Course Overview

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

This course provides an analytical overview of the comparative politics of East Asia, mainly focusing on Northeast Asia (China, Taiwan, Japan, and two Koreas) with some emphasis on Southeast Asia. This course has at least three goals: 1) to understand important political issues, political institutions, political behaviors, contentious politics, and political economies of East Asia, 2) to provide a theoretical framework to understand important historical events that have shaped the current politics of East Asia, and 3) to make an explicit comparison across countries (e.g., China and Japan) as well as comparison across regions (e.g., Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia). To do so, this course is divided into three parts.

In Part I, we will begin with a session that equips students with a theoretical framework of comparative politics and introduces this region more generally. By focusing on the modern nation-state formation in the context of colonialism, the following sessions in Part I will provide significant historical facts and issues of China, Japan, Taiwan, North/South Korea, and Southeast Asian countries to properly understand the substantive topics in the following parts.

The first part in Part II will deal with political regimes (democracy and dictatorship), regime dynamics, and culture (center around “Asian values”). In the second part of Part II, we will study two divergent political systems: democracy in Japan and dictatorship in China. Here the topics are political institutions (political party system, parliamentary and presidentialism, and electoral system) and political change (election and succession).

In Part III, we will examine the political economy of East Asia, highlighting East Asia’s phenomenal economic development and the recent financial crisis. We will explore the
various conditions under which the economic “miracle” happened and the socio-political consequences of rapid growth. And we will investigate the financial “crisis,” evaluating competing explanations of the origins and effects of the “crisis.”

**Readings**

Each student is expected to read (before class) all the required readings for each session (see the course outline below). All of these readings are posted on Semester Book. All students should have a LSU e-mail account for access to Semester Book through the PAWS desktop.

Students need to purchase and read the following book to write a final paper (see the course requirements below).


Here are some of the important background/recommended books on East Asia.

**General**


**China**


**Taiwan**


**Japan**


**Korea**

Course Requirements

Basically, classes will involve lectures and discussions of the reading material assigned for each session. But, I will introduce and explain some issues and concepts that are not in the readings, so attendance is crucial. This means that a significant amount of material on the examinations will come from class lectures presenting information not discussed directly in the text and other readings. Participation from students is important and will count toward the final grade. At the end of each week, I will distribute a memo (posted on Semester Book) that contains important points of my lecture.

Students are expected to complete:

1) Three tests (two mid-term and one final) (20% each)
   The emphasis is on important concepts and competing explanations of various political phenomena. Knowledge of some relevant historical facts is required as well.

2) Critical review paper (20%)
   You will write a critical review of Spector’s *In the Ruins of Empire*. The text should be no longer than six single-spaced pages. The format and guide of the paper will be discussed in class. **You should submit a hard copy due in class on December 4.**

3) Class participation (20%)
   Attendance will be taken for each session. Students may earn credit for their attendance at each class session, while repeated and unexcused absence will cause deduction in student's total grade. In addition to attending class, students are highly encouraged to ask and answer questions, and to make appropriate comments on issues covered in class.

Grading scale: A: 90 ~ 100; B: 80 ~ 89; C: 70 ~ 79; D: 50 ~ 69; F: 0 ~ 49

**NOTE:** If you do not take any of the examinations, or if you do not submit the final paper, you will automatically receive an F. No “make-up” examinations will be given; no late papers will be accepted.

Important Dates

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date and Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} midterm exam</td>
<td>September 25 (Thursday) 3:10 – 4:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} midterm exam</td>
<td>October 30 (Thursday) 3:10 – 4:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td><strong>December 12 (Friday) 7:30 – 9:30 am</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Final review paper</td>
<td>December 4 (Thursday) due in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall Holiday</td>
<td>October 9 (Thursday) No class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>November 13 (Thursday) No class</td>
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<td>Thanksgiving</td>
<td>November 27 (Thursday) No class</td>
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Course Outline

I. Modern Nation-State Formation

1. Theoretical Framework: Three Traditions in Comparative Politics
Importance of history. Three traditions or research paradigms – structuralism, culturalism, and rationalism.

No reading required.

2. East Asia and the World


3. China


4. Taiwan
Colonizers and colonized. KMT (or the GMD). February 28 Incident. Why did the Nationalists fail? Is Taiwan the nation state or part of “Greater China?” National identity.


5. Japan


6. Two Koreas


7. Southeast Asia


II. Political System, Culture, and People

8. Democracy and Dictatorship
Minimalist vs. maximalist definitions. Trend and pattern of political regimes throughout the world.


9. Democratic Transition
Prerequisites vs. strategic interactions. Top-down vs. bottom-up models. Third Wave in Asia. Tiananmen Square in 1989. Why do some dictators survive longer than others?


10. “Asian Values?” Culture and Democracy
Conceptualization of political culture. “Asian values.” Do we need democrats to have a democracy? Is culture an independent or dependent variable? Is culture a variable?


11. Hegemonic Party and Politics of “Complacency?”: Japan
Parliamentarism vs. presidentialism. The 1955 system. Cabinet formation. Minimal coalition size vs. minimal connected coalition. Electoral system. What made the end of the LDP dominance possible? Conservative-socialist connection. “Lost ten years.” Politics of “complacency?” The general issues are: 1) party system, 2) parliamentarism, 3) electoral system, and 4) cabinet formation.


III. “Miracle and Crisis”: Political Economy of East Asia

13. The Developmental State


14. Financial Crisis


15. Conclusion
What have we learned from this course?