Modern East Asian Political Thought: Nationhood and Sovereignty

Course Meetings: Times/Location TBD
Office Hours: Times/Location TBD
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i. Course Overview and Objectives

What is a “nation”? How is it constituted? What is its relationship to transnational and international actors and their (legitimate or illegitimate) claims to sovereignty? How do we make sense of changing perceptions of nationhood and sovereignty in light of historical legacies of imperialism, colonization, and rapid economic, political, and social change? This course explores these questions and more through the history of nineteenth and twentieth century East Asian political thought. More specifically, this course foregrounds a range of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean political thinkers and asks what, if anything, constitutes a “nation”. In light of developments over the last several decades, both in academic literature and in the empirical world, is the “nation” still a useful conceptual frame?

This discussion-based survey course is primarily geared toward students of political theory and the history of political thought, though it will likely be of interest to students in comparative politics, international relations, and East Asian studies as well. Through dialogue and writing, students will develop their ability to recognize, compare, and critically (though charitably) assess disparate articulations of the “nation” across the history of modern East Asian political thought. This course ultimately aims to foster in students a greater comprehension of modern East Asian political thought as well as the varied—and often contradicting—notions of the “nation” in the modern world.

ii. Required Texts

All readings will be posted on Chalk. For those interested, physical copies of the following volumes will be available for purchase in the campus bookstore. If you have concerns obtaining these texts for whatever reason, please contact me.

- *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol. 2: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century* (de Bary and Lufrano; 2001)
- *Sources of Korean Tradition, Vol. 2: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (Ch’oe, Lee, and de Bary; 2001)

**The following text will be available on reserve at the library for students wishing for more historical context. Chapters 18-30 will be sufficient for our concerns, but the earlier chapters provide valuable context as well.**

- *Modern East Asia from 1600: A Cultural, Social, and Political History* (Ebrey and Walthall; 2013)
iii. Assignments, Grading, and Policies

Attendance and Participation 20 %
Regular class attendance and active participation facilitate the successful recognition, comparison, and assessment of the many concepts, schools of thought, institutions, and figures encountered in this course. Thus, attendance and participation in class is mandatory. Absences due to personal emergencies, illness, religious observance, or other legitimate causes will be excused with advanced notice and proper documentation, where applicable. Good participation reflects quantity and quality of in-class comments. Students are expected to come to class with texts readily available, having done the reading and having prepared for respectful and substantive discussion. Laptops are allowed only for course-related activities; other observed activities will result in a grade reduction. I am available for any student wishing to discuss methods for engaging more effectively in class discussion.

Episode Recaps 30 %
“Episodes” refer to the thematic groupings of material covered in this course (see below). Episode recaps serve as a verbal means of evaluating the students’ ability to assess the claims of the course’s texts on a given thematic grouping and develop a nuanced reading (i.e. thesis) for submission to peer review. Students may choose to focus either on one author from the relevant episode or a few authors, but they must present a coherent and defendable thesis that engages with the broader themes of that episode. In order to balance varying degrees of exposure to the course material and the type of argumentation required in this course, episode recaps will be conducted and evaluated in groups. Groups will spend the first ten to fifteen minutes of class presenting their thesis, supporting textual evidence, and responses to potential counter-arguments. The next fifteen to twenty minutes will be a free-range discussion where others may offer constructive feedback in the form of contrary textual evidence, unclear points or themes, or other things that come to mind. Presenting students will be evaluated on their thesis, use of evidence, counter-arguments, and responses to classroom feedback. Non-presenting students will also be evaluated on the quality of their feedback. I will provide more details in the first week. Student groups are required to meet with me at least twenty-four hours in advance of their presentation to discuss their group’s thesis and evidence.

Position Papers 50 %
Position papers are intended to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to critically, yet charitably, assess the course material. Therefore, position papers will require students to adopt the perspective of a thinker encountered in class and argue for their conception of the “nation”. This will involve some level of historical research. The first paper (20%) will be due at the beginning of week 5; the final paper (30%) will be due at the beginning of week 10. Position papers must be original work from the student; plagiarism is not tolerated under any circumstance and will result in failure on the assignment and possibly failure in the course or further University sanctions. Students should consult https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/Policies#Honesty if they are unclear on what constitutes plagiarism. A one-page prospectus with a thesis paragraph and potential supporting evidence (with citations) will be due a week in advance. Students will bring these to class and review each other’s developing arguments. I will provide paper prompts a week in advance of the prospectus class. Also, I will upload a sheet for the prospectus review on Chalk. Students may choose to use the sheet or write/type out their feedback on a separate sheet, but they must answer all parts and give this to the student whose work they are reviewing. Final drafts of papers must be emailed to me by 5pm the day they are due with the prospectus review comments included at the end of the paper. I will not read drafts of papers. Late papers will be reduced by one-third a letter grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B) for every day past the due date.

