**Modern Asian Cultures – Asian 459**

Meeting Time: W 4:00 PM – 6:40 PM  
Place: PSFA 325  
Instructor: Dr. Todd Myers   
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Office: AL465  
E-mail Address: [todd.myers@gcccd.edu](mailto:todd.myers@gcccd.edu) and [myerst@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:myerst@mail.sdsu.edu)   
Times Available: I will respond to email inquiries within 48 hours. I am available the hour after class for consultation. You may also visit me at Grossmont College in room 508B.

Texts

**Required**

Sulak Sivaraksa’s *Conflict, Culture, Change: Engaged Buddhism in a Globalizing World*

Melvyn C. Goldstein’s *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet and the Dalai Lama*

Rana Mitter’s *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Struggle with the Modern World*

Michael Zielenziger’s *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation*

Osamu Tezuka’s *Sun*, volume 11 in the Phoenix series

**Suggested for Background**

Christopher Goto-Jones *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction*

Damien Keown’s *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*

Rana Mitter Modern *China: A Very Short Introduction*

Introduction

Modernization in Asia revolved around the clash, adaptation, and or the eclipse of indigenous traditions with various strands of Western enlightenment traditions committed to democracy, science, and industrialization. The power generated by these enlightenment traditions is beyond dispute, but the wisdom and sustainability of this power is a concern that reverberates throughout the entire world as globalization tightens a straight-jacket of laissez-faire, rationalized relations that generate great wealth but place great stress on the financial architecture that sustains it as well as the planet’s limited resources. The old traditions of limits, responsibilities, and authority promise an exit from the destruction threatened by our excesses.

In this course, we will survey a variety of historical and contemporary Asian responses to the problem of modernity beginning with China’s search for identity beyond empire. We will then examine Thailand’s attempts at modernization and a Buddhist response to those efforts. Later we will investigate Tibet’s search for identity within the confines of growing Chinese power and forces of globalization that challenge traditional Buddhist values. Finally, we will turn our gaze to Japan and see its struggle for identity through the art of Osamu Tezuka as well as examine its social malaise through the phenomenon of the Hikikomori, adult males who have chosen to not participate in Japanese society by exiling themselves to their bedrooms in their parents’ houses.

Readings, Tests, and Assessment Schedule

I reserve the right to change films if I find a film I feel better meets the learning objectives of the course or to redirect the class to a special event in lieu of class if an appropriate learning event emerges. I will work with students to make certain they have alternatives to such an event if it conflicts with their personal schedules.

**Week 1**

January 19 **Introduction to Class**

**Week 2**

*The Last Emperor* - documentary

**Readings:**

Rana Mitter’s *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Struggle with the Modern World*, pp. 3-68, Chapters 1-2

**Lecture:**

China’s Century of Humiliation

January 26

**Week 3**

**Lecture:**

Birth of a Republic

**Readings:**

Rana Mitter’s *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Struggle with the Modern World,* pp. 69-152, Chapters 3-4

February 2

**Week 4**

**Lecture:**

Goodbye Confucius

**Film:**

*Raise the Red Lantern*

**Readings:**

Rana Mitter’s *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Struggle with the Modern World*, pp. 155 – 199, Chapter 5

February 9

**Week 5**

**Lecture:**

Chairman Mao’s Strange Experiment with Anarchy as a Tool of Power

**Readings:**

Rana Mitter’s *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Struggle with the Modern World,* pp. 200-243, Chapter 6

February 16

**Week 6**

**Lecture:**

The People’s Republic of Capitalism

**Film:**

*The Blind Shaft*

**Reading:**

Rana Mitter’s *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Struggle with the Modern World,*

pp. 244-314, Chapters 7-8

February 23

**Week 7**

**Lecture:**

Socially Engaged Buddhism

**Readings:**

Sulak Sivaraksa’s *Conflict, Culture, Change: Engaged Buddhism in a Globalizing World,* pp. 3-62, Chapters 1-8

**Film:**

*Buddha’s Lost Children*

March 2

**Week 8**

**Lecture**:

Fascism and Capitalism: the Devil’s Discus and the Disintegration of the Moral Order of Siam

**Reading:**

Sulak Sivaraksa’s *Conflict, Culture, Change: Engaged Buddhism in a Globalizing World,* pp. 63 -124, Chapters 9-16

March 9

**Week 9**

**Lecture:**

History and Contemporary Events

**Reading:**

Melvyn C. Goldstein’s *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet and the Dalai Lama*, pp. 1 – 60.

