

POLS 420: Introduction to Asian Politics

CLASS LOCATION: ADMIN BUILDING 336

CLASS TIME: TR 03:30 pm – 04:45 pm

INSTRUCTOR: Chen Wang

OFFICE: Admin Building 205J

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday 9:30 am – 11:30 am or by appointment

EMAIL: chenw@uidaho.edu

DEPARTMENT PHONE: (208)885-6032

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to provide students with a basic understanding of both domestic and international politics of *major* regions and countries in Asia. It is challenging to study Asian Politics in one single course, even at the introductory level. The European countries share common cultural heritage and, nowadays, democratic political systems. The same might be said about Latin America, while the countries of Sub-Saharan African share common patterns of political history. But there is surprisingly little in common among the countries in Asia. They are characterized by diverse religious/cultural traditions (Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity), colonial legacies (or lack thereof), political systems (ranging from democracy to one-party autocracy to monarchy, and levels of development. They are not entirely integrated economically (in contrast to Europe) and have complex relations characterized by union (e.g., ASEAN), hostility (e.g., Japan and China), rivalry (India and Pakistan), or contesting-alliance (both South Korea and Japan are key US allies in the region but are periodically at odds with each other). Each subregion, or even country, merits its own semester-length treatment.

Due to this regional diversity, this course will inevitably be taught in a selective manner. The majority of our time will be spent on the Northeast Asia theater, which includes China, Japan, and two Koreas (South Korea and North Korea). This subregion warrants the most pressing attention for a simple and straightforward reason: it has the potential to trigger another world war (either over a nuclearized North Korea or the Taiwan Strait). We will also briefly cover India (another major power in South Asia measured by economy, size, and military), and only take a bird's-eye view of the ASEAN countries (Southeast Asia). We will regrettably not cover Central (e.g., Kazakhstan) and West Asia (e.g., Saudi Arabia).

Hopefully, with this calibrated balance of depth and breadth, the course can prepare students for their future study/research in Asian Politics and/or their career development in international affairs of this region.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students are expected to:

- Gain basic knowledge and understanding of both domestic and international politics of certain countries and regions in Asia.
 - Enhance your ability to apply basic political science concepts to understanding these countries' behaviors and policies
 - Be able to form independent evaluation of events and issues related to these countries.
 - Learn to think critically, write convincingly, and communicate clearly.
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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your grade in this course will be derived from your performance on the following components:

- **Attendance and Participation: 10%**

Attendance and participation are important. Each student is permitted *three unexcused absences*. Every other absence will lower your participation grade by 5 percent unless you have a valid excuse (medical, academic, family, etc.) backed by proper documentation. The course will succeed only if students have completed all the required readings, and arrive prepared and ready to share thoughts and questions about the subject matter.

- **In-class Quizzes: 15%**

There will be **six quizzes** based on the readings and previous lectures across the semester (mostly multiple choice and true-or-false questions). The quizzes will be conducted at the beginning of the classes marked in the weekly schedule below. The quizzes are **open-book, but timed**. Each time students will have **15 minutes** to complete the quiz. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped from the final course grade.

- **Reaction Essay: 15%**

Each student will write an essay in response to one reading of your own choosing. Readings that are available for this assignment are marked with **Reaction Essay** in the schedule below. The essay should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margin on all sides, with 12-point Times New Roman font. No specific styles are required, but you must have citations that can be traced back to the original sources (see course policy on academic integrity below). **The essay is due on the Tuesday of the week in which the reading is scheduled to be covered.** Late submission will be penalized 5 percent for each day late except in the event of a documented medical or family emergency.

The essay should be roughly organized into two parts. The first part should be a succinct summary of the key points of the article (**less than one page**):

- What is the question or puzzle the author(s) are trying to address?
- What is the author(s)' answer/argument?
- What kind of evidence have the author(s) provided to support the argument (or to reject other explanations)?

The second part of the essay should be focused on discussing your own opinions/critiques about the article. Things that could be discussed include:

- What surprised you most about the discussion in the article? What did you find most interesting and why?
- To what extent do you agree or disagree with the author(s)' argument, analysis, and/or evidence? Why?

