

Asia In A Modern World

History 004

University of Pennsylvania
Department of History
Spring 2009

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Purpose: History 004 seeks to make modern Asian history intelligible by examining both internal change and external interactions in the region, and with the West. *It is an introduction*, albeit to challenging (but immensely important) material. The course will begin to familiarize you, not with the international world your parents or grandparents lived (or imagined they lived) in—*but with the world in which you will live, and some of its fundamental issues*. That is to say, it will look at a world whose destiny will be decided by the interactions of the European, Russian, Chinese, Indian, Islamic and other peoples of the vast Eurasian continent.

Some real intellectual curiosity and historical imagination are desirable, but *the course has no other prerequisites*. Readings and lectures will introduce material, and maps, lists of names and dates, glossaries, and other such materials will be provided as necessary. *But don't be put off or intimidated if much material is unfamiliar. How could it be otherwise?* We will lead you into it as clearly as possible—*so freshmen are encouraged to join*.

Please note that with one exception, every assigned reading is written not by a Western student of the country in question, but rather by a citizen—among them some of the greatest writers and memoirists of the last century.

Topic: The course focuses on the transitions, everywhere from Turkey to Japan, from the traditional ways of organizing life to the changes adopted or forced during the nineteenth century period.

We proceed methodically, country by country, looking at the traditional, the transitional, and what exists now. From the very first lecture, however, we stress the interconnections that make the history of Asia *an integrated whole* or seamless fabric, that must be treated as one, rather than sheared into fragments as is usually done. This integration—economic, demographic, military, artistic and cultural, religious, and so forth—is our primary theme.

Most of the states we examine were autocratically controlled, by monarchs, during the traditional period and most of them spent much or all of the twentieth century likewise under autocratic control. How and why this happened (or in a few cases did not) will be a second major theme.

This course is designed for an undergraduate or graduate who is serious about *being brought up to date* about the world in which they will live. There is nothing mysterious about the course—except, perhaps, that Penn is one of a handful of colleges and universities to offer a serious and substantial introductory course that seeks to integrate the histories of the seventeen million (the United States is not quite four million) square miles of Asia.

History 004/404 stands on its own, but it is logically complemented by History 003 “Asia in a Wider World”, to be given again in the spring semester of 2010. This course introduces Asia from the beginnings until about the sixteenth century.

Both course are intended as serious introductions; as doors through which students can enter a more specialized concentration on the world of national and cultural histories of the lands from the eastern Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.

Meetings: We will normally meet on **Tuesdays and Thursdays for lecture, 1030-1200.**

Requirements: Because we have no teaching assistants or recitations; no, not even a grader (!)—so much for Penn’s deep commitment to the study of the world beyond the United States—because of these lamentable circumstances, you the students and I will keep in touch using discussion threads on our blackboard site. Much other material will also be posted on that site. It will serve as a second classroom.

Most units have three lectures. I will post questions on the discussion thread and would ask you, after you have done the reading and heard two lectures, to **post a thoughtful response to my question**. You may also set up threads yourself, argue with one another on line, and so forth. **You must post BY MIDNIGHT OF THE DAY OF THE SECOND LECTURE** (exceptions will be discussed). I will read all postings and respond to as many as I can.

I think you will find the online discussion very interesting, convenient (you can chat with me and your colleagues at any hour of the day or night, as the spirit moves you). **YOUR ONLINE WORK WILL COUNT FORTY PERCENT OF YOUR FINAL GRADE.** I think you will agree this is fair: I find that I get to know my students better on line than through examinations.

We will also have regular midterm and final examinations. These will pose no problem for anyone who does the work and keeps up with the course.

Course Personnel: I have regular office hours: Tuesdays 13:00-14:00 (please sign up, 311C College Hall). I would ask you NOT to email me. Instead, post your concerns on blackboard.

Course Materials: You will notice that we have no textbook. No suitable one has yet been written. So the basic narrative and analysis will be provided in lectures.

In order to make the course as first hand as possible, I have assigned a number of fine memoirs written by people from Asia who lived through the events they describe—a Tibetan monk, a Chinese official of the last century and one of the great Chinese writers of

the present, a towering Indian man of letters (and one of the great twentieth century masters of English prose), a Russian serf, a Korean prisoner, a great Japanese educator, and so forth.

You will be responsible for everything in the lectures and readings. This may seem a lot, but in fact what is important, and therefore likely to be tested, will become clear and obvious as the course progresses.

I promise you this will be an genuinely enjoyable course, and informative. High intellectual protein content for you mental fitness types!

Assigned Readings: These books are available at the **Penn Book Center** (Corner of Walnut and 34th Street, NOT the big University bookstore!) and on reserve in Van Pelt library:

Halide Edib *The House with Wisteria* [1926] (Charlottesville, VA: Leopolis Press, 2003) ISBN 0-9679960-3-1

Edward G. Browne *The Persian Revolution 1905-1909* [1910] Introduction by Abbas Amanat (Washington, D.C.: Image Publishers, 2006) ISBN 193382307

Nikitenko, Aleksandr. *Up from Serfdom: My Childhood and Youth in Russia, 1804-1824*. [1888] Tr. Helen Saltz Jacobson. Foreword by Peter Kolchin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) ISBN 0-300-08414-5

Chaudhuri, Nirad C. *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* [1951] (London: Macmillan & Co., 1951).

Chiang Monlin *Tides from the West* [Published in Chiang's own English and Chinese, simultaneously, in 1947. Chinese title: 西潮 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947)

Eiichi Kiyooka, tr. With foreword by Carmen Blacker. *The Autobiography of Yukichi Fukuzawa* [1932] (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) ISBN 0-231-08373-4

Kang Chol-Hwan and Piere Rigoulot, *Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag* (New York: Basic Books, 2001) ISBN 0-465-01101-2

Gyatso, Palden. *The Autobiography of a Tibetan Monk*. With a foreword by the Dalai Lama [1992] (New York: Grove Press, 1997) ISBN: 0-8021-1621-3

Thant Myint-U *The River of Lost Footsteps: Histories of Burma* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005) ISBN: 0374163421 ISBN-13: 9780374163426

Alexander N. Yakovlev, foreword by Paul Hollander, translated by Anthony Austin, *A Century of Violence in Soviet Russia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), hardcover, 254

pages, ISBN 0-300-08760-8; trade paperback, Yale University Press (2002), 272 pages, ISBN 0-300-10322-0

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York: Knopf, 2005)

Grading: Final grades will be calculated roughly as follows:

Course Web: 40%

Midterm Examination: 20%

Final Examination: 40%

SCHEDULE

Week I. Introduction: (Th 15 January)

Lecture: What the Course is About

Week II. *The Turkish World* (TTh 20, 22 January)

Lecture: The Ottoman Empire at its Height

Lecture: Constitutional Change and the Young Turk Revolution

Reading: Halide Edib *The House with Wisteria* [1926]

Week III.

(TTh 27 29 January)

Lecture: World War I and the Ataturk Regime

The Persian World

Lecture: The Safavid Empire and its Ending

Week IV. (TTh 03,05 February)

Lecture: Afghanistan

