HIS 251: Culture & Progress in Pre-modern East Asian History

Instructor: Richard Reitan  
Office: 309 Stager (291-3906)  
Email: richard.reitan@fandm.edu

Class Meets: T/R 10:00-11:20 in STA 216  
Office Hours: Mon 1:30-3:30, Wed 2:00-3:00, ABA

We take for granted that the histories we study are the histories of China, India, Japan, France. It is in this way that the nation insinuates itself as the master subject of History into the very assumption of both professional and popular history...That even the best social and local historians do not find themselves challenging this assumption or theorizing an alternative to the already-always nation-space is testimony to the complicity of History and the nation-state.

Prasenjit Duara. Rescuing History from the Nation.

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

Walter Benjamin on the “Angel of History”

This course provides an historical introduction to the various cultures of East Asia, from ancient archeological records to the early seventeenth century. Our geographical focus will be the region encompassing present-day China, Korea, and Japan. One objective of this course is to provide students with a basic literacy in the key developments in East Asian history. Another is to encourage students to critically assess this history. Therefore, given the enormous time span and geographical scope to be considered, we will begin the course by introducing two critical themes to help us think through and focus our subject: culture and progress. Is China, Korea, and Japan each a distinct and enduring cultural entity? Can we claim that, while they have “evolved and progressed” over the past two or more thousand years, they have changed in geographical form but have remained in essence culturally intact? Does “culture” refer to a more or less fixed inventory of a society’s knowledge, religious beliefs, literature, art etc.? Can culture be understood as an ideological framework shaping (and shaped by) thought, action, and material conditions? Where and how do we draw the borders of “Oriental culture”? These are challenging questions—ones we will not seek to answer in the first weeks of class, but ones we will return to again and again as we move through the semester.

Readings: Our main text for this class is Ebrey, Walthall, and Palais’s Pre-Modern East Asia: To 1800. (Note: two sets of page numbers are given in the readings below: the first edition in parentheses, the third edition in brackets.) We will also use two primary sourcebooks: Ebrey ed., Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook, and Lu ed., Japan: A Documentary History Vol. 1. Assigned readings will include sections/excerpts from these three required texts and from other sources.
representing a variety of disciplines. Thus, we will examine literary, visual, religious, philosophical, and political texts. Our readings will highlight not only the thought and social conditions of elite groups in power, but also non-elites, women, and others usually placed outside mainstream narratives of this region. Required texts are available for purchase at the F&M College Bookstore (Distler House). All other readings will be available electronically on Blackboard, and whenever possible in hard-copy form on reserve at Shadek-Fackenthal Library. Blackboard is located at: http://blackboard.fandm.edu. At “user login,” enter username & password, select appropriate course. Note: Reading questions are posted on Blackboard with each week’s readings. These questions will help to focus your reading and prepare you for class discussion; please familiarize yourself with them.

**Course Requirements:** Discussion will be a regular part of each class. All students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. Please feel free to speak up with comments, questions, etc. at any point during the class. Regular on-time attendance of all classes is expected and required. (See “Participation” section below.) Your grade will also be based on a number of writing assignments (See “Short Essays” and “Writing Assignments” sections below for further details.)

**Grading:** Your final grade will be calculated with the percentages below. (See “Grading Criteria” section at the end of the syllabus.)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Essays</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Due Thursdays (weeks 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Assignment #1</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Version #1 due Thursday, Oct 9 (15%); Version #2 due Tuesday, Nov 25 (25%)</td>
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<td>Writing Assignment #2</td>
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<td>Due Thursday, Oct 30</td>
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<td>Writing Assignment #3</td>
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<td>Due Tuesday, Dec 9</td>
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**Academic Integrity:** All students are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. All exams, papers, and other graded work are to be completed in conformance with this policy. For specific guidelines, please refer to the statement on academic policies and procedures in the F&M Catalog.

**Disability Services:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability please notify me as soon as possible. You will need to submit a disability notification form to Disability Services, located at the Counseling Services office on the lower level of Appel (tel. 717-291-4083). Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities.