- **Presentation: 15%**

Each student is also expected to sign up for one reading to present. Readings that are available for this assignment are marked with **Presentation** in the schedule below. **The paper you plan to present should be different from the Reaction Essay one.** Each reading will have **two slots** for students to sign up as presenters. And if there are two students who sign up for the same reading then they will work as a team to conduct the presentation. The presentations are scheduled for the last 30 minutes of every Thursday's meeting. Detailed instructions about the presentation will be discussed in class later. But the general expectation is that the presenter(s) will present the content as if they are the author(s) of the paper.

- **Take-home Midterm Exam: 20%**

There will be a take-home midterm exam scheduled on **Thursday, March 7th**. It will be a timed open-book exam (75-mins) that contains multiple choice, true-or-false, short answer, and essay questions. The exam will be conducted on Canvas during the class time on the exam day.

- **Final Exam: 25%**

The final exam will be given during the period scheduled by the University. This will be a timed, open-book exam (only notes and readings are allowed). The exam will be cumulative but with a slightly heavier focus on topics after midterm, which will consist of multiple choice questions, true-or-false questions, short answer questions, and one essay.

- **Grade Scale**

There will be no curving in this class. Final letter grades will be calculated as follows:

[90, 100]	A
[80, 90)	B
[70, 80)	C
[60, 70)	D
[0, 60)	F

COURSE MATERIALS

The complexity and diversity of Asian Politics also make it difficult to have a coherent and comprehensive learning experience with one single textbook. We will thus rely on different book chapters

and academic journal articles to facilitate our study. All required readings will be provided by the instructor and available on Canvas.

In addition, students are also encouraged to watch a free YouTube channel: [Asian Boss](#), where you can find interesting street interviews on a variety of topics with ordinary people all over Asia. Sometimes these interviews can provide you with perspectives that are very different from those you can read from major news outlets such as NYT, Washington Post, or WSJ.

COURSE POLICIES

- **Academic Integrity**

Cheating and plagiarism are taken very seriously in this course. All assignments must be solely original work of the student. Violations include quoting or paraphrasing another author without attribution on written assignments. Avoid plagiarism by using footnotes (with page numbers) whenever you quote, paraphrase, or otherwise borrow someone else's ideas. If you are unsure whether you are committing plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask me for guidance (before you submit your work). Note that forming a group to study for homework assignments or offering feedback on a draft of another student's paper are not considered violations of academic integrity. On the other hand, writing portions of a classmate's paper or copying a paragraph from a book or website without attribution are very serious violations. It is the policy of our department to refer instances of suspected academic dishonesty to the Student Judicial Council. For the Dean of Students' Academic Integrity site, see <https://www.uidaho.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/student-conduct/academic-integrity>.

- **Learning Environment Civility**

In any environment (including online) in which people gather to learn, it is essential that all members feel as free and safe as possible in their participation. To this end, it is expected that everyone in this course will be treated with mutual respect and civility, with an understanding that all of us (students, instructors, and guests) will be respectful and civil to one another in discussion, in action, in teaching, and in learning. Should you feel our classroom interactions do not reflect an environment of civility and respect, you are encouraged to meet with your instructor during office hours to discuss your concern. Additional resources for expression of concern or requesting support include the Dean of Students office and staff (5-6757), the UI Counseling & Testing Center's confidential services (5-6716), or the UI Office of Human Rights, Access, & Inclusion (5- 4285).

- **Grade Appeals**

Hopefully there will be no reason to contest a grade. However, a student who believes strongly that a homework assignment or the paper has been graded incorrectly may appeal by writing a one-page, typed memo explaining why the grade was inappropriate. No sooner than 72 hours and no later than 10 days after the original grade was issued, the memo must be submitted along with the original graded assignment to me for re-grading.

- **Religious Holidays**

Although students are expected to meet every due/deadline, exceptions will of course be made for religious holidays. Students who know they will miss any deadline owing to observance of a religious holiday need to notify the instructor during the first week of the semester.

- **Accommodations**

University of Idaho is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course or instructional content are usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class (including pregnancy-related disabilities), please contact Center for Disability Access and Resources (CDAR) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from CDAR is required before any modifications, above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided. Please be advised that disability-related academic adjustments are not retroactive. CDAR is located at the Bruce Pitman Building, Suite 127. Phone is 208-885-6307 and e-mail is cdar@uidaho.edu. For a complete listing of services and current business hours visit <https://www.uidaho.edu/cdar>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The subsequent weekly schedule in this course are tentative and subject to change.

