

East Asian Studies Program Spring 2026 Course Descriptions

Four-credit hours courses

These courses meet twice a week for 105 minutes per class.

Please note that students must attend both sessions of the course.

ASIAN PHILOSOPHIES & THOUGHT

Junichiro Ando

Monday & Friday 4th (15:20-17:05)

The aim of this course is to help students acquire a basic understanding about the history of East Asian traditional thoughts, which would also lead to deeper and better insights into many contemporary issues of the region. The course will consist of four sections.

In the first section, the course will focus on the major schools of Chinese classical philosophy (such as Confucianism, Taoism and Legalism) that formed a common ideological background in premodern East Asia, tracing how they had been generated and developed into highly sophisticated theories (both metaphysical and practical), and how they had spread over a broad area of the Far East and fostered the emergence of a “sphere of civilization” (in the broader sense of term).

In the second section, the course will discuss the process in which the classical philosophies gradually merged with indigenous or imported religions in different parts of East Asia and ingenerated various forms of religious traditions. The examples such as following will be covered: Confucianism as a theory and ritual of ancestral worship, Taoism as a popular religion, Chinese Buddhism and its unique development in Japan, Japanese Shintoism, and Islam in China (that may seem somewhat less important but actually has played very important role in Chinese history).

The third section will provide a general survey of the profound influence of these teachings – especially Confucianism – to the traditional political and social systems in East Asia. The cases of China, Japan and Korea will be considered comparatively.

Then in the fourth section, the problems of “traditional thoughts and modernity” in East Asia will be discussed. This final section will deal with the philosophical struggles in China and Japan after the late 19th century to reconsider the traditional thoughts, transform the old ideologies and construct the new ways of thinking.

GLOBALIZATION & ASIA

Mikhail Kotykhov

Tuesday & Thursday 4th (15:20-17:05)

Globalization affects different aspects of economic and social environment in Asia. In this class we will focus on how globalization process changes the economic and social development in Asian countries. In particular, we will discuss the impact of globalization on the economic integration, free trade, labor migration, quality of life, education and knowledge economy, cultural exports, technology development and environmental sustainability.

SURVEY OF IDENTITIES IN ASIA

Julian Manning

Tuesday 4th (15:20-17:05) & 5th (17:15-19:00)

This course will examine issues of ethnic identity in Japan, China and South Korea and how discourses of ethnic identity have historically informed the construction of these nation-states and national identities. As a starting point, we will attempt to arrive at concrete definitions of the terms used in discussing these issues, namely ethnicity, nation and identity. Dismissing the notion that any of these properties are primordial in origin or innate to human beings, we will argue that all of these are best understood as socially constructed concepts. This implies that the concepts are therefore also subject to social deconstruction and reconstruction and cannot be properly understood if we imagine them to be distinctive reified, essential properties of specific groups of human beings.

Having established the ground rules, students will be presented with two opposing arguments concerning the origins of national identities derived from studies in nationalism. The first position is that contemporary nation-states and the concomitant identities and nationalisms associated with them are products of the modern, industrial world. This position is supported by writers such as Ernest Gellner (*Nations and Nationalism*), Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*) and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (*The Invention of Tradition*). The opposing position is known as ethno-symbolism. The main proponent of this position is Anthony Smith (*The Ethnic Roots of Nations*). Smith argues that contemporary nation-states and nationalisms have their roots in pre-modern ethnic identities.

Having presented the two opposing models, we will turn to the specific case studies of Japan, China and South Korea and attempt to identify the salient discourses of ethnic and national identity current in each society. We will examine how these discourses have developed over time and how they have been employed to shape each society. We will assess whether the modernist, the ethno-symbolic or neither model of the origins of national identity best fits our East Asian examples of nation-states.