**Religious Observances:** I will make every effort to accommodate all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or other required attendance, provided they notify me well in advance (at least two weeks) of the scheduled conflict.

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**Part One: Background & Critical Themes**

**WEEK 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

*Sept 4 (Thurs)*

- Course Syllabus
- *Pre-Modern East Asia*, “Preface,” “Conventions” (xvi-xxi) [xvii-xxii]
**WEEK 2**

**LANGUAGE, GEOGRAPHY & PEOPLE**

*Sept 9*
- Balibar, *The Nation Form: History and Ideology* (86-105)

*Sept 11*
- Goto, *The Real Character of the Japanese Race* (11-17)
- Wetherall, *Nakasone Promotes Pride and Prejudice* (86-87)
- Ienaga, *The Spirit of Japan* (2 pages)
- *Images*: “Chinese Characters,” *Maps of East Asia*

**Discussion:** What constitutes a “people”? Are non-Han Chinese “Chinese”?

**WEEK 3**

**IDEAS OF PROGRESS & ENDURING CULTURE**

*Sept 16*
- Fairbank, *China: A New History* (xvii-xix)
- Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (17-33)

*Sept 18*
- Williams, *Culture* (11-20)
- Denoon ed., *Multicultural Japan* (1-3, 245-263)

**DUE: Short Essay #1:** What does Fairbank presuppose about China and “progress”? What are some of the problems with Fairbank’s assertions?

**Part Two: “Classical Knowledge,” Myth, and the Politics of Origins**

**WEEK 4**

**THE POLITICS OF ARCHAEOLOGY**

*Sept 23*
- *Pre-Modern East Asia*, “Prehistory of E. Asia” & “China in the Bronze Age” (3-23) [2-19]
- *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (1-16)

*Sept 25*
- Pai, *Constructing “Korean” Origins* (12-21)
- Kaner, “Beyond Ethnicity & Emergence in Japanese Archaeology” (46-59)
- Fawcett, “Archaeology and Japanese Identity” (60-76)
- *Images*: Bronze vessels and coins, oracle bones, maps

**DUE: Short Essay #2:** In what ways does archaeology function to sustain present notions of Chinese/Japanese/Korean identity?

**WEEK 5**

**CLASSICAL CHINESE THOUGHT**

*Sept 30*
- *Pre-Modern East Asia*, “Eastern Zhou” (25-42) [20-35]
- *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (17-26, 72-76)

*Oct 2*
- *Chuang Tzu* (1-49)
- Mann and Cheng ed., *Under Confucian Eyes* (47-67)

**DUE: Short Essay #3:** Describe the status of women under Confucianism during the Han Dynasty and in the documents in *Under Confucian Eyes*. Were women invariably victims of their gender? Why or why not?
WEEK 6

SEEKING LEGITIMACY: COSMOLOGY, “MYTHISTORY,” & THE CREATION OF ORIGINS

Oct 7
- Pre-Modern East Asia, “Japan to 794” (137-152) [114-28]
- Lu, Japan (37-39 & 3-17)

Oct 9
- Pre-Modern East Asia, “Qin-Han China” (43-64) [36-55]
- Sources of Chinese Tradition Vol. 1 (236-241)
- Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook (57-59)
- Pai, Constructing “Korean” Origins (57-96)
- Images: “Kofun” (key-hole shaped burial mounds), “Amaterasu” (the sun deity) and her evil (Korean?) brother “Susano-o/Tangun”

Discussion: What is the relationship between history and myth? Do they share common ground?

DUE: Writing Assignment #1, Version #1 (Oct 9, in class)

**Fall Break (Oct 11-14)**

WEEK 7

REVIEW

Oct 14
- No class

Oct 16
- No readings. Review materials from weeks one to seven.