**Film:**

*Ten Questions for the Dalai Lama*

March 16 **Midterm Exam Due and First Biography**

**Week 10**

**Lecture:**

Different Visions of Tibet

**Reading:**

Melvyn C. Goldstein’s *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet and the Dalai Lama*, pp. 61-131.

**Film:**

*Angry Monk: Reflections on Tibet*

March 23

**Week 11**

March 30 **Spring Recess**

**Week 12**

**Lecture:**

Buddhism and adapting to the Modern World

**Film:**

*The Cup*

April 6

**Week 13**

**Lecture:**

History and Japanese Identity

**Reading:**

Osamu Tezuka’s *Phoenix*, Volume 11, *Sun*, *Part II*, pp. 6-403

April 13

**Week 14**

**Reading:**

Michael Zielenziger’s *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation*, pp. 1 -75.

**Film:**

*Train Man*

April 20

**Week 15**

**Reading:**

Michael Zielenziger’s *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation*, pp. 76 - 160.

**Film:**

*The Burmese Harp*

April 27

**Week 16**

**Reading:**

Michael Zielenziger’s *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation*, pp. 161-236.

**Film:**

*Departures*

May 4

**Week 17**

**Reading:**

Michael Zielenziger’s *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation*, pp. 237 - 301.

May 11

**Week 18**

May 18 **Final Exam and Biography Due**

Student Learning Outcomes

Courses that fulfill the 9-unit requirement for **Explorations** in General Education take the goals and skills of GE Foundations courses to a more advanced level. Your three upper division courses in Explorations will provide greater interdisciplinary, more complex and in-depth theory, deeper investigation of local problems, and wider awareness of global challenges. More extensive reading, written analysis involving complex comparisons, well-developed arguments, considerable bibliography, and use of technology are appropriate in many Explorations courses.

This is an **Explorations course in the Humanities and Fine Arts**. Completing this course will help you to do the following in greater depth: 1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments; 2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures; 3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance; 4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems

and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.

After completing this course, students will:

* Be able to analyze literature and film in a critical manner incorporating Buddhist, Confucian, and Western Enlightenment perspectives
* Be able to write a brief critical biography of a significant Asian cultural figure with appropriate attention to issues of historical and philosophical relevance
* Be able to describe the plasticity of Buddhist, Confucian, and Western Enlightenment idea systems and or experiential symbolisms with attention to material and spiritual concerns
* Be able to generate interesting, nuanced, logical essay length answers to questions relating our readings and films to the human condition

Assessments and Grading Policies

Since people take this course for diverse purposes and therefore have different motivation and goals, I have created a grading structure to meet these diverse needs. All students will be expected to come to class, view the films, and participate on blackboard in the discussions about the films and topics that we explore. This means that you should make at least two substantive comments and or share web links posted in the blackboard discussion for each class week. Failing to meet the participation or attendance criterion will result in you receiving a one-letter grade reduction in your final class grade. Substantive means that you will comment on the symbolism of the film, the film’s cinematography, the style of the director, the philosophical themes of the work or point to materials available on the web that bring greater insight into the film and topics we are investigating. The richer you make the blackboard environment, the more we all will learn.

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|  | Test 1 | Test 2 | Biographies | Blackboard Participation | Attendance and Participation |
| A level | Answer three essays with no fewer than four pages for each essay. The essays need to be of A level quality. | Answer three essays with no fewer than four pages for each essay. The essays need to be of A level quality. | Write two 500 plus word biographies on an Asian person of cultural significance. | Make two substantive posts that bring light to the film, class discussion, or the readings covered in class. | Miss no more than two class periods and be prepared to discuss reading assignments in small group or big group discussions. |
| B level | Answer two essays with no fewer than four pages for each essay. The essays need to be of B level quality. | Answer two essays with no fewer than four pages for each essay. The essays need to be of B level quality. | Write two 500 plus word biographies on an Asian person of cultural significance. | Make two substantive posts that bring light to the film, class discussion, or the readings covered in class. | Miss no more than two class periods and be prepared to discuss reading assignments in small group or big group discussions. |
| C or Credit level | Answer one essay with no fewer than four pages.  The essays need to be of level quality. | Answer one essay with no fewer than four pages. The essays need to be of level quality. | Write two 500 plus word biographies on an Asian person of cultural significance. | Make two substantive posts that bring light to the film, class discussion, or the readings covered in class. | Miss no more than three class periods and be prepared to discuss reading assignments in small group or big group discussions. |