GLOBAL ASIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Sam-Sang Jo

Wednesday 4th (15:20-17:05) & 5th (17:15-19:00)

Despite the notable strides in democracy and economic integration, Asia remains marked by pervasive tensions, potential flashpoints, and complex antagonistic relationships. The course is designed to offer students a profound exploration of the geopolitical landscape, security challenges, and foreign policy dynamics in 21st-century Asia. Throughout the semester, this course will delve into crucial facets such as the rising influence of Japan, South Korea at the crossroads, the debate over North Korea, India-China relations, democracy in East Asia, history disputes, territorial Disputes, and new regional order. A focal point of the course is a thorough examination of the profound impact of China's ascent and the escalating strategic rivalry between the United States and China on the region's geopolitical dynamics.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Issac Gagne

Thursday 3rd (13:25-15:10) & 4th (15:20-17:05)

This course introduces the social scientific study of gender, sexuality, and family in Japan from the postwar to the contemporary period from a comparative perspective. The course combines historical and contemporary analysis of gender, family, and sexuality to look at change and continuity of gendered life ways in Japan. The course is divided into five sections addressing issues of: 1) Defining Gender and Gender Stereotypes; 2) Gender and Social Institutions; 3) Gender Construction / Performance; 4) The Politics of Identity and Sexuality; and 5) Gender and "Marginality." In addition, in each section we investigate cultural constructions of gender, family, and sexuality and key themes that revolve around them: identity, class, morality, and life course in contemporary Japan. At the end of each section, we will take time to reflect on gender and sexuality in Asia more broadly. The course consists of lectures, student-led presentations, class discussions, and reflective essays.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Colin Tyner

Friday 3rd (13:25-15:10) & 4th (15:20-17:05)

The aim of this course is to provide an introduction changing relationship between human beings and nature from the mid-nineteenth century to beginning of the twenty-first century. The chronological focus will be on the early modern and modern periods. Themes covered in this course include, but are not limited, to the impact of colonialism on environmental change, resource use and development, disasters and vulnerability, migration and conflict, environmental dynamics of cities, and the impact of climate change on human societies.

Two-credit hours courses

Full TERM: 13-week courses

This course meets once a week for 105 minutes.

POLITICS IN ASIA

Jake Northey

Wednesday 3rd (13:25-15:10)

This course offers an account of change and continuity in Japanese politics from the postwar years to the present. The course provides an overview of Japan's political landscape, focusing on major political institutions, such as the party system, the government and public administration, the media, civil society and more. This course provides students with a foundational knowledge of Japanese politics through textbook readings as well as in-class exercises designed to stimulate independent thinking about the critical issues that characterise Japanese politics today. This course will be of interest to students interested in learning more about Japanese society through a lens of political issues and those who have an interest in comparative politics in general.

2nd QUARTER: 7-week courses

June 5-July 23

These courses meet twice a week for 105 minutes per session

Students must attend both sessions of these courses.

SEMINAR IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Shiho Watabe

Monday 2nd (10:55-12:40) & Thursday 1st (9:00-10:45)

Entrepreneurship is a way of understanding how value is created, communicated, and sustained in society. This course invites students to explore entrepreneurship as both a mindset and a practice that sits at the intersection of technology, culture, history, and global markets, with a particular focus on Japan and its relationship with the world.

Through lectures, seminar-style discussions, and active student participation, the course examines how industries emerge, how narratives shape markets, and how entrepreneurs and organizations respond to social, technological, and cultural change. Students will analyze case studies from Japan and other global ecosystems, including Silicon Valley, Europe, and Southeast Asia, while also engaging with Japan's distinctive strengths such as pop culture, intellectual property, and hardware innovation.

By the end of the course, students will have developed a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship as a lens for interpreting the world, as well as the confidence to engage thoughtfully with complex, real-world problems across cultural and national boundaries.

FIELDWORK IN JAPAN

Brian Masshardt

Monday & Tuesday 3rd (13:25-15:10)

This course provides a foundational understanding of key fieldwork methods used in ethnographic research. Although formally designated as a lecture-style course, it is highly interactive, balancing readings, discussions, and conversations with fieldwork professionals. However, fieldwork is learned by doing, not just by reading about it. Students will gain hands-on experience with essential research methods, including journaling, surveying, direct observation, participant observation, and interviewing, all of which will contribute to the creation of a mini-ethnography. This course encourages students to actively engage with their surroundings, critically reflect on their observations, and deepen understanding of daily lived experiences.

SEMINAR IN VISUAL CULTURES

Maumita Banerjee

Wednesday & Friday 3rd (13:25-15:10)

This introductory course on visual culture focuses on Japan. It examines key texts related to Japanese history, society, and politics through the lens of visual culture. Students are encouraged to engage with the course materials, participate in discussions, and think comparatively. Using themes like gender, violence, and memory, we will explore questions such as: How do images create meaning? How do visuals shape memory? How do they contest power?