Writing Assignment #2 handed out in class

Part Three: The Preeminence of Tang

WEEK 8

STATE AND RELIGION IN TANG DYNASTY CHINA

Oct 21
- Pre-Modern East Asia, “Buddhism in India” & “Buddhist Conquest of China” (65-70, 83-86) [56-60, 70-74]

Oct 23
- Pre-Modern East Asia, “Sui/Tang China” (88-109) [75-92]
- Sources of Chinese Tradition Vol. 1 (564-586)
- Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook (128-131)
- Suggested: Benn, Everyday Life in the Tang Dynasty (19-43, 276-89)
- Images: Avalokitesvara and Guanyin; Map of Chang’an, “Silk-beaters Scroll,” “Chang’an Tomb Murals”

DUE: Short Essay #4: How was Buddhism transformed when it emerged in China? Is there a “pure” or “original” Buddhism? How did religion and the state draw upon one another for legitimacy and power in Tang China?

WEEK 9

SYMBOLIC POWER & THE FUJIWARA ASCENDANCY IN HEIAN JAPAN

Oct 28
- Pre-Modern East Asia, “Heian Japan” (192-207) [148-161]
- Sansom, A History of Japan (129-77)

Oct 30
- Lu, Japan (51-79)
- Anthology of Japanese Literature (76-81, 137-144)
- Images: Mudra and Mandala; Artwork of the Heian period
Discussion: How did the Fujiwara family maintain their authority?

DUE: Writing Assignment #2 (Oct 30, in class)

Part Four: New Regimes and New Beliefs

WEEK 10

SONG CHINA & CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN

Nov 4

• Pre-Modern East Asia, “China Among Equals” (153-174) [129-147]
• Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook (137-154, 164-168, 172-187)

Nov 6

• Ebrey, The Inner Quarters (1-9, 261-271)
• Images: “Garden Creatures,” “Seated Bodhisattva,” “The Great Ultimate”

Discussion: Discuss/critique Ebrey’s view of women as agents of change in Song China.

WEEK 11

THE KAMAKURA BAKUFU & NEW PATHS TO SALVATION IN JAPAN

Nov 11

• Pre-Modern East Asia, “Kamakura Japan” (208-223) [183-197]
• Lu, Japan (117-145)

Nov 13

• Ruch, Coping with Death (93-130)
• Images: The kinkakuji, Noh masks, Sumi-e Scrolls

DUE: Short Essay #5: How does the term “syncretism” apply to religious beliefs in 13th c. Japan?

WEEK 12

THE KORYO DYNASTY

Nov 18

• Pre-Modern East Asia, “Koryo Dynasty” (176-190) [169-182]
• Sources of Korean Tradition Vol. 1 (139-142, 170-189, 200-205, 216-219, 240-258)

Nov 20

• Re-read: Balibar, The Nation Form (86-105)
• Kim, The Paekchong Movement (311-35)
• Suggested: Passin, The Paekchong of Korea (195-240)
• Images: Map of Koryo, artwork of the Koryo period

DUE: Short Essay #6: How might we apply Balibar’s idea of “fictive ethnicity” to Koryo period social classes, and particularly to the Baekjeong?

Part Five: Barbarian Encounters

WEEK 13

“BARBARIAN” DYNASTY: THE YUAN

Nov 25

• Pre-Modern East Asia, “The Mongols” & “China/Korea under Mongol Rule” (226-251) [162-168, 176-181, 198-210]
• Fairbank, China: A New History (108-27)
• Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook (192-94, 199-201)
• Sansom, A History of Japan to 1334 (438-50)
• Images: Gong Kai’s “Emaciated Horse,” Map of Mongol Empire, etc.

Discussion: The Mongols, in narratives of China, are often described as “non-Chinese barbarians”. What are the problems with this description? Was the Yuan Dynasty Chinese?

DUE: Writing Assignment #1, Version #2 (Nov 25, in class)
Nov 27  

- No class

**Thanksgiving Break (Nov 26-30)**

**WEEK 14**  
Dec 2  

JAPAN’S “CHRISTIAN CENTURY”

- Pre-Modern East Asia, “Japan’s Middle Ages” & “Europe Enters the Scene” (252-268, 308-12) [212-226, 265-69]
- Massarella, Reflections on identity formation in East Asia (135-48)
- Lu, Japan (196-201, 224-225)
- Elison, Deus Destroyed (259-67)
- Images: The “Barbarian Scrolls” (Namban); Representations of Francis Xavier, Portuguese traders and others

Discussion: Why is the period from 1549 to 1639 called the “Christian Century”? What are the problems with this reference?

