
ASAN 101

Introduction to Asian Studies

Summer 2017
Online

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Overview

This course is an introduction to Asian Studies. It examines the history and cultures of “Monsoon Asia,” or South, Southeast, and East Asia. Students will explore systems of values and their expression, history, social and political institutions in these regions. This course will focus on change and continuity within the various regions of Asia, and this vast region's interrelationships with the rest of the world.

Goals

Upon successful completion of ASAN 101, the student should be able to:

1. Discuss components of traditional and contemporary Asian political, social, economic and cultural patterns and institutions.
2. Discuss the geography of Asia and interrelationships with the rest of the world.
3. Analyze and describe cultural, historical and contemporary issues and perspectives about Asia.
4. List and describe Asian cultural traditions, lifestyles, aesthetic expressions and their contemporary relevance.

Requirements

1. Online Discussion Questions (40%): Answer at least TWO questions for every module. Your answer should be a paragraph long (at least 4 sentences) and clearly refer to the readings and any other relevant materials from this course.
2. Weekly Quizzes (20%)
3. Midterm Exam (20%)
4. Final Exam (20%)

Textbook

Heinz, Carolyn Brown. *Asian Cultural Traditions*. Waveland Press, 1999.

Milestones

Each Saturday

All quizzes and discussion questions for the week must be completed by 11:55 pm.

Week 4

Midterm Exam

Week 8

Final Exam

Policies and Advice

*This syllabus is subject to change at the professor's discretion.

*If you have concerns about your performance in the course, please email me as soon as possible. We have a lot to cover and it may be easy to fall behind.

*Late work will not be accepted and exams may not be taken early. It is to your advantage to stay on top of your assignments and to begin early in the week, or even begin earlier, seeing as all assignments are open from the beginning of the course. You could, theoretically, complete all assignments in the first few days that the course is open. This is an advantage of an online course; the disadvantage of doing that would be that you miss the perspectives of your fellow students, and you may have to wait a while to receive feedback from the professor. Just remember: when in doubt, do things early rather than saving them until the last minute. Given the short amount of time we have to cover such a large amount of material, if you fall behind it will be extremely difficult for you to catch up.

*Students are advised that academic dishonesty (cheating and plagiarism) are prohibited by UH's Code of Conduct - if you are having problems with the class, please discuss them with me as soon as you notice you're having some difficulties. Plagiarism or cheating on any assignment will lead to a grade of 0 on the assignment. Repeat instances of plagiarism or cheating will lead to academic sanctions.

*If you have a hidden or visible disability, which may require class or testing accommodations, please talk to me as soon as possible or let me know via email. In most cases I will already have been informed of this through the Kokua program, so I will already be aware that we will need to create a plan. If you are a student with a disability and have not yet voluntarily disclosed the nature of your disability and the support you need, you are invited to contact the Kokua Program (Student Services 013, kokua@hawaii.edu, 808-956-7511, 808-956-7612) to establish a support system for your academic success. If you have a disability arise midway through the semester, the same holds true, and the Kokua program and I will make every effort to accommodate your needs. Please be advised that in an online class the possible accommodations may be limited by the medium of instruction, so in some instances taking this course in the classroom might result in a better learning experience.

*I uphold the University of Hawaii's nondiscrimination policy in my classes. UH does not tolerate discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, national origin, ancestry, color, creed, religion, sex, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation, arrest and court record, or associational preference.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Mapping Asia

Read Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 in *Asian Cultural Traditions* (pp. 1-38).

Play country identification game here: <http://online.seterra.net/en/vgp/3032>

Quiz

If you haven't already, please create an avatar/post a photo to your profile, and introduce yourself in the discussion forum in your first post.

Discussion Questions

- What are the major Asian landforms, how were they formed, and what are some of the cultural significances they carry in mythic geography?
- What is "Monsoon Asia"? What environmental aspects and cultural practices define it?

- Why is rice so important in Asia, both geographically/environmentally and culturally?
- Discuss one relationship between nature and culture in Asia that you find interesting.