East Asian Studies Program Fall 2026 Course Descriptions

Four-credit hours courses

These courses meet twice a week for 105 minutes per class.

Please note that you must attend both sessions of the course.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON ASIAN SOCIETIES

Matthew Carlsen

Monday & Wednesday 5th (17:15-19:00)

This course explores Japanese society and culture from historical and theoretical perspectives. The scope of topics covered will be wide ranging, including Japanese philosophy, Bushido, religion, anime, manga, fashion, art, Meiji Restoration, class/gender stratification, family and school educations, economy, immigration, demographic and social problems. The course will stress primary engagement with these cultural forms incorporating a variety of activities and field experiences in and out of the classroom. It will also enlighten specific issues of cultural phenomenon, social and historical contexts to gain insights into the links between traditional and modern Japan. This intensive course is basically designed for international junior/senior students interested in Japanese culture, society, philosophy and history.

JAPAN & INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

Theme: TRANSNATIONAL HISTORIES & GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Yasuko Kobayashi-Hassell

Tuesday & Thursday 3rd (13:25-15:10)

This advanced history course provides a critical examination of modern Japan's historical development within a transnational and global framework. It interrogates Japan's complex engagement with global historical processes, emphasising the reciprocal influences of intellectual exchange, migration, and cultural diffusion—particularly through food. Challenging nation-centric narratives, the course investigates Japan's evolving role within transnational networks, assessing how it has both shaped and been shaped by global forces. Through a critical analysis of Japan's interactions with Asia, the West, and broader global systems, students will develop a sophisticated understanding of its historical trajectory in an interconnected world. Designed for those with a strong foundation in global history, this course fosters a deeper engagement with historiographical debates and methodological approaches in transnational history.

TOPICS IN GLOBAL BUSINESS

Mikhail Kotykhov

Tuesday & Thursday 4th (15:20-17:05)

Japan, Korea, and China have distinctive characteristics in relation to business and management systems. Through an examination of the development stages and current issues facing these three countries, students will have acquired specialized knowledge on diverse models of business and management systems in East Asia, as well as acquired skills to critically analyze regional business and management systems in a global economy.

JAPANESE HISTORY

Theme: FROM 1868 TO THE PRESENT

Colin Tyner

Friday 3rd (13:25-15:10) & 4th (15:20-17:05)

This course covers the cultural and social history of Japan from the mid-1850s to the present moment. The course was designed for students without any background in Japanese history. We will begin with an examination of the construction the nation-state of the Japan in the context of an imperialized East Asia. Through a selection of translations, secondary sources, we will discuss how people were enrolled in the making of Japan and how their participation in the construction of this empire differed depending on their gender, class, and ethnicity.

Two-credit hours courses

These courses meet once a week for 105 minutes.

SURVEY OF GLOBAL ISSUES

Theme: REGIONAL ORDER & ASEAN

Sam-Sang Jo

Monday 3rd (13:25-15:10)

Established in 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is recognized as one of the world's most successful regional organizations. This course aims to explore and analyze the historical development, current challenges, and future prospects of ASEAN. Additionally, it seeks to provide students with a better understanding of ASEAN within the context of a changing global landscape, particularly amid the growing rivalry between the United States and China, along with addressing the challenges to the principle of ASEAN Centrality and the Indo-Pacific security architecture. The course should broaden and deepen your substantive, historical, and systematic knowledge of regional order and ASEAN. In addition, the course should improve your general learning potential and level of competence. My hope is that you will find the material interesting, that you will learn, and that you will grow intellectually.

SURVEY IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURES

Munia Hweidi

Monday 4th (15:20-17:05)

This course is a comparative survey of literature centering Japanese literature in dialogue with other world literatures focusing on Environmental fiction as seen in genres such as docufiction, petro-fiction, science fiction, and eco horror. Through our discussions and introductions to the various authors and their works, we will learn how to approach a literary text by considering both how the text is presented and the details of its content as well as how it can be put in dialogue with other works. By the end of the course we will have been introduced to a selection of literary works and have developed the language to provide a critical reading of a text by appreciating both form and context, as well as how to relate it in a comparative framework.