Dec 4  

“NATIVE” DYNASTY: THE MING

- Pre-Modern East Asia, “Ming Empire” (269-288) [227-246]
- Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook (203-07, 226-262)
- Images: Zheng He’s voyages, 18th c. copy of 1418 map of the world, Ming porcelain, etc.

Discussion: Was the Ming a “native Chinese” dynasty? What is at stake in such a claim?

**WEEK 15**  
Dec 9  

DISCUSSION & DEBATE: NATIVISM & SEMANTIC INSTABILITY IN THE MAKING OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

- Short passages on term “nativism” and “semantic transparency”
- Discussion/Debate on class concepts, themes, and Writing Assignment #3  

DUE: Writing Assignment #3 (Dec. 9 in class)

Dec 11  

- No Readings. Continue Discussion/Debate as means both to review and to push our understanding further

**Participation**

Participation includes regular on-time attendance and thoughtful contribution to class discussion. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of my office hours to discuss your work, the readings, etc. I will consider this a form of “participation.” Note: Please use the restroom/drinking fountain prior to the start of class as entering and leaving the classroom during lecture/discussion can be disruptive. Also note that absences and arriving late to class will negatively affect your course grade.

- Unexcused Absences: Your overall course grade will be reduced by 0.2 points (on a 4.0 scale) for each unexcused absence beyond the first two.
- Excused Absences: Absences will count as excused only for students taking short-term medical leave. More than five absences (excused or unexcused) will ordinarily result in a participation grade of zero and, potentially, a failing grade for the course. For F&M’s short-term medical leave policy, see http://www.fandm.edu/healthservices/medicalexcuse.

- Please be on time for class: Arriving late three times will count as one absence. Arriving more than 10 minutes late will count as an absence.

**Short Essays**

Due start of class Thursdays of weeks 3, 4, 5, 8, 11 and 12. Write a short critical response (one page, typed, double-spaced) to the discussion questions that appear following assigned readings. These writings should directly engage with the question and its key terms, be well written and free of grammatical or typographical errors, and include a clear main claim or argument (typically a single sentence). Please
underline your main claim. I will only accept hard copies submitted in class (i.e. no e-mailed assignments). Printers can have difficulties, so it is a good idea to prepare your assignment the night before. Late assignments will not be accepted.

These assignments are intended to help you think through each week’s readings and lectures, and to prepare you for our class discussions. If you would like to discuss your writing assignment or receive additional feedback on it, please stop by during my office hours and I will be happy to go over it with you.

**Writing Assignment #1**
Version #1 (5-6 pages); Version #2 (14-15 pages)

Go back to the weekly discussion question from the fourth week of class: “In what ways does archaeology function to sustain present notions of Chinese/Japanese/Korean identity?” Develop your short response into an essay of 5-6 pages (version one) and then into an essay of 14-15 pages (version two). Your papers should touch on Korea, Japan and China, though in your shorter 5-6 page essay you may focus your attention on one of these regions. Explore the claims and views of archaeologists themselves. How do they understand their aims and their work? How does Pai critique conventional views of archeology?

In formulating your essays, you should draw upon insights from relevant class readings (this should include articles in *Multicultural Japan*, Pai’s *Constructing Korean Origins*, Balibar’s *The Nation Form*, and related primary documents). If you would like to discuss the paper with me, feel free to come by my office before the due date. Be careful not to wait until the last minute. I may be unavailable to discuss your assignment e.g. the day before it is due. Additional guidelines:

- The essay should be typed, double spaced, and the appropriate length
- Include a bibliography (in addition to the assigned page requirement)
- Your essay should include a main claim (argument) that is clearly stated in your introduction. Please underline your main claim.
- Quote brief passages from key texts to illustrate your claims. (But avoid overly long block quotations.)
- When you cite/quotation from sources, use the following system of citation:

  In a footnote:
  Author, *Title* (City: Publisher, Year), page#.