Week 2: South Asia

Read Chapter 5 “India” in *Asian Cultural Traditions* (pp. 118-181), and from the start of Chapter 9 “The Colonial Period” through the section on “Britain’s Indian Empire” (pp. 331-347).

Quiz

Discussion Questions

- How did the moral order relate to the state in Premodern India?
- What is the caste system in India and what are its characteristics? Pay attention to ideas of purity and impurity, and exchanges of substance, in your answer, making sure you discuss more than just the simple “ranking” system of castes known as *varna*.
- How did the coming of Buddhism change India, and how did it influence the rest of Asia?
- What influences did Islam have on art, architecture, and poetry in South Asia?
- How did changes in the economic choices made by British colonists in India articulate with changes in the global economy during the colonial period?

Week 3: Southeast Asia

Read Chapter 6 “Southeast Asia” (pp. 185-220) and sections on “English and Dutch Merchant Companies” and “Below the Winds: Colonizing the Islands” in Chapter 9 “The Colonial Period” (pp. 339-340, 354-361) in *Asian Cultural Traditions*

Quiz

Discussion Questions

- How did India, China, and Muslim societies leave their cultural marks on Southeast Asia? Give at least one example of each.
- How is the Thai Buddhist Ramayana different from the Indian Hindu Ramayana(s)?
- How does Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhism articulate with other forms of popular religion?
- Which nations colonized and/or significantly influenced Southeast Asian countries, and how did colonial powers contribute to the formation of the states we know today?

Week 4: Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice and short essay questions. You may use the textbook and your notes. Unlike the quizzes, it is timed: you have two hours to complete it. Once you start, you can’t stop – you can’t take one hour of the midterm on Monday, and another hour on Thursday, for example.

Week 5: China

Read Chapter 7 “China” (pp.223-278) and section in Chapter 9 on “China: Opium Wars and Treaty Century” (pp. 345-354) in *Asian Cultural Traditions*

Quiz

Discussion Questions

- The author states “more than any other people in human history, the Chinese have achieved a continuity of social and cultural identity” even when such continuity was challenged (223). How have they done so?
- How does the king’s or emperor’s legitimacy rest on his relationship to heaven?

- What is the importance of ancestor worship in China, and what is its relationship to the state? Make sure to draw on the whole chapter for your answers.
- Who were Confucius and Laozi, what are their philosophies, and how do these philosophies differ?
- Why was it difficult for Buddhism to gain prominence in China?
- What is the Confucian model of the family, and how has it influenced social relations in China?
- What “barbarians” have invaded China, including would-be colonial powers/opium traders, and how has China responded to their presence, both practically and philosophically?

Week 6: Japan

Read Chapter 8 “Japan” (pp. 282-327) and section in Chapter 9 on “The Meiji Era” (pp. 362-363) in *Asian Cultural Traditions*

Quiz

Discussion Questions

- How is Shinto important to the imperial state in Japan, since the Yamato period?
- How did aspects of Chinese culture influence Japan?
- What is the concept of mono no aware and how did it influence Japanese art and literature?
- What were some of the values that constituted the basis of samurai culture, and what were their relationships to Confucianism and Zen Buddhism?
- How did the changes of the Meiji era depart drastically from previous social relations in Japan?

Week 7: Ethnic Identities and States

Read Chapter 4 in *Asian Cultural Traditions* (pp. 78-115), and country profiles for your assigned countries at Federal Research Division Country Profiles (<https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/cs/profiles.html>). Pay special attention to these headings in the country profile for information to answer the discussion questions about your assigned country: “Climate,” “Natural Resources,” “Environmental Factors,” “Population,” “Ethnic Groups,” “Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing,” “Energy,” “Tourism,” “Labor, and Human Rights.” If your country seems to be mono-ethnic according to the report, think about why that might be the case.

Countries: China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam

Quiz

Discussion Questions:

- What ethnic groups exist in your assigned country?
- How are they defined as separate from each other? More specifically and in-depth, what factors have contributed to their identities as separate groups – environmental, political, social, economic?
- What challenges do the ethnic groups face in relation to the state, the global economy, and/or global climate change?

Week 8: Final Exam

The final will be in the same format as the midterm and will deal with the second half of the class after the midterm.