd): Discussion of *Spider Eaters*
****3rd Reaction Piece (*Spider Eaters*) due in class**

Thursday, November 8. The Reforms of Deng Xiaoping

- Reading for next class: e-reserve articles "People's Daily Editorial and Response" and "A Letter From Beijing, June 1989" by Ya Lu

Tuesday, November 13. The Tiananmen Square Incident

- Reading for next class: Chinese Communist Party Report on Rising Social Tensions

BEGIN READING *When Heaven & Earth Changed Places*; Reaction Piece due Nov. 29

Thursday, November 15. China Since Tiananmen

Tuesday, November 20. French Colonialism in Southeast Asia

Tuesday, November 27. War and Revolution in Vietnam

Thursday, November 29. Discussion of *When Heaven & Earth Changed Places*
****4th Reaction Piece (*When Heaven & Earth Changed Places*) due in class**

Tuesday, December 4. The "Killing Fields" of Cambodia

Thursday, December 6. Asia Today

****2nd Paper due in class**

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 18 Noon-3:00 PM