**If you have a documented disability and require a reasonable accommodation to complete the course, you are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. http://disabilities.uchicago.edu/. If you already have an Accommodation Determination Letter, I am available to discuss how to implement the accommodation.**
iv. Reading Schedule

Assignments listed under each day are **due for that day**. This course is intended as a survey of modern East Asian political thought for students with little to no background in East Asian political history. Thus, the readings reflect a balance of high quality translation of smaller excerpts from a range of authors and relevant historical background material. Students are not expected to master every individual thinker in this course. Rather, they are expected to gain a general view of prominent concepts and arguments in the history of East Asian political thought, from which they may elect to develop a more focused research topic in the written assignments.

**EPISODE ONE:** Foreign Exposure and Responses

*Week One*
T: Introduction and Course Aims
Assignment: Background Probe and Basic Information Surveys

H: “Domestic and International War in Mid-19th Century China”
Reading Assignment: *Sources of Chinese Tradition II*, pp. 198-249

*Week Two*
T: “Kanghwa, Seclusion, and Enlightenment”
Reading Assignment: *Sources of Korean Tradition II*, pp. 140-142, 227-242, 245-260

H: “Seclusion and the ‘Opening’ of Japan”
Reading Assignment: *Sources of Japanese Tradition II*, pp. 616-638, 676-688, 696-710

**EPISODE TWO:** The Sino-Japanese War—Causes and Consequences

T: “The First Sino-Japanese War”
Reading Assignment: *Sources of Korean Tradition II*, pp. 261-276
*Sources of Japanese Tradition II*, pp. 798-816

H: “The Triple Intervention and the Hundred Days Reforms”
Reading Assignment: *Sources of Chinese Tradition II*, pp. 250-313

**EPISODE THREE:** Early Twentieth Century Nationalisms

*Week Four*
T: “The Boxer Rebellion and the Founding of Taiwan”
Reading Assignment: *Sources of Chinese Tradition II*, pp. pp. 314-350

**FIRST POSITION PAPER PROSPECTUS WORKSHOP**

H: “The New Culture/May Fourth Movement”
Reading Assignment: *Sources of Chinese Tradition II*, pp. 351-395

*Week Five*
T: “Korean Independence and Patriotic Movements”
Reading Assignment: *Sources of Korean Tradition II*, pp. 333-366, 387-393

**FIRST POSITION PAPER DUE (5PM EST)**
EPISODE FOUR: Reform in the Wake of WWII

Week Six
T: “The Chinese Civil War and the Communist Revolution in China”
Reading Assignment: Sources of Chinese Tradition II, pp. 396-449

H: “SCAP and Constitution-Making”
Reading Assignment: Sources of Japanese Tradition II, pp. 1021-1081

Week Seven
Reading Assignment: Sources of Chinese Tradition II, pp. 450-481
Sources of Korean Tradition II, pp. 419-425

Reading Assignment: Sources of Korean Tradition II, pp. 367-387, 393-395

EPISODE FIVE: Economic Growth and “Democratization”

T: “Chinese ‘Modernizations’”
Reading Assignment: Sources of Chinese Tradition II, pp. 485-526

H: “The Post-War ‘Japanese Miracle’ and the ‘Miracle’ on the Han”
Reading Assignment: Sources of Korean Tradition II, pp. 395-400, 442-443
Sources of Japanese Tradition II, pp. 1082-1112

EPISODE SIX: Dilemmas of Identity, Domestic and International

Week Nine
T: “The Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the New Life Movement, and Tiananmen Square”
Reading Assignment: Sources of Chinese Tradition II, pp. 527-583

SECOND POSITION PAPER PROSPECTUS WORKSHOP

H: “Cold War Japan, the Kwangju Movement, and the Sunshine Policy”
Reading Assignment: Sources of Japanese Tradition II, pp. 1162-1187
Sources of Korean Tradition II, pp. 400-419

Week Ten
T: “‘Global Presences’: The Taiwanese Sunflower Movement, Japanese-South American Emigration, and the Mindan/Chongryon” and Concluding Thoughts (Background Probe)

SECOND POSITION PAPER DUE (5PM EST)