STUDIES OF ASIAN ECONOMIES

Tai-Wei Lim

Monday 4th (15:20-17:05)

This is a contemporary political-economic and economic history (from the late 20th century to the current period) course on East Asia surveyed through the lens of multidisciplinary area studies. It highlights some selected important themes in political-economic developments that may potentially lead to a better understanding of contemporary East Asian regionalism and affairs. These political-economic themes can be found in the case studies on East Asian regionalism and technological developments. The course materials are also divided into three major regions of focus: Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and US Pacific presence. This course does not pretend to be comprehensive but provides class participants with the essential knowledge to analyse and understand contemporary East Asian political-economic affairs and developments.

TRADITIONAL ARTS OF ASIA

Cecile Laly

Tuesday 3rd (13:25-15:10)

This class is an introduction to Japanese traditional arts and crafts and focuses more particularly on their interrelations with various elements of Japanese popular culture during the Edo period. Subjects such as *ukiyo-e*, woodblock printing, theater, *haiku*, literature, kites, and tattoos will be discussed. The class aims at students who want to discover Japanese art history and also students who want to enlarge their general culture of Japanese culture and society.

TOPICS IN TECHNOLOGY & SOCIETY

Theme: DISCOURSES ON TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Ikenna Steve Nweke

Tuesday 5th (17:15-19:00)

The focus of this course is to explore how technology affects society, and vice versa? This course is designed to provide students with theoretical tools to begin asking questions for themselves and seeking better answers. Over the course of the semester, we will examine key themes in technology studies that involve Political Science, Economics, Anthropology, and Sociology within the context of Japan and Global Asia. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the emergence of new forms of social relationships involving both humans and non-humans in alignment with the adoption of new technology in the region.

SPECIAL TOPICS IN GLOBAL ASIA

Theme: THE POLITICS OF DEMOCRACY ACROSS EAST ASIA

Jake Northey

Wednesday 3rd (13:25-15:10)

In the final decades of the 20th century, there was a so-called "third wave of democratisation", with many scholars pointing to Asia as the hotspot for democratic struggle. Today, this view has been somewhat substantiated. However, struggles for democracy remain, as do the legacies of authoritarian regimes. Therefore, this course focuses on the historical and contemporary factors that fuel both drivers of and challenges to democracy in East Asia by providing an overview of the political cultures across the region. Because this course does not focus on one particular country it will be useful for students interested in East Asian politics, regional political developments, and political cultures in general.

SEMINAR IN GLOBAL ASIA ISSUES

Theme: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY & THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Eddie Hearn

Wednesday 4th (15:20-17:05)

This course examines the international relations of East Asia focusing on diplomacy, economic exchange, and conflict in the Asia-Pacific region. The course begins by introducing and applying traditional IR theory to East Asia. Do theories largely created and tested in Europe provide useful explanations of international relations in East Asia? The second part of the course examines the political economy of East Asia by first introducing Japan's distinctive model of political economy. The course then considers how this model has influenced other countries in Asia and examines the effect of China's economic rise on the region. How has China's rapid growth altered economic strategies and outcomes in East Asia?

MODERN ARTS OF ASIA

Cecile Laly

Friday 3rd (13:25-15:10)

This lecture focuses on Japanese art from the early 20th century until today. Japanese artists and creations are studied in a global context in order to grasp the difference of "contemporary Japanese art" viewed from Japan or from abroad. Special attention is given to painting, photography, and performance. The class aims at students who want to discover Contemporary Japanese art and also students who want to deepen their understanding of Japanese contemporary culture and society.

SURVEY OF GLOBAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATION

Theme: CONTEMPORARY MEDIA IN GLOBAL ASIA

Ikenna Steve Nweke

Friday 5th (17:15-19:00)

Contemporary Media in Global Asia introduces students to the interaction of media and sociopolitical issues in global Asia. The course is particularly devoted to examining the relationship between media and themes such as (In)security, identity politics, democracy, migration, diplomacy, inequality, human rights, and climate change, all from the perspective of Global Asia. The course aims to help students adeptly weave theory, history and contemporary events in analyzing the complexities of such interaction