  In your bibliography (works cited section), put in alphabetical order with author’s last name first:

- Be certain to put quotes around words that are not your own. Understand what plagiarism is and avoid it.
- Version #1 of this assignment is a rough draft only in a loose sense. Both the shorter and the expanded drafts should be well-written, free of grammatical errors and typos, and should represent your best effort. Your expanded draft should take account of my suggestions for revision.
- An “x” in the margin of returned essays indicates an error (typo, spelling, grammar) on that line of the text.

**Writing Assignment #2**
Write two short essays (3 pages each) addressing questions handed out in class. In your response, you should draw upon key ideas and/or theories addressed in class thus far. Follow the stylistic guidelines for writing assignment #1 above.
Writing Assignment #3
Write two short essays (3 pages each) addressing questions handed out in class. They will deal with readings concerning the last weeks of class: the Yuan and Ming Dynasties, and Japan’s Christian Century. In your response, you should draw upon any/all key ideas and theories addressed in class. Follow the stylistic guidelines for writing assignment #1 above.

Grading Criteria for assignments/exams
Your essays should:

• Have a clear thesis or main claim
• Directly address the assignment or question and otherwise conform to the assignment guidelines
• Include analysis, not merely descriptions or summaries (to this end, it should avoid overly long block-quotations that simply fill up space)
• Show familiarity with both readings and class lectures/discussions
• Have no serious problems with grammar, style or sentence structure, and contain no serious factual errors.

If your essay/paper falls short in one of the above areas, it will fall into the “C” range. Assignments with problems in more than one of these areas will fall into the “D” or “F” range. If your assignment meets all of the above criteria, I will then look for the following:

• A creative or thoughtful thesis or main claim
• A thesis that thoroughly engages with the assignment or question rather than addressing only one part of it
• Thoughtful and careful analysis
• Solid support or evidence to back up your thesis or main claim
• A thorough understanding of the readings/lectures
• Organization (Is the argument consistent? Is there unnecessary, irrelevant or redundant information?)

Your paper will fall into the “A” or “B” range depending upon how well it reflects the second set of criteria.

F&M Grading Scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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*Please note: Late writing assignments (other than “short essays”) will be accepted, but they will be marked down 0.4 grade points for every day they are late: e.g. a 4.0 (A) paper turned in one day late will receive a 3.6 (A-). Assignments involving any kind of plagiarism typically receive an F (0.0) and may be a basis for a failing course grade.

Suggestions for structuring your essays

Introductions
Perhaps the most important part of your essay. Clearly state your main argument (main claim) in your introduction. Also, an introduction generally includes the following:

Stable Context:

• Begin with a "stable context," a kind of common ground or a shared understanding regarding the current status of a problem. This should not be a matter of controversy, but something generally accepted. (Give thought to your first words. Don’t start w/ a dictionary entry: “Webster’s defines syncretism as…” Avoid: “This paper will examine…” Don’t start grandly: “Since the dawn of time…” Avoid sweeping generalizations: “Throughout history the Chinese have always…”)

8
Disruption:
• Usually signalled by: but, however, on the other hand, yet, etc.
• Here, introduce your "problem," e.g. an error, a condition of ignorance, etc.
• Costs/Benefit: Briefly discuss the consequences of this problem (the cost of leaving it unresolved, or the benefit of resolving it).

Resolution:
• This should be your essay's Main Claim. This should resolve the "problem" mentioned above.
• Your claim should matter to people (otherwise why read the essay?), and it should be somewhat controversial (if everyone already agrees with your argument, there's no need to make it).
• Give your essay a title. Create a title from the key terms in your main.

