Introduction to East Asian Cultures: From Zen to K-Pop

The course examines various aspects of culture in both premodern and modern East Asia, ranging from literature, art, performance, cuisine and film. Focusing on China, Japan and Korea, each week we will analyze a specific cultural phenomenon, or aspect of material culture. We will also consider the central influence of major philosophical systems such as Confucianism and Buddhism on East Asian cultures. A comparative perspective will be employed to examine the cultural links, and the cultural differences between these major East Asian countries. The course will also introduce students to a variety of methodologies for the study of culture (e.g. cultural studies, anthropology, and history). The study of gender and sex roles will be an integral part of this subject. This class is suitable for students of all levels, and requires no language background. Students who wish to fulfill the MISTI-Singapore requirement may do the final project on Singapore. Taught in English.

The course includes field trips to the MFA and the Peabody Essex Museum.

Policy on academic integrity. I expect all students to be familiar with MIT's policies and guidelines on academic integrity as outlined in the handbook on academic integrity: http://web.mit.edu/academicintegrity/

Please review all the guidelines in the handbook, including the information on responsible paraphrasing: http://web.mit.edu/academicintegrity/writing/paraphrasing.html

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will be dealt with according to MIT policy and procedures.

Laptop policy: laptops and electronic reading devices are permitted in class for the sole purpose of consulting class materials or taking lecture notes. Use of e-mail, web surfing, and any work related to other classes is prohibited.

Intended Learning Outcomes: by the time you complete this course, you should be able to:

Identify the countries included in the formal regional term "East Asia," and the shared features that are said to mark "East Asian civilization."

Identify examples of regional variation or diversity within East Asia, and across historical time.

Understand the basic tenets of Confucianism and Buddhism, and their influence on select works of East Asian literature and arts.

Explain the tension between globalization and localization as exemplified in particular examples from contemporary East Asian cultures.

Understand diverse definitions of the word "culture," and explain how these definitions help us to understand why "East Asian culture" is not a fixed, and unchanging entity.

Demonstrate improvement in writing concise, readable prose.
Requirements: In addition to the class readings, students will be required to write a 1-2 page journal reflecting on cultural issues nearly every week. The journal prompts and explanation of journal system are available on stellar. At the end of the semester, students will compose a final journal portfolio working with concepts learned in the class. Students will complete a total of approximately 20 pages of writing by the end of the semester. Students will also be expected to give informal oral presentations throughout the term. A quiz will be administered near the end of term in order to assess student mastery of basic concepts covered in the class. There will be a final oral presentation based on an original research project selected by the student in consultation with the instructor. A written bibliography will accompany the oral presentation. All topics must be approved by the instructor.

Grading: Class participation 25%*, oral presentation (with bibliography) 15%, weekly journal 15%, graded journal 5%, quiz 15%, final portfolio 25%

* Class participation: students are expected to attend every class, having completed the homework assignment, prepared to participate actively in class discussion and/or answer questions about the reading. This means no unexcused absences. Students who miss film viewings will be expected to make them up on their own time. Students are required to designate a special folder for their journal and bring it to class weekly. All journal entries must be kept in this folder and organized appropriately. We will be working with the journals in class as needed.

***No class absence, except in cases of illness, or family emergency. Please inform me in advance by e-mail. Absence in cases of ILLNESS are always excused with e-mail notification from student.

Readings: All books are on reserve at Reserve Reading Library (Bldg 14) readings marked with * on Stellar

Required Texts


Recommended Texts


we have a dedicated librarian for our class:
Michelle Baildon
Philosophy, History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology, & Society Librarian
Tel. 617-253-9352
Week 1 Introduction

Thursday, September 6: Introduction to East Asia

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Week 2 Introduction to East Asia

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Tuesday, September 11 lecture

Thursday, September 13 discussion

Readings:
*de Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* pp.15-33 (Confucius), 48-53 (Taoism), 266-274 (Introduction to Buddhism)

*“Thinking about Culture,” in *Comparing Cultures*, 3-11

*Amy Chua, "Why Chinese Mothers are Superior"

*Dominic Ziegler, "Tiger Cubs v Precious Lambs"

Journal due

Week 3 Zen Buddhism and Japanese Arts

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Tuesday September 18: lecture

Thursday September 20: discussion


Journal due

*D. Suzuki, “Painting, [Haiku], Swordsmanship, Tea Ceremony,” in *Zen Buddhism*, 279-294

Week 4 Literati Culture in Late Imperial China
Tuesday, September 25 -- lecture

Thursday, September 27 -- discussion

Shen Fu, *Six Records of a Life Adrift*, (ch 1-3)

*Clunas, “Furnishing the Self in Early Modern China,” 21-34
*Wen Zhenheng, “Treatise on Superfluous Things,” excerpts
*“The Scholar’s Garden,”4-9

*Clunas, “Furnishing the Self in Early Modern China,” 21-34
*Wen Zhenheng, “Treatise on Superfluous Things,” excerpts
*“The Scholar’s Garden,”4-9

Journal due

Week 5 MFA Week – Art and Material Culture

Tuesday, October 2: field trip to Museum of Fine Arts *Beyond the Screen* Exhibit and East Asian Galleries

*Fang, “Introduction,” Treasures of the Chinese Scholar, 1-3
*Zhang, “Scholar Objects and Folk Beliefs,” *Treasures of the Chinese Scholar*, 23-26
[review readings from week 3]

Thursday, October 4: discussion

MFA Journal due

Week 6 Lady Hyegyoung’s *Hanjungnok* and Korean Confucianism

Tuesday October 16: lecture

Thursday, October 18: discussion

***Graded Journal due

Week 7 East Asian Foodways I

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: discussion

China:
*Simoons, “Food in and Chinese Thought and Culture,” 13-37

Japan:


Recommended:
Francesca Bray, “Rice, Technology, and History: The Case of China” Education about Asia 9.3 (2004):

Week 8 East Asian Foodways II

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Oishinbo: A Surprising Taste (manga) from Oishinbo à la carte / story by Tetsu Kariya ; art by Akira Hanasaki ; translation, Tesuichiro Miyaki, 2009, excerpt

Rec:

Field trip to Peabody Essex Museum, Salem

Reading:

journal due next Tuesday

Week 9 Cool Japan: Anime

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Tuesday, October 30 lecture

Thursday, November 1 discussion


Journal due

Week 10

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<td>KoChan, Brenda, and Wang Xueli. &quot;Of prince charming and male chauvinist pigs:</td>
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**Week 11 Consumer Culture in Contemporary China**

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Tuesday, November 13:

Thursday, November 15: discussion

Karl Gerth, Li Zhang

**Journal due**

**Week 12 Westernization, Globalization, or Localization?**

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Tuesday, November 20: **Quiz**
discussion of final projects

Thursday, November 22:


*Wang, *Brand New China*, chapter 1, "Local Content"

Recommended:
Watson ed., *Golden Arches East*, chapters on Hong Kong and Taipei

### Week 13

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Tuesday, November 27 -- student presentations

Thursday, November 29 -- student presentations

### Week 14

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Tuesday December 4: student presentations

Thursday December 6: student presentations

**final portfolio due**

### Week 15

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Tuesday December 11: last day of class/party