HSEA 4232: EMPIRES IN THE FORMATION OF MODERN EAST ASIA, 1700-1950

SPRING 2017

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Course overview

This course, a seminar for advanced undergraduates and M.A. students, explores themes in the history of empires in East Asia, from the early 18th century to the end of World War II. The main geographical focus will be the region now corresponding to mainland China (including a part of Inner Asia), Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Colonial empires and their possessions in Southeast Asia will also be discussed.

The master narrative of modern political history has long been one of transition from Empire to Nation: decaying empires – Mughal, Ottoman, Qing – proved unable to adapt to the challenges of modern international competition, and were replaced more or less violently with more homogeneous nation-states. We have come to see, however, that empires are more flexible and durable political forms than previously thought, and also that East Asian polities were far from stagnant when Western imperialism burst onto the scene. Imperialism itself was not foreign to the region; the Qing Empire, for example, vastly expanded its territory in the 18th century. Both in Japan and in China, although in different ways, modern nation-building was inseparable from the imperial control of remote and heterogeneous lands. Lastly, in the East Asian context of the 19th and early 20th centuries, framing Western powers as aggressive “nations” is partial at best: what East Asians dealt with were colonial empires, whose policies were often determined at the margins rather than in the metropole. It is therefore appropriate to consider the international history of East Asia from the 18th century to World War II through the lens of interactions and conflict among Empires and Empires in the making.

Course goals

This course aims at giving students a general understanding of the history of East Asia from the Qing expansion to World War II, particularly of the geopolitical conflicts that shaped the region. By focusing on the areas of interaction (often violent, but not always) between empires, the course will provide students with a global perspective on modern East Asian history. Students will deepen their understanding of the subject, further, by writing research papers on topics chosen in consultation with the instructor. Although the course concludes in the mid-20th century, the material covered has direct relevance to present-day geopolitical tensions in East Asia, from the Xinjiang and Tibet questions to Russo-Japanese disputes and competing claims in the South China Seas.

Previous basic knowledge of the overall history of early modern and modern East Asia, as well as a basic knowledge of the history of Western imperialism, are recommended. Students who are unfamiliar with the time period are advised to read Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*, Blackwell, 2004. The book will be on reserve at the...

**Course Policies**

- **Attendance and participation**

  Attendance is compulsory. If a student finds it necessary to miss one class for exceptional reasons, she or he must discuss it with the instructor beforehand.

  Since this is a seminar course, it is indispensable that students read the texts assigned each week and participate actively in class discussions, which will be based on the readings.

- **Disability Accommodation**

  Students with disabilities are entitled to receive reasonable accommodations necessary for their full participation in the course and all of its requirements. If you are a student with a disability and have a DS-certified ‘Accommodation Letter’ please come to my office hours to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation, you should contact Disability Services at 212-854-2388 and disability@columbia.edu. For more information about accommodations and the process for acquiring them please see the following website: http://www.college.columbia.edu/rightsandresponsibilities.

- **Academic Integrity**

  The academic integrity standards applied to this course will mirror those outlined in the University’s official policy statements regarding intellectual honesty. These policies are listed here: http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity-statement. Any violations will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs and Community Standards.

- **Requirements and grading**

  1) **Each week**, every student will write a **short post** (300-500 words) summarizing the main takeaways of the week’s readings to help prepare for discussion. Oral participation and weekly posts will make up **35% of the final grade**.

  2) **Each week, one or two students** (depending on the size of the group) will **present** the compulsory readings and start the discussion (**15% of the final grade**).

  3) Each student will write a **research paper, due on week 13**. The paper will address a question of the student’s choice after approval by the lecturer. A list of suggested topics will be provided on the first day. Students are welcome to make other suggestions. The research paper should tackle a specific historical question based on diversified and up to date scholarship. **Students are expected to discuss the historiography and defend their**
own position in a balanced, well-argued and organized manner. A bibliography must be included, as well as detailed references to the works used and cited. Using primary sources (historical documents) is welcome but not required. The expected length of the paper is 12-15 pages for undergraduate students and 15-20 pages for MA students (Times New Roman 12, double spaced). The topic must be set by week 4. By week 6, a prospectus (1-2 pages) and a working bibliography must be provided. The prospectus accounts for 15% of the final grade and the research paper for 35% (50% in total).

- Deadlines and extensions

Late work will be sanctioned (minus 5% for each day). Extensions will be granted only in exceptional cases, and only if requested at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline.

SCHEDULE AND WEEKLY READINGS

All the readings listed below are required unless otherwise indicated. Some of the texts can be accessed online via CLIO. The others are available at several of the Columbia Libraries, and will all be put on reserve at the Starr East Asian Library.

**Week 1: Introduction and course administration. What is an Empire?**

**Week 2: Ending the “empire of the steppes”: the Qing, Russia and the conquest of Central Asia**


**Week 3: East Asia's encounter with the European maritime empires**


**Week 4: External encroachments and restive peripheries: the crisis of the Qing imperial system**

William Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 149-200.


Deadline for choosing a research paper topic.

**Week 5: The teleology of the nation: Western theories and Asian problems**


Prasenjit Duara, “On Theories of Nationalism for India and China” (http://ignca.nic.in/ks_40032.htm).


**Week 6: Redefining the East Asian order in the late 19th century**


Prospectus and bibliography due on day of class

**Week 7: The scramble for Asia: collective imperialism around 1900**


**Week 8: From Empire to Republic: redefining the Chinese nation**

Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History From the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 177-204.


Peter Zarrow, “Historical Trauma: Anti-Manchuism and Memories of Atrocities in Late Qing China”, *History and Memory*, 16 (2), 2004, pp. 67-107.


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**Week 9: World War I, a suicide of Western imperialism?**


**Week 10: Japan’s colonial Empire: mimetic imperialism?**


**Week 11: Nation-Empire: colonial expansion and nation-building in modern Japan**


*Sayon no kane* サヨンの鐘 (*Sayon’s Bell*), excerpts.

**Week 12: Pan-Asianism and Japan’s challenge to the West**


**Week 13: From sacred land to puppet state: the making of Manchuria**


Research paper due

Week 14: Empires at war (again): mobilization and integration during World War II