Example of an Introduction

[Stable Context]  It is not uncommon to find scholarly works on international affairs referring to the "characteristics" of some society, nation, civilization or people. (Reader: "no debate")
[Disruption]  Attributing "characteristics" to an entire society or nation, however, relies upon a highly problematic set of presuppositions that ignore differences (ethnic, religious, ideological, linguistic, etc.) (Reader: "so what?")
[Costs/Benefits]  The uncritical acceptance of such presuppositions only reinforces nationalistic claims to cultural exceptionalism and sustains the violence often carried out in the name of "national essence." (Reader: "so what have you found?")
[Main Claim]  Contemporary statements on "National character," although putatively reflecting some timeless "essence" or "animating spirit" of the nation, are tied to a specific nineteenth century discourse associated with the emergence of the modern nation-state and nationalism.

Many stories will open in the same way: One sunny morning, Little Red Riding Hood was skipping happily through the forest on her way to Grandmother’s house. Suddenly, Hungry Wolf jumped out from behind a tree, frightening her very much. [Here, you already have a stable context, disruption (“suddenly, the wolf.”), and the cost (“frightening her…”). The rest of the story provides the “resolution.”]

Body of Essay
Your Main Claim will be supported by a number of "sub-claims."
• Each of your sub-claims should support your Main Claim (your main argument).
• Each sub-claim, in turn, needs to be supported by evidence (e.g. a quotation from a primary text, or from a secondary text).
• Be sure the connection between your evidence and your sub-claim is clear. This is where you can analyze or interpret the passage just quoted.

E.g. "You should be checked by a doctor (claim), because your blood-test reading is 200 (evidence)."

Ok, perhaps we accept the evidence, but why does a reading of 200 mean we should see a doctor? We need to connect the evidence to the claim:

E.g. "Whenever someone has a blood-test reading of higher than 120, it oftentimes indicates they have diabetes."

Conclusion
• Don't merely re-state your main claim. Point out the significance of the problem that you addressed and the way you resolved it. Be sure you answer the "so what" question. In other words, now that we all accept your Main Claim, tell us its deeper implications. (This might refer back to and elaborate upon the "Costs and Benefits" mentioned in your introduction.)

Much of this comes from Booth, Colomb, and Williams ed. The Craft of Research. I recommend this book to each of you.
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<th>WEEK 1</th>
<th>INTRODUCTION</th>
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<td>CLASSICAL CHINESE THOUGHT</td>
<td>Pre-Modern East Asia (25-42) &gt; 20-34</td>
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<td>WEEK 6</td>
<td>SEEKING LEGITIMACY: COSMOLOGY, “MYTHISTORY,” &amp; THE CREATION OF ORIGINS</td>
<td>Pre-Modern East Asia (137-152) &gt; 114-127</td>
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<td>Pre-Modern East Asia (43-64) &gt; 35-54</td>
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Part Three: The Preeminence of Tang

| WEEK 8 | STATE AND RELIGION IN TANG DYNASTY CHINA | Pre-Modern East Asia (65-70, 83-86) > 55-59, 69-73 |
|        |                                      | Pre-Modern East Asia (88-109) > 74-91 |
| WEEK 9 | SYMBOLIC POWER & THE FUJIWARA ASCENDANCY IN HEIAN JAPAN | Pre-Modern East Asia (192-207) > 147-159 |

Part Four: New Regimes and New Beliefs

| WEEK 10 | SONG CHINA & CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN | Pre-Modern East Asia (153-174) > 128-146 |
| WEEK 11 | THE KAMAKURA BAKUFU & NEW PATHS TO SALVATION IN JAPAN | Pre-Modern East Asia (208-223) > 180-193 |
| WEEK 12 | THE KORYO DYNASTY           | Pre-Modern East Asia (176-190) > 167-175 |

Part Five: Barbarian Encounters

| WEEK 13 | “BARBARIAN” DYNASTY: THE YUAN | Pre-Modern East Asia (226-251) < 160-166, 175-179, 194-204 |
| WEEK 14 | “NATIVE” DYNASTY: THE MING   | Pre-Modern East Asia (269-288) > 221-239 |
|         | JAPAN’S “CHRISTIAN CENTURY”  | Pre-Modern East Asia (252-268, 308-12) < 206-220, 257-61 |