Every essay or biography begins as an A. Essay and biography grades will be determined by evaluating your paper in three categories including writing, organization and logic, and substance and research. Making grammatical or stylistic errors that detract from the quality of your written product will result in a one-letter grade reduction. Failing to have good organization and logic in argumentation in your essays will result in a one-letter grade reduction. Failing to incorporate materials from the readings, films, and outside matter skillfully into your arguments will result in a one-letter grade reduction. Letter grades will be calculated as A = 4 points, B = 3 points, and C = 2 points. Efforts will this level of achievement will receive an F = 0 points. You will need to maintain a 3.5 average to receive an A; a 3.0 to maintain a B, and a 2.0 to maintain a C.

Biographies

Over the course we will be building the Encyclopedia of Modern Asian Culture. Each of you will select two different persons of cultural significance from East, Southeast, Central or South Asia. Each entry will be 500 words in length and should be built upon at least five outside scholarly resources. Below is a sample of the biography.

Entry: Lu Xun (1881 – 1936)

Lu Xun is generally acknowledged as China’s greatest twentieth century author. His sardonic humor, literary skill, and sense of the absurd made him an effective advocate of Chinese nationalism, the rejection of a self-satisfied traditionalism, and the need to embrace a pragmatic program of modernization. The victory of Mao Zedong would turn him into “the Chief Commander of China’s cultural revolution” and because of this embrace by power, make him an ambiguous icon of the spirit of political and social criticism.

Born and raised in Shaoxing, Jiangan, as Zhou Zhangshou, Lu Xun belonged to a prominent family that was in decline. A bribery scandal involving Lu Xun’s grandfather punctuated this descent. The difficulties associated with the family’s bad luck made the less expensive Westernized educational opportunities afforded by the Jiangan Naval Academy and later the School of Mines and Railways, attractive educational opportunities for young Zhou Zhangshou.

During the period of his scientific education from 1898 to 1904, he not only mastered a technical curriculum, but he became familiar with various Western writers such as John Stuart Mill, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sir Walter Scott, and the evolutionary theorist, Thomas Huxley. A hybrid of Darwinism and romantic idealism play a major role in Lu Xun’s concept of nationalism.

Studies in Japan from 1902-1909 would be important to reinforcing his commitment to nationalism. He came to Japan and initially studied medicine but became disillusioned with medicine as he became more and more aware of the spiritual illness he perceived to plague the Chinese nation. Lu Xun prescribed art and literature as the medicine most likely to cure an ailment of the spirit. He put down his scalpel and picked up his pen and began his literary career. During this time, Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra* inspired him, which led to a creative piece about the power of demonic writers to transform society.

When he returned to China, his vision of the artist set the tone for how he would confront the failings of the Revolution of 1911 to remedy China’s weakness. Some of his most appreciated short stories such as “A Mad Man’s Diary”, “Medicine”, and “The True Story of Ah-Q” were written during this turbulent period. His criticism of Chinese tradition as being cannibalistic and his endorsement of pragmatic action made him an icon of the May Fourth Movement (1919). He also supported patriotic movements through out the twenties including the May 30th (1925) and March 18th (1927) movements.

Through observing the dynamics of these patriotic movements, Lu Xun began to perceive the insufficiency of the creative superman and the forces of evolution to lead to progress in China’s political situation and began to explore the usefulness of class struggle as a path to national survival. He engaged in various literary battles that forced him to forge a more solidly Marxist-Leninist identity and developed the political essay as his primary literary art form. The political positions he took during this time period, particularly his support of Mao Zedong, would determine his legacy. Lu Xun died in 1936 of tuberculosis.