Week 1 (Jan 11): No Class

Instructor will be traveling for conferences

Week 2 (Jan 16 & Jan 18)–Introduction

- Read this syllabus
- Gilley, Bruce. 2014. *The Nature of Asian Politics*. **Chapter 1**.
- Shambaugh, David and Michael. Yahuda. 2014. *International Relations of Asia*. 2nd ed. **Chapter 1**

Week 3 (Jan 23 & Jan 25)–China I: The Party-State

- Joseph, William A., ed. 2014. *Politics in China: An Introduction*. **Chapter 2 & 6**
- Horsley, Jamie. 2023. “What is the State of the Chinese State.” *The Diplomat*: [available online](#)
- Truex, Rory. 2020. “Authoritarian gridlock? Understanding delay in the Chinese legislative system.” *Comparative Political Studies* . [[Reaction Essay](#)]

Week 4 (Jan 30 & Feb 1)–China II: From the “Red Star” to the “Pragmatist”

- Xu, Chenggang. 2011. “The fundamental institutions of China’s reforms and development.” *Journal of Economic Literature*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Montinola, Gabriella, Yingyi Qian, and Barry R. Weingast. 1995 “Federalism, Chinese style: the political basis for economic success in China.” *World Politics*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Shaoda Wang and David Y. Yang. 2022. “Policy Experimentation in China: The Political Economy of Policy Learning” *NBER Working Paper*: [available online](#). [[Reaction Essay](#)]

Week 5 (Feb 6 & Feb 8)–China III: Elite Politics**Quiz-1 on Feb 6**

- Li, Cheng. 2012. “The powerful factions among China’s rulers.” *Brookings*: [available online](#)
- Jia, Ruixue, Masayuki Kudamatsu, and David Seim. 2015. “Political selection in China: The complementary roles of connections and performance.” *Journal of the European Economic Association*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Zhu, Jiangnan, and Dong Zhang. 2016. “Weapons of the powerful: authoritarian elite competition and politicized anticorruption in China.” *Comparative Political Studies*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]

Week 6 (Feb 13 & Feb 15)–China IV: Security and Foreign Policies

- Drinhausen, Katja and Helena Legarda. 2022. “Confident Paranoia: Xi’s ‘comprehensive national security’ framework shapes China’s behavior at home and abroad.” *Metrics China Monitor*
- Fravel, M. Tyler. 2021. *Testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission: Hearing on ‘US-China Relations at the Chinese Communist Party’s Centennial’*.
- Culver, John and Ryan Hass. 2021. “Understanding Beijing’s motives regarding Taiwan, and America’s role: A 35-year CIA officer’s view.” *Brookings*: [available online](#)
- Fravel, M. Taylor. 2007. “Power shifts and escalation: explaining China’s use of force in territorial disputes.” *International Security*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]

Week 7 (Feb 20 & Feb 22)–Japan I: The Long-term LDP Dominance**Quiz-2 on Feb 20**

- Scheiner, Ethan. 2006. *Democracy Without Competition in Japan: Opposition Failure in a One-Party Dominant State*. **Chapter 3**. [[Reaction Essay](#)]
- Scheiner, Ethan. 2005. “Pipelines of pork: Japanese politics and a model of local opposition party failure.” *Comparative Political Studies*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Cox, Gary W., Frances McCall Rosenbluth, and Michael F. Thies. 1999. “Electoral reform and the fate of factions: The case of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party.” *British Journal of Political Science*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]

Week 8 (Feb 27 & Feb 29)–Japan II: Security and Foreign Policies

- Richard J. Samuels. 2006. “Japan’s Goldilocks Strategy.” *The Washington Quarterly*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Jerdén, Björn, and Linus Hagström. 2012. “Rethinking Japan’s China policy: Japan as an accommodator in the rise of China, 1978–2011.” *Journal of East Asian Studies*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Tamaki, Taku. 2019. “It takes two to Tango: the difficult Japan–South Korea relations as clash of realities.” *Japanese Journal of Political Science*. [[Reaction Essay](#)]

Week 9 (Mar 5 & Mar 7)–Japan III: The Puzzling Long Stagnation**Take-home Midterm Exam on March 7 (No Class)**

- Krugman, Paul. 2023. “What happened to Japan?” *New York Times*
- Hoshi, Takeo, and Anil Kashyap. 2011. “Why did Japan stop growing?.” *NIRA Report*.

