

**EAST ASIA: THE GREAT TRADITION**  
**EARLY HISTORY, SOCIETY, AND CULTURES OF CHINA, KOREA, AND JAPAN**

**Class:** TuTh 5:00 – 6:20 PM

Center Hall 101

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### **Introduction**

This course introduces China, Korea, and Japan from the Neolithic period through the Song dynasty in China (960 – 1279), the Koryo dynasty in Korea (889 – 1259) and the Heian period in Japan (794 – 1185). Since recorded Chinese history starts much earlier than that of either Korea or Japan, we will study Chinese history for the first part of the course before we turn to Korea and Japan. (HILD 11 and 12 will not be so China-centered.) Once we have introduced all three cultures, we will move back and forth among the three, investigating their many connections rather than studying them as three entirely separate stories. Writing, systems of religion and thought, government institutions, technology, gender and family, material culture, and daily life will provide organizing themes for studying these civilizations over such a long time. We will stress social and historical context, continuity and change, crisis and resolution, comparison and contrast. Since creations of earlier eras have had a deep impact on cultural life in China, Korea, and Japan today, we will use contemporary examples to show the enduring importance as well as the changing interpretations of the ancient heritage.

Our main framework will be chronological. Our approach will be interdisciplinary, combining approaches from history, art history, literature, philosophy, religion, archaeology, gender studies, and the social sciences. When possible, we will try to include groups that have previously been excluded from the historical narratives, such as women, minorities, and peasants. Class materials come from a variety of sources, both textual and visual. Textual sources include historical, philosophical, religious, and literary writings; visual materials include

archaeological discoveries, art, and film. We will study both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources, written or made by the people who lived during the periods we are studying, can be either texts or material culture (things). Primary resources, such as the texts found in the anthologies of Chinese literature and Japanese traditions, tell us what those people believed, valued, desired, feared, and thought important. Secondary sources, such as your textbook by Ebrey et al., will provide structure, general background, and interpretation. In each section of the course, we will usually read the textbook first to give us a broad picture of a period and its important issues before delving into the primary sources. Primary sources are challenging: they were not produced to answer the questions we want to ask, and we have to work hard at interpreting them. Much of lecture and section will be devoted to this task. Another challenge in studying this material comes from the dizzying pace of archaeological discoveries in recent decades, especially in China, which has already changed our views of the dominant narratives of history significantly. Yet another challenge will be the intense political feelings, related to modern nationalism in all three cultures, aroused by historical interpretations. As William Faulkner said: “The past is never dead; it’s not even past.” (*Requiem for a Nun*, 1950)

One of your main tasks this quarter is to read all your texts critically, analyzing them in terms of meaning, reliability, argument, and historical value. You will also be able to sharpen your writing skills, improving your ability to write clearly and convincingly. Section discussion will give you practice in communication and collaboration. Our goal is for you to become active scholars rather than passive recipients of data. By the end of the course you should have a good general picture of the major historical developments in early times of these three great civilizations and of their deep connections with each other. You should be able to recognize modern references to these cultures. You should be able to question and critique the easy stereotypes and platitudes on early East Asia that abound on the internet and in popular culture. Specifically, you should be able to distinguish different places, peoples, and periods rather than lumping all of the past together in a faulty a-historical construction of an unchanging and monolithic “traditional East Asia.”

### **Course Requirements**

There are no prerequisites. Students should come to class with the assigned reading for that day completed, and take part in discussions. Reading assignments are due on the day they are listed in the “Course Outline and Assignments” section of this syllabus. This course has a large reading load. Your job is to do the reading and our job is to make sure you understand it. There will be weekly 2-page reading responses, based on the primary sources, due at the beginning of each section. In writing your responses, do not summarize. Instead, think of

questions, topics, and relevant personal experiences that will stimulate lively and fruitful discussions in section. Be sure to bring up anything that puzzles you. Do not bore your TAs or each other and do not worry about looking stupid. Your reading responses, together with section attendance and performance, make up thirty-five per cent (35%) of your grade. There will be a midterm worth thirty percent (30%). The midterm will consist of identifications and essays. There will be a final exam emphasizing material from the second half of the course, consisting of long and short essays, worth thirty-five percent (35%) of your course grade. You must complete all written assignments and attend every section, unless excused by your TA, in order to pass the course. Do not plagiarize: this will result in your failing the assignment and possibly the course. If we even suspect you of cheating or plagiarism, we are required to report you to the Academic Integrity Coordinator. I encourage you to discuss the reading with each other, but when you sit down to write a response, you must be alone, with only the reading and class notes. Do not consult the internet. If you would like extra reading, ask us.

There will be a course web site at [ted.ucsd.edu](http://ted.ucsd.edu) where you can view the syllabus, class Powerpoint slides, exam study guides, and other supplementary materials. The Powerpoint slides give an outline of the lecture and are intended to help you organize your notes and prepare for exams. They are no substitute for coming to class.

### **Required Texts**

These books are available at the University Bookstore. There are also copies on reserve at Geisel Library.

Patricia Buckley Ebrey, Anne Walthall, and James B. Palais, *East Asia: The Great Tradition; Custom for HILD 10* (secondary source)

Victor H. Mair, *The Shorter Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press (collection of translated primary sources)

Wm. Theodore de Bary, Donald Keene, George Tanabe, and Paul Varley, *Sources of Japanese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*; volume one, second edition New York: Columbia University Press (collection of translated primary sources)

Susan Whitfield, *Life Along the Silk Road*. University of California (secondary source)

Murasaki Shikibu, translated and abridged by Edward Seidensticker, *The Tale of Genji*. Vintage Classics paperback (translated primary source)

Note: Many of our texts have supplementary front and back matter. These can be extremely useful. Consult them!

## COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics and Readings</b>
<b>Week Zero</b>	<b>I. Introduction</b>
September 27	Themes, Approaches, Materials, Expectations, and Definitions Romanization: Wade Giles and Pinyin; see Mair, 727 - 731 Get your textbooks: the first reading assignment is due next Tuesday
<b>Week One</b>	
October 2	<b>II. Chinese Myth and Archaeology</b> A. Origin Stories B. Early Archaeological Records <b>III. China in the Bronze Age: The Shang &amp; Western Zhou Dynasties (c. 1500 – 771 BCE)</b> A. The Beginning of Written History 1. Oracle Bones 2. Bronze Inscriptions Readings: Ebrey, Chapter 1; Mair, entries 1 – 2: (Note that for the Mair book, entry numbers rather than page numbers are assigned.)
October 4	<b>IV. Philosophers and Warring States During the Eastern Zhou Period (771 – 256 BC)</b> A. Crisis: The Age of Confucius and the Five Classics Readings: Ebrey, Chapter Two; Mair, entries 3, 4, 6, 16, 157, and 159
<b>Week Two</b>	

- October 9                   **IV. Philosophers, and Warring States During the Eastern Zhou Period (771 – 256 BC)**  
 B. After Confucius: The Age of “The Hundred Schools of Thought”:  
 Rivals, Followers, and Alternatives  
 Readings: Mair, entries 7 – 10, 159 (review), 200
- October 11                   **V. The Bureaucratic Empire: Qin – Han China (256 BCE – 220 CE)**  
 A. Qin and Han Empires and Legacy  
 B. Gender and Daily Life in the Han  
 Readings: Ebrey, Chapter Three; Mair, entries 123, 129 –136, 138, 139, 158, 160, 162, 167, 185, 186, 191
- Week Three**                   **VI. Disunity in China (200 – 580 CE)**
- October 16                   A. Political and Cultural Context of the Age of Disunity:  
 “The Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties” or “Northern and Southern Dynasties” Period  
 B. Buddhism Comes to China  
 Readings: Ebrey, Chapter Four; Mair, entries 21, 23, 140--142, 144--147, 163, 181, 182, 214; Keene, pages 55 –62 (ignore the part of introduction that addresses Japan for now)
- October 18                   C. Daoism and Literati Culture  
 Readings: Mair, entries 12, 13, 18 –20, 22, 24, 25, 126, 143, 168, 171, 172, 202 – 204
- Week Four**                   **VII. Sui and Tang China (581 – 907)**
- October 23                   A. Political and Cultural Context of Two Cosmopolitan Empires  
 Readings: Ebrey, Chapter Five; Mair, entry 149; Keene, pages 85 – 89 (ignore the part of introduction that addresses Japan for now)
- October 25                   **Midterm**
- Week Five**

October 30 B. Travel, Trade, War, and Exchange on the Silk Road  
Readings: Silk Road (all)

November 1 C. Tang Poetry and Prose: Literature as a Historical Source  
Readings: Mair, entries 26 – 53, 85 – 89, 148 – 150, 165, 169, 173, 187, 188, 193 – 195, 198, 199, 201, 207, 208

### **Week Six**

November 6 **VIII. Early Korea to 935**  
A. Bronze Age Through the Period of Small Chiefdoms  
B. Three Kingdoms and Silla  
Readings: Ebrey, Chapter Six; Primary Sources for Early Korea through Parhae will be presented in class

November 8 **IX. Early Japan to 794**  
A. Political and Cultural Context  
Reading: Ebrey, Chapter Seven; Keene, chapter 1 (pages 3 – 8, 13 – 16), chapter 2 (pages 17 – 25, 31 – 38), chapter 3 (pages 46 – 56), chapter 15, 346 – 343)

### **Week Seven**

November 13 B. Early Records and Shinto Religion  
C. Buddhist Church and the Japanese State  
Readings: Keene, chapter 4 (pages 63 – 85, 91 – 97), chapter 5.

### **X. Song China and its Neighbors, 960 - 1279**

November 15 A. Political and Cultural Context  
B. Gender: Bound Feet  
Readings: Ebrey, Chapter Eight; Mair, entries 1, 53, 101, 131 – 135, 142, 145, 149, 150, 162, 170, 207, (review all the former), 90 – 103, 127, 170, 174, 175, 183, 215

## **Week Eight**

November 20 C. *Daoxue* (Neo-Confuciansim) and the Song Renaissance  
Readings: Mair, 6 (review the former), entries 54 – 59; *Daxue*

November 22 **Thanksgiving Holiday**

## **Week Nine**

November 26 **XI. Koryo Korea, 935 -- 1392**  
A. Political and Cultural Context  
B. Religion, Gender, and Daily Life in the Koryo Period  
Readings: Ebrey, Chapter Ten; Korean Primary sources, TBA

### **XII. Heian Japan, 784 – c. 1180**

November 29 A. Political and Cultural Context  
Readings: Ebrey, Chapter Nine; Keene, chapter 7, chapter 8 (pages 175 – 187), chapter 9 (pages 197 – 202), chapter 15 (pages 343 – 346)

## **Week Ten**

December 4 B. The Heian Court; Daily Life of the Elite  
Reading: *Genji* (all)

December 6 **XIII. Connections and Divisions**  
**Themes and Definitions Revisited**  
No reading assignment: catch up and review for final examination