This course explores the modern history of China’s Northeast (“Manchuria”) as a site for challenging the boundaries imposed by histories of the nation-state. The histories of Japan, the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia will be interwoven to examine the region’s transformation from sparsely populated Manchu homeland, to staging ground for Japanese imperialism, to scene of Mao Zedong’s triumph over the Nationalists in the Chinese Civil War of 1945-49.

**Goals and Expectations:** The purpose of this course is twofold. In addition to charting the history of China’s Northeast over three centuries, students are encouraged to develop an understanding of how history is written—from both ideological and practical standpoints. To this end, weekly readings combine primary and secondary source materials. Careful attention to argumentation and evidence will form the basis of weekly class discussion and critique. During weeks 1 and 2, we will concentrate on how to read a scholarly article, paying attention to the structure and method of academic argumentation.

**Required Texts:** Required texts have been ordered in paperback at the Oberlin Bookstore (basement) and placed on reserve at Mudd Library.


All other readings are available on Blackboard.

**Assessment:** The course grade will be based on the following:

- Oral Presentation & Follow-up Paper (2): 20% each
- Paper: Integrating Historiography & Research: 20%
- Class participation (& reading questions): 40%

**Oral Presentations:** Students will make 2 presentations over the course of the semester on assigned readings. (One of the presentations must be completed before Week 8.) Each presentation should last no more than 10-15 minutes during which time the presenter will
formulate two or three key questions about the common readings assigned for that week. Presenters for any given week are encouraged to meet with one another in advance of class time to discuss common themes with a view toward integrating such themes into class discussion.

On the day of the scheduled presentation, a 3-5 page paper summarizing the main themes of the assigned supplemental reading and how they tie into the general readings for the week will be due at the start of class. [No electronic copies, please.]

**Paper: Integrating Historiography & Research:** *The New York Times* and *The Times* (London, England) are two indispensable English-language sources for studying the history of late 19th and early 20th century Manchuria. The digitization of both newspapers (as well as many, many others) provides the historian with a wealth of information on the day-to-day development of Western coverage of such important events as the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, Manchurian Incident of 1931, and the worldwide economic depression of 1929-1931—to name a few key events within our subject of inquiry. Students will write a 4-5 page paper in weeks 5-10 or week 13, focusing on how the Western media depicts a key event, individual, or set of issues. The goal of this exercise is to discover and explore resources and methods for writing a transnational history of the region.

**Class Participation and Attendance:** Discussions are a central component of the course, and attendance is mandatory. Students are required to complete the assigned readings and come prepared to discuss. **The success of the course depends on the active involvement of each participant, and active involvement requires timely and thorough completion of all readings.**

To develop skills as an active reader, students are required to write one (or two, if so inspired) question about the readings for distribution to other class members at the beginning of each week’s class. Good reading questions are not quizzes on factual content (what year did Japan withdraw from the League of Nations?). Rather, they ask about processes and trends in the historical record (How did the establishment of Manchukuo in 1932 lead Japan on a path towards isolation from the international community?). Good questions have multiple answers and help readers frame a larger context for any given reading. Developing a proficiency in posing good reading questions is thus one of the goals of the course.

**Film Screening:** Bernardo Bertolucci’s “The Last Emperor” will be screened on Monday, Nov. 9 at 7pm in Wilder 101. The film will be discussed in class in conjunction with the readings for the week.

**Writing Assistance:** Students are encouraged to use the Drop-In Writing Center located in Mudd 101A (the Academic Commons) as well as other services offered by Oberlin’s Writing Associates Program.
**Honor Code:** All students are expected to adhere to the Oberlin Honor Code on all written assignments. Infractions of the Honor Code will be referred to the College Honor Committee. Questions regarding the citation of sources and proper attribution of information should be directed to the instructor.

**Accommodations for Disabilities:** Students requiring accommodation for a disability must present a note from Jane Boomer (Director, Office of Disability Services, Peters Hall G-27) by Thurs. Sept. 20. The note should include a detailed description of the type of accommodation required.

**Office Hours:** Students are encouraged to come see the instructor with questions about any aspect of the course:

Wed. 2:30 - 4pm and Thurs. 4:30 - 6pm  
Rice Hall, Room 308  
Phone: 5-6708  
E-mail: Emer.ODwyer@oberlin.edu
PART I: FRAMEWORKS

Week 1, Sept. 6: Introduction
Maps, Timelines, and Course Overview

Week 2, Sept. 13: National History Recap; “Manchuria”


Discussion:
• How to read a scholarly article/book chapter
• How to develop a good question on the week’s readings

Week 3, Sept. 20: Transnational History and Imperialism
AHR Conversation “On Transnational History” (with the participation of C.A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed). AHR 111, 5 (December 2006): 1441-64.


PART II: HISTORIES

Week 4, Sept. 27: (Qing China) Manchuria under the Manchus, 1600-1911


Presenters:


Week 5, Oct. 4 (Imperial Russia) The Russian Far East


Presenter: Kajima, Morinosuke. The Emergence of Japan as a World Power, 1895-1925 (1968): chs. 21-22 (pp. 328-54).

Week 6, Oct. 11: (Japan) Railway Imperialism and the South Manchurian Railway Company (Mantetsu)


Presenters:


Week 7, Oct. 18: (Republic of China) Manchuria of the Warlords


Presenters:

**Fall Recess**

**PART III: MILITARY CONQUEST AND WARTIME IMPERIALISM, 1931-45**

Week 8, Nov. 1: The Manchurian Incident: A Military Solution


Primary Source:
Clips of Japanese news reels from the Manchurian Incident:
http://www.bbcmotiongallery.com/gallery/clip/977075_001.do


Presenters:


Week 9, Nov. 8: *Manchuko: Birth of a State*
Young, Louise. *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (1998).
   • Introduction – Ch. 5 (pp. 3-240)

Primary Source:

Week 10, Nov. 15: *Manchuko at War: Economic Consolidation and Continued Military Expansion*
Young, Louise. *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (1998).
   • Chs. 6-9 (pp. 307-436)

*Reminder: Screening of “The Last Emperor” at 7pm on Wed., Nov. 14.*

Week 11: No class. *Happy Thanksgiving!*

*Thanksgiving Recess*

**PART IV: BEARING WITNESS**

Week 12, Nov. 29: *Writing Manchuria*


Primary Source:

**PART V: POSTWAR AND CIVIL WAR**

Week 13, Dec. 6: *Decolonization, Chinese Civil War, and Korean War*

Week 14, Dec. 13: Concluding Thoughts