Week 10: Spring Break**Week 11 (Mar 19 & Mar 21)–Two Korea I: Democratization of the South****Quiz-3 on Mar 19**

- Fowler, James. 1999. “The United States and South Korean Democratization.” *Political Science Quarterly*. [[Reaction Essay](#)]
- Suh, Jae-Jung, Sunwon Park, and Hahn Y. Kim. 2012. “Democratic consolidation and its limits in Korea: Dilemmas of cooptation.” *Asian Survey*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Shin, Doh Chull. 2018. “The Deconsolidation of Liberal Democracy in Korea: Exploring its Cultural Roots.” *Korea Observer*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]

Week 12 (Mar 26 & Mar 28)–Two Korea II: Authoritarian Resilience in the North

- Eleanor, Albert. 2020. “North Korea’s Power Structure.” *Council on Foreign Relations*: [available online](#)
- Byman, Daniel, and Jennifer Lind. 2010. “Pyongyang’s survival strategy: tools of authoritarian control in North Korea.” *International Security*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Kim, Taekbin, and John Ishiyama. 2023. “Kim Jong Un and Consolidating Power: Explaining Elite Appointment in the Workers’ Party of Korea Central Committee, 2012–2019.” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Greitens, Sheena Chestnut, and Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein. 2022. “Toward Market Leninism in North Korea: Assessing Kim Jong Un’s First Decade.” *Asian Survey*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]

Week 13 (Apr 2 & Apr 4)–Two Korea III: Stability and Instability in the Korean Peninsular

Quiz-4 on Apr 2

- Roehrig, Terrence. 2016. “North Korea, nuclear weapons, and the stability-instability paradox.” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*. [[Reaction Essay](#)]
- Bowers, Ian, and Henrik Stålhane Hiim. 2020. “Conventional counterforce dilemmas: South Korea’s deterrence strategy and stability on the Korean Peninsula.” *International Security*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Bernhardt, Jordan, and Lauren Sukin. 2021. “Joint Military Exercises and Crisis Dynamics on the Korean Peninsula.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]

Week 14 (Apr 9 & Apr 11)–India I: The Puzzling Case of Democracy

- Treisman, Daniel. 2007. “What have we learned about the causes of corruption from ten years of cross-national empirical research?.” *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Sun, Yan, and Michael Johnston. 2009. “Does democracy check corruption? Insights from China and India.” *Comparative Politics*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Bertrand, Marianne, Simeon Djankov, Rema Hanna, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2007. “Obtaining a driver’s license in India: an experimental approach to studying corruption.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]

Week 15 (Apr 16 & Apr 18)–India II: The Duel in South Asia

Quiz-5 on Apr 16

- Paul, Thazha V. 2006. “Why has the India-Pakistan rivalry been so enduring? Power asymmetry and an intractable conflict.” *Security Studies*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Mansoob Murshed, Syed, and Dawood Mamoon. “Not loving thy neighbour as thyself: Trade, democracy and military expenditure explanations underlying India—Pakistan rivalry.” *Journal of Peace Research*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Suedfeld, Peter, and Rajiv Jhangiani. 2009. “Cognitive management in an enduring international rivalry: The case of India and Pakistan.” *Political Psychology*. [[Reaction Essay](#)]

Week 16 (Apr 23 & Apr 25)–South East Asia

- George, Cherian. 2007. “Consolidating authoritarian rule: Calibrated coercion in Singapore.” *The Pacific Review*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Thayer, Carlyle A. 2010. “Political legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and response.” *Politics & Policy*. [[Reaction Essay](#)] [[Presentation](#)]
- Rees, Nicholas. 2010. “EU and ASEAN: Issues of regional security.” *International Politics*.

Week 17 (Apr 30 & May 2)–America in Asia**Quiz-6 on Apr 30**

- “What Asia needs from America today?” *Editorial Board of East Asia Forum*: [available online](#)
- Paal, Douglas. 2019. “America’s Future in a Dynamic Asia.” *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*.
- Heginbotham, Eric, and Richard J. Samuels. 2021. “Vulnerable US Alliances in Northeast Asia: The Nuclear Implications.” *The Washington Quarterly*. [[Reaction Essay](#)]