By asking the questions “What is Asia? and What has Asia meant to whom?” this course will explore a number of issues including: stereotypes and knowledges 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 lectures and selections from videos, but will emphasize reading and discussion of reading and lecture material. Attendance at class sessions and participation in discussions are expected of each student. Nearly all class sessions will include discussion. All assignments must be completed to receive credit for the course. In accord with the college rule, no written work will be accepted after the end of Reading Period, unless accompanied by an official incomplete. The following assignments are required of each student.

1. A short analytical review of one of the readings for the class by the last day before break. A handout on how to write the review will be distributed in advance and discussed.

2. A brief analytical paper (around 10 pp.) addressing some issue relevant to the subject matter of the course is due by the last day of class. I will provide a list with some ideas for topics, but you are welcome to come up with your own. In either case, please submit a brief note to me (preferably by e-mail) indicating what topic you will write on. I encourage you to make an appointment for a paper conference before commencing reading and writing. Certainly come see me if you find yourself having difficulty coming up with a topic. It is a good idea to let me see an outline and/or a draft for comments before writing the final draft of the essay. I will accept drafts for comments up till two weeks before the due date.

3. Panel Presentation: The class will be divided into groups for cooperative projects and mini-discussions. The cooperative project is a panel or other presentation. Topics will be discussed in class midway through the first half of the course. Group members will present the results of their work to the class and moderate a discussion after the presentation. Members of the previous group will submit short written critiques of the current panel to me and to the panel participants. The group scheduled for the last presentation will critique the first presentation. We will discuss the principles and practices of constructive critique in advance.

All work in the course is governed by the Honor Code (see
Blackboard Course Web Site:

This course will use a web site called Blackboard. The site will display announcements and distribute information about the course and provide a forum for communication among class members, including me. Assignments and handouts will be posted, and students are encouraged to submit written assignments through Blackboard. If you have not used Blackboard before, please see the information at http://www.oberlin.edu/OCTET/Bb/ (note capitalization in the URL). Read the general information and click on the “Student FAQ” link. Let me know if you have problems logging on.

I encourage electronic submission of papers and assignments, which can be done through the Digital Dropbox feature.

There is an e-mail feature that will allow you to communicate with individuals and groups in the class. When our small groups are set up, I will establish small group links so that you may communicate within your research group.

Readings

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


Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*

Kingston, Maxine Hong, *The Woman Warrior*

Spence, Jonathan. *The Chan’s Great Continent: China in Western Minds*

Course Meetings

Part I. East is East and West is West...

**Sept. 2 & 4: Introductions:**

Introduction to the Course
Divisions of the world, the problem of continents and other metageographical assumptions

Begin *The Myth of Continents*, Introduction, Chapter 1

**Sept. 9 & 11: Asia through the Mists:**

From Gold-digging Ants to the Quest for Prester John
Discussion: *Myth of Continents*

Handout: Sir John Mandeville, from *Mandeville’s Travels*

*The Myth of Continents*, complete

**Sept. 16 & 18: Eurasian Divisions and Connections (ca. 600-1300)**
The World of Islam

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

_Pax Mongolica_ and the Great Travelers

Reading from John Pian del Carpini and Marco Polo (handout)

**SEPT. 23 & 25: ASIA EMERGENT FROM THE MIST (1450-1600)**

The Age of Discovery
Trade and the Cross

_Spence, The Chan’s Great Continent, 1-121_

**SEPT. 30 & OCT. 2: ASIA IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE (1570'S-1790'S)**

Asia in the Enlightenment: Part 1: New Knowledges and Skepticism
Discussion: _The Chan’s Great Continent_

_Spence, The Chan’s Great Continent, complete for discussion_

**OCT. 7 & 9 THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE**

Asia in the Enlightenment, Part 2: China as a Model for Europe
Discussion

_Said, Orientalism, 1-148_

**Part II: Orientalism, Area Studies, Global Visions**

**OCT. 14 & 16: ORIENTALISM (I)**

Asia in the Enlightenment, Part 3: Montesquieu, A Reversal
Discussion: _Orientalism_

_Edward Said, Orientalism, continue reading._

**OCT. 18-26: FALL RECESS: Complete Orientalism if you haven’t**

**OCT. 28 & 30: ORIENTALISM (II)**

From Oriental Despotism to the Asiatic Mode of Production
Discussion: Orientalism, Contest and Controversy

The Exotic: Triviality and Threat  
Discussion: Area Studies and the Interests of the State  

- Bruce Comings, “Boundary Displacement: Area Studies and International Studies during and after the Cold War”  
- James K. Boyce, “Area Studies and the National Security State”  
- Chalmers Johnson, “The CIA and Me”  
- Tani Barlow, “The Virtue of Clairty and Bruce Comings’s Concern over Boundaries”  

Nov. 11 & 13: Toward a Global Vision  
Alternative Visions for a Global History  
Discussion: Alternatives  

- Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History*, chaps 1-2: “The Interrelations of Societies in History” and “In the Center of the Map”  
- Andre Gundar Frank, *Re-Orient*, introduction: chapter 1  

Part III: Asia and Asian American Discourses of Identity  

Nov. 18 & 20: Contesting Asia  
Panel  
Panel  
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, begin  

Nov. 25 [No Thursday Class Thanksgiving]: Contesting Asia  
Panel  

Dec. 2 & 4: Contesting Asia  
Panel  
12/4 Discussion Session: Woman Warrior  
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, complete  

Dec. 9 & 11: Conclusions and Prospects  
Panel  
12/11 Final discussion focused on course content and approach