COMILLAS
UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA
CIHS

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: **Asia: History, culture, politics**

COURSE DATA	
Degree	Diploma in Humanities and Global Challenges
Academic Year	2025-26
Credits	6
Course type	Elective
Departament	Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales
Language of instruction	English
Name and email of instructor	Prof. Ana Trujillo Dennis ana.trujillo@comillas.edu

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Asia-Pacific has become one of the most dynamic regions in the world. This change is motivated by aspects such as the high economic growth of a large part of the region during the last decades. Other reasons for this growing importance are its geostrategic position, its large number of internal and external problems and the global repercussions of these conflicts. All this makes Asia-Pacific a crucial region to study.

This course offers an introductory presentation on the history and culture of different regions of **East Asia** (China, Japan and the Korean Peninsula), with a special emphasis on the 19th and 20th centuries, that will help students understand the importance of East Asia today. Throughout the course, different matters such as history, religion, society, politics, or different forms of culture will be addressed.

This course will focus on the cultures of East Asia. It will cover key historical events, and the historical and cultural relations and interactions between the countries and regions concerned. Special attention will be placed on material and visual culture.

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

TOPIC 1: Introduction. Geopolitical regions of Asia

TOPIC 2: Religious traditions of East Asia. Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto

TOPIC 3: Cross-cultural encounters. Western imperialism in East Asia. The arrival of the Southern Barbarians.

TOPIC 4: Modern East Asia. History, society, politics. General features and challenges of modern Asian societies (China, Japan, the Korean Peninsula)

METHODOLOGY

The course will be structured as follows:

1. Theoretical background provided by the teacher in class (PPT presentations, videos, etc.)

2. In class activities: case studies, group work and informal presentations, questionnaires, debates

Independent learning techniques/activities:
Throughout the course students will have to carry out independent learning activities:
1.Readings and understanding historical texts
2. Researching for a group project (teamwork; critical and intercultural thinking; oral and written communication)

MAIN OUTCOMES

- Understand the context of contemporary East Asian history from a global perspective.
- Assess the role of East Asia in contemporary world history
- Identify the main events and figures related to the historical development of East Asia.
- Understand and be able to explain basic concepts related to the history and cultures of East Asia.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment type	Assessment criteria	Percentage
FINAL EXAM	Analytical skills; skills to organize and articulate the main concepts learnt during the course	50%
GROUP PROJECT	Group project will be explained at the beginning of the course. Evaluation criteria: appropriate research and in-depth study of the topic; use of relevant academic bibliographical sources; use of proper academic language.	35%
CLASS ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION	Evaluation criteria: class attendance and active participation.	15%

- Committing any serious academic misconduct, such as **plagiarism** of previously published material, or **copying** in the exam or any other graded activity, **will imply not being able to pass the course in the ordinary assessment period.**

- The **use of AI** to create complete works or relevant parts, without citing the source or the tool or without being expressly allowed in the description of the work, will be considered plagiarism and regulated according to the General Regulations of the University.

- At the beginning of the term the professor will announce the office hours for the course. Tutorials are an essential part of the development of the course, and students may attend tutorials during the course within those office times, but it is recommended that they are arranged in advance with the professor.

- Any non-face-to-face learning activity that requires the submission of an assignment/document, etc. will be submitted by the student through Moodle, always in PDF format.

- To be able to take the final exam, students must not have missed **more than one third of the classes without justification**. If this requirement is not met, the student may lose the right to be assessed both in the ordinary and extraordinary assessment period (art. 93-1 of the General Regulations). Failure to attend to the first hour of a two-hour lecture, means having missed the whole session in terms of attendance, regardless of whether or not the student the second hour.

STUDENT WORKLOAD (in hours)		
CONTACT HOURS	OUTSIDE CLASSROOM	OVERALL
60	90	150

READING LIST / RELEVANT REFERENCES

BROTTON, J. (2003). *El bazar del Renacimiento. Sobre la influencia de Oriente en la cultura occidental*. Barcelona: Editorial Paidós.
BOXER, C.R. (1951). *The Christian Century of Japan*. California: University of California Press.
CUMINGS, B. (2005). *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*. New York: W. W. Norton
DE BARY, W. T. (1992). *Civilizaciones del Este asiático*. Pamplona: Eunsa.
DE BARY, W. T. (ed.). (1969) *Sources of Indian Tradition*. New York and London: Columbia University Press
DE BARY, W. T. (ed.). (1971) *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. New York and London: Columbia University Press.
DE BARY, W. T. (1964) (ed.). *Sources of Japanese Tradition*. New York and London: Columbia University Press
FUCH, E., KASAHARA, T. & SAALER, S. (eds.). A New Modern History of East Asia. Volume 1. Göttingen: V&R Academic. **https://www.vr-elibrary.de/doi/book/10.14220/9783737007085**
HANE, M. (2013). *Modern Japan: a historical survey*. Boulder: Westview Press.
HEO, U. & ROEHRIG, T. (2014). *South Korea's rise: economic development, power and foreign relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University
HOLCOMBE, Charles (2011) *A History of East Asia: from the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press
HOLROYD, Carin (2021). *Introducing East Asia. History, Politics, Economy and Society*. Press. London: Routledge
IRIYE, Akira (1999). *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific*. London: Routledge,
JOSEPH, W. A. (2010). *Politics in China: an introduction*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
KINGSTON, J. (2011). *Contemporary Japan. History, Politics and Social Change since the 1980s*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
MAILLARD, C. (1995) *La sabiduría como estética. China: confucianismo, taoismo y budismo*. Madrid: Akal
NAKANO, R. & ZHU, Y. (2020), "Heritage as soft power: Japan and China in international politics". *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 26(7), 869-881.
PRESCOTT, A. (2015). *East Asia in the World. An Introduction*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
REISCHCHAUER, E. O. (1990). *Japan. The story of a nation*. New York: MacGraw Hill.
SODERBERG, M. (2011). *Changing Power Relations in Northeast Asia: Implications for Relations between Japan and South Korea*. Abingdon: Routledge
SODUPE, K. y MOURE, L. (coords.) (2013) *China en el escenario internacional: una aproximación multidisciplinar*. Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco.
SPENCE, J. (2013). *The search for modern China*. New York, London: Norton.
TAN, A. T. H. (Ed.) (2013). *East and South-East Asia International relations and security perspectives*. Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge.
VARLEY, P. (1984). *Japanese Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

HAKSOON, Yim (2002) "Cultural Identity and Cultural Policy in South Korea", *The International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2002, Vol. 8 (1), 37-48.