History 282
The Invention of Asia
Oberlin College Fall 2010
TTR 8:35-9:50 King 339

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Hours: WF 11-12, and by appointment
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Blackboard: http://oncampus.oberlin.edu

By asking the questions “What is Asia? and What has Asia/Asian meant? to whom?” this course will explore a number of issues including: stereotypes and “knowledge” of Asia/Asians and their implication in cultural, imperial, and other politics; the problem of moving from the specific to the general; and how we “know” about experiences alien to our own. We will be focusing on the question of how the modern world order arose and the various ways it has been and can be conceived. Problems of how to fashion a global history de-centered from a Euro-American perspective will be fundamental to our inquiry.

Requirements:

The course will include a few lectures but will emphasize reading and discussion. Attendance at class sessions and participation in discussions are expected of each student, and both will contribute to your course grade (15%). All assignments must be completed to receive credit for the course. Please submit assignments electronically, which can be done through Blackboard or through e-mail enclosures.

The following assignments are required of each student.

1. A Discussion Board for readings will be found on the course Blackboard site. Each student should post a short informal response to the Discussion Board questions or follow up on another student’s comments. Comments should be thoughtful and around 500 words. Posts should be submitted by Sunday night for Tuesday discussions; Tuesday night for Thursday discussions, so that we all may have time to read and think about the posts before class. (20%)

2. A short analytical review of one of the readings for the class is due by the last day before break. A handout on how to write the review can be found on the course Web site and will be discussed in advance of the assignment. (15%)

3. Collaborative research: The class will be divided into small groups for cooperative projects and mini-discussions. The cooperative project will result in a panel presentation followed by questions and discussion by the class. Topics will be discussed in class
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midway through the first half of the course. We will discuss the principles and practices of collaborative research and constructive critique in advance. As well as how to prepare and present your research to the class. (25%)

4. Final Project: Based on her or his part in the collaborative research project, each student will provide a write-up in a final essay as an annotated research report. Due by 9:00 pm, Sunday, December 19, in lieu of a final examination. (25%)

All work in the course is governed by the Honor Code. See http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/11-Policies-Honor.pdf

The following works are available for purchase and will also be on reserve for the course:

Spence, Jonathan. The Chan’s Great Continent: China in Western Minds
Lye, Colleen. America’s Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945

Other readings will be in PDF format and available on Blackboard.

Course Meetings

SEPT. 7 & 9: INTRODUCTIONS:

INTRODUCTIONS
THE PROBLEM OF “ASIA,” META-GEOGRAPHIES AND KNOWLEDGE

Reading: Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen, The Myth of Continents, pp. i-46

SEPT. 14 & 16: ASIA THROUGH THE MISTS:

FROM GOLD-DIGGING ANTS TO THE QUEST FOR PRESTER JOHN

Reading: Selection Sir John Mandeville, from Mandeville’s Travels
The Myth of Continents, 47-103

SEPT. 21 & 23: EURASIAN DIVISIONS AND CONNECTIONS (CA. 600-1300)

ISLAM, THE MONGOLS AND THE (RE-)CONSTRUCTION OF (EUR)ASIA

Reading Richard M. Eaton, “Islamic History as Global History” in Michael Adas, ed. Islamic and European Expansion, 1-36
Judith Tucker, “Gender and Islamic History,” Ibid., 37-74
Selections from John Pian del Carpini and Marco Polo

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SEPT. 28 & 30: ASIA EMERGENT FROM THE MIST (1450-1600)

Reading: Spence, The Chan's Great Continent, 1-121
Discussion of Collaborative Research Project

OCT. 5 & 7: ASIA IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE (1570's-1790's)

Reading: Spence, The Chan's Great Continent, complete for discussion

OCT. 12 & 14 AMERICA'S ASIA I

Reading: Colleen Lye, America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945, 1-140

OCT. 19 & 22: AMERICA'S ASIA II

Reading: Colleen Lye, America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945, 141-254

OCT. 23-31: Fall Recess:

NOV. 2 & 4: AMERICA'S ASIA III

Reading: Jack London's Asian Writings

NOV. 9 & 11: PEARL BUCK AND AMERICA'S CHINA

Reading: Selections from Hilary Spurling, Pearl Buck's China
Movie: The Good Earth

NOV. 16 & 18: SHANGRILA AND THE FANTASY OF THE EXOTIC

Reading: Selections from Orville Schell, Virtual Tibet

NOV. 23: DISCUSSION [NO FRIDAY CLASS: THANKSGIVING]

STUDENT PANEL PRESENTATIONS

NOV. 30:

DEC. 2:

DEC. 7:

DEC. 9:
DEC 13: CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS:

Final discussion