Lu Xun’s death, despite the fact that he never joined the Chinese Communist Party, made him a communist saint. Lu Xun’s spirit of attack and reform was invoked by Chairman Mao, and found similar polemical use by those as varied in political outlook as the Red Guards, the Gang of Four, Capitalist Roaders, protestors at Tiananmen Square, and present Chinese dissidents. Recent scholarship has focused on situating Lu Xun in the Confucian tradition of remonstrance, understanding the relation of evolution to his thinking, discerning the meaning of individualism for his thought, and questioning an overly simplistic interpretation of the evolution of his thought towards Marxism-Leninism.

Bibliography

Chiu Yee Cheung and Zhao Zhiyang *Lu Xun: the Chinese “Gentle” Nietzsche*, Peter Lang Publishing, 2001.

Rana Mitter *A Bitter Revolution: China’s Struggle with the Modern World*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

David Pollard *The True Story of Lu Xun*, Chinese University Press, 2003.

James Reeve Pusey *Lu Xun and Evolution*, State University Press of New York, 1998.

Virginia Suddath “Ought We Throw the Confucian Baby out with the Authoritarian Bath Water: A Critical Inquiry into Lu Xun’s Anti Confucian Identity” in *Confucian Cultures of Authority*, State University of New York Press, 2006.

If both of your articles are accepted for publication, you will receive full credit for this assignment. Only one biography per cultural figure will be accepted. The first person to approach me with an idea for an entry in the encyclopedia will be assigned that entry. Getting to me first will make certain that you get to work on your preferences.

Academic Integrity:

Cheating and plagiarism (using one’s own ideas, writings or materials of someone else without acknowledgement or permission) can result in any one of a variety of sanctions. Such penalties may range from an adjusted grade on the particular exam, paper, project, or assignment to a failing grade in the course. The instructor may also summarily suspend the student for the class meeting when the infraction occurs, as well as the following class meeting. For further clarification and information on these issues, please consult with your instructor or contact the office of the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs.  
  
I will be grading with letter grades giving an A 4 points, a B three points, a C two points, a D one point, and an F zero points.  
  
Grade consequences for less than completed performance of course requirements:   
  
1. Written assignments will be lowered a letter grade if turned in late.   
2. In-class presentations, tests, and individual presentations cannot be made up if missed.   
  
The instructor reserves the right to use his discretion in individual circumstances that may not be covered by this syllabus or if the application of the rules of the syllabus would result in a miscarriage of justice. . If you have any problems with the class or the instructor please come to talk to me about these issues during office hours so that we can work the issues out.  I am a reasonable person and will try to address your concerns in a manner that will be mutually satisfactory.

About the Instructor

My professional background includes a stint in West Africa as an agricultural teacher trainer, work as a sales rep for Prentice Hall Publishing, internships in a variety of agencies for the State of Louisiana, curriculum development and teaching for the Institute of Reading Development, and educational and national security consulting for a variety of federal government agencies.  I have been teaching at Grossmont for the past six years and joined the faculty as a full time member in the Fall of 2005.

I have been a student for most of my life and have a Bachelor's of Arts from Eureka College in Illinois, a Master in Public Administration from Louisiana State University, and a Ph.D. in political science from that same university.  I have studied in Germany where I was awarded a Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst Stipendiat (The German government's version of the Fulbright Grant) to study political science, economics, and philosophy. I also have studied in Brazil as a Ronald W. Reagan Fellow. Most recently, I have received awards from the NEH to study Chinese culture, the Freeman Foundation to study Japanese culture, and the Lehrman Institute and the James Madison Institute at Princeton University to study American statesmanship. I am deeply interested in the relationship between politics and the stories peoples tell about themselves. I have been published in the International Encyclopedia of Political Science, the Encyclopedia of Cultural Sociology, the Encyclopedia of U.S. Latin American Relations, and Education About Asia. My present research projects include developing a student-centered think tank focusing on political, cultural, and economic reforms in Asia, writing about American foreign policy and wars in Asia, and writing about the use of film as a medium expressing social critique and order.

In my free time (Is there such a thing?), I read for pleasure (I like to read literature written by Nobel laureates, history, philosophy and economic theory), read, watch, and listen to the news (I like NPR and read the New York Times), play strategy games, spend time with my wife and my two sons, hike, play Frisbee, and appreciate nature.