

HUMA 1520: Modern East Asia

3 credits, no pre-requisites

Instructor: Dr. Mian CHEN

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Office Hours: Friday 1:30-3:30. Location TBD.

Course Description

This course is a survey of the history of political, social, economic, and cultural changes in East Asia (mainly China, Japan, and Korea) from the 1800s to the 1990s. In the past two centuries, the classical civilizations of East Asia met new challenges: the disintegration of old political systems, the growth of social tensions, and the arrival of an aggressive and expanding West. This course will study the internal and external tensions that undermined the traditional orders, compelling China, Japan, and Korea to seek new political and social reforms. Special attention will be given to the revolutionary changes in society, thought, culture, and the rise of a new political order in twentieth-century China, Japan, and Korea. This course will also pay special attention to the position of Hong Kong in the formation of modern East Asia.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Evaluate the major historical processes and events that have defined modern East Asia.
2. Examine the complex regional interactions and global networks that transformed East Asian societies.
3. Situate the development of Hong Kong within the larger context of East Asian history.
4. Critically analyze primary sources and secondary historical literature to construct well-supported arguments.
5. Apply effective communication skills through analytical writing, presentations, and teamwork.

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessments:

Assessment task	Contribution to overall course grade (%)	Due date
Three in-class multiple-choice quizzes	20%	Feb 27; March 20; April 17
One 800-word book review ¹	20%	By 11:59 PM on the Friday two weeks after the chosen week.
One group presentation based on primary source research ²	25%	Presentations will be scheduled on Fridays. A list of cited sources should be submitted before the start of class on Fridays.
Final exam	35%	N/A

¹ The full list of books will be uploaded to canvas. Each week includes 3–4 books open for reviews.

² A workshop will be held on the Feb 6 session to teach how to carry out primary source research.

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
In-class quizzes.	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3.	This task assesses students' ability to understand major events in East Asian history (ILO 1) and major connections (ILO 2), as well as major East Asian historical events that shaped modern Hong Kong (ILO 3).
One 800-word book review	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO 4, ILO 5.	This task assesses students' ability to understand major events in East Asian history (ILO 1) and major connections (ILO 2), as well as major East Asian historical events that shaped modern Hong Kong (ILO 3) through critical reading (ILO 4) and analytical writing (ILO 5).
One group presentation based on primary source research	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO 4, ILO 5.	This task assesses students' ability to understand major events in East Asian history (ILO 1) and major connections (ILO 2), as well as major East Asian historical events that shaped modern Hong Kong (ILO 3) through critical reading and primary source research (ILO 4) and effective presentation (ILO 5).
Final exam	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO 4, ILO 5	This task assesses students' ability to understand major events in East Asian history (ILO 1) and major connections (ILO 2), as well as major East Asian historical events that shaped modern Hong Kong (ILO 3) through critical reading (ILO 4) and analytical writing (ILO 5).

Grading Rubrics

For Writing assignment and presentation:

A: Completes all reading/research assignments and manifests close, critical, and original readings of texts and other historical sources. Demonstrates superlative written/spoken communication skills and strong logical argumentation. Substantiates observations with convincing evidence and is able to think creatively. Writes/presents critical and thoughtful papers in polished and sophisticated English, with no weaknesses in argumentation, coherence, paragraphing, grammar or syntax.

B: Completes most reading/research, but understands it at a general level: may have some trouble grasping subtleties or thinking critically about an author's argumentation or use of evidence. May also have difficulty comparing and contrasting divergent historical arguments about the same subject. Writing or presentation is clear but might have small but consistent problems in logic, grammar and structure; it shows inconsistent grace and originality. This student can argue competently and often deploys significant evidence, but may do so inconsistently.

C: Has some familiarity with the reading/research, but does not show evidence of having read competently. Writing or presentation is problematic in one or all dimensions. Deploys evidence poorly, arguments are weak and unsupported. Creativity is not really an issue because the student has not been able to understand the course's basic elements.

D: Either failed to complete some course assignments or completed many of them incompetently.

Final Grade Descriptors:

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of subject matter, expertise in problem-solving, and significant creativity in thinking. Exhibits a high capacity for scholarship and collaboration, going beyond core requirements to achieve learning goals.
B	Good Performance	Shows good knowledge and understanding of the main subject matter, competence in problem-solving, and the ability to analyze and evaluate issues. Displays high motivation to learn and the ability to work effectively with others.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate knowledge of core subject matter, competence in dealing with familiar problems, and some capacity for analysis and critical thinking. Shows persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.
D	Marginal Pass	Has threshold knowledge of core subject matter, potential to achieve key professional skills, and the ability to make basic judgments. Benefits from the course and has the potential to develop in the discipline.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the subject matter and lacks the necessary problem-solving skills. Shows limited ability to think critically or analytically and exhibits minimal effort towards achieving learning goals. Does not meet the threshold requirements for professional practice or development in the discipline.

Course AI Policy

This course will not accept work done used with generative AI (ChatGPT and other similar programs). Anyone detected to have used such methods to generate text for their assignment will receive an automatic zero for the assignment as it is a form of academic dishonesty by submitting work not produced by the student.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include strengths and areas for improvement. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Required Texts and Materials

Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Anne Walthall, *Modern East Asia from 1600: A Cultural, Social, and Political History 3rd Edition* (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2014).

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Tentative schedule:

Week 1

Feb 2, Feb 6

Intro. Ming-Qing China, Edo/Tokugawa Japan, and Choson/Joseon Korea.

Read: Ebrey and Walthall, Chapters 15, 16, 17.

Week 2

Feb 9, Feb 13

The Opium Wars and the Transformation of East Asia

Ebrey and Walthall, Chapters 18, 19, 20, 21.

Week 3

Feb 16, Feb 20

Japan's rise and its annexation of Korea; China's failed reforms and revolutions

Ebrey and Walthall, Chapters 22, 23, 24.

Week 4

Feb 23, Feb 27 (quiz)

Rising nationalism and communism, China in war and revolution

Ebrey and Walthall, Chapter 25.

Week 5

Mar 2, Mar 6

Japanese expansion, Chinese resistance

Ebrey and Walthall, Chapter 26.

Week 6

Mar 9, Mar 13

WWII

Ebrey and Walthall, Chapter 26.

Week 7

Mar 16, Mar 20 (quiz)

China in civil war (1946–1949) and the early PRC; Japan under U.S. occupation (1945–1952); the Korean War

Ebrey and Walthall, Chapters 27-28.

Week 8

Mar 23, Mar 27

Cold War Hong Kong

Fu, Poshek. "More than Just Entertaining: Cinematic Containment and Asia's Cold War in Hong Kong, 1949–1959." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 30, no. 2 (2018): 1-55.

Week 9-10

Mar 30, April 10

China in the Cultural Revolution; China's rapprochement with the United States and Japan

Yang, Guobin. "Days of old are not puffs of smoke: Three hypotheses on collective memories of the cultural revolution." *China Review* (2005): 13-41.

[Book review deadline: April 17]

Week 11

Apr 13, Apr 17 (quiz)

China's "Reform and Opening-Up"; South Korea's and Taiwan's democratization

Ebrey and Walthall, Chapters 29-30.

Week 12

Apr 20, Apr 24

Leslie Cheung and Pokémon: East Asian cultures at the turn of the century

Allison, Anne. *Millennial monsters: Japanese toys and the global imagination*. University of California Press, 2006, chapter 7 – 8.

Week 13-14

Apr 27, May 4

Outlook for the 21st century

Ebrey and Walthall, "Connections: East Asia in the 21st century."

[Book review deadline: May 15]

Week 14

May 8

Final review.