

Knowledge, Imitation, and Rivalry: Intellectual and Political Transformations in Sino-Japanese Relations

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This course traces the evolving patterns of cultural authority, intellectual exchange, and political rivalry between China and Japan from antiquity to the Second World War. Centering on the movement of ideas—Confucianism, Buddhism, statecraft, nationalism, Pan-Asianism—students will examine how Japan initially engaged with Chinese knowledge as a dominant civilizational model, how it reinterpreted and localized imported traditions, and how by the late 19th century, the direction of imitation reversed as Chinese reformers looked to Meiji Japan for inspiration. Sessions highlight key ideological currents, institutional borrowings, and moments of transformation or rupture. Readings combine primary texts in translation with leading scholarship in intellectual and transnational history.

Seminar paper

Students can choose one of the three types of writing assignments:

- 1.) Choose a theme from the course that particularly interests you. Create a timeline of events and periods related to the event, movement, idea, war, or social phenomenon you have selected. Analyse its historical development and discuss its significance in the context of modern Chinese history.
- 2.) Select a theme from the course that resonates with your interests and provide a brief overview. Situate this theme within a comparative framework by identifying a similar or related theme from your own area of research or geographical focus. Highlight the similarities and differences between the two and reflect on how this comparison offers broader insights into global or regional historical processes and the methodologies of historical analysis.

Around 3000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliography (in case of in-text citations)
Citations should adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style*:
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Syllabus and Readings

1. Civilization and Hierarchy: The Early Imagination of Asia

Primary Sources:

- *Nihon Shoki (Nihongi)*, Vol. 2, pp. 136–140 (or search 572 of the PDF file).

Secondary:

- Charles Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia*, chp. 3.
- Toshikazu Hori, “The Exchange of Written Communications between Japan, Sui and Tang Dynasties.”

2. Intellectual Exchange under Empire: Asymmetry and Adaptation in the Sinographic Sphere

Primary Sources:

- “Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories,” *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 1, 3–13.

Secondary:

- Wai-Ming Ng, *Imagining China in Tokugawa Japan*, chps. Introduction and 7.

3. Buddhism as Shared Cosmology and Political Philosophy

Primary Sources:

- *Ennin’s travel diary*, preface, 321–28, and 332.
- “Amida, the Pure Land, and the Response of the Old Buddhism to the New,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 1, chp. 10.

Secondary:

- Gregory N. Evon, “Buddhism and Statecraft in Korea: The Long View,” in *Buddhist Statecraft in East Asia*, chp. 5.

4. Confucian Orders and Divergent Political Ethics

Primary Sources:

- “Selections from the Analects,” in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, chp. II.
- *Ogyū Sorai’s Philosophical Masterworks*, 333–37.

Secondary:

- Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 1–42.

5. Reforms, Translations, and Competing Modernities (19th Century)

Primary Sources:

- Fukuzawa Yukichi, “An Encouragement of Learning (excerpts),” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 2, 696–710.
- Kang Youwei, “Confucius As a Reformer (excerpts),” and “The Grand Commonality (excerpts),” in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 2, pp. 260–272.

Secondary:

- Colin Baker, “Origins and Significance of the Meiji Restoration,” 48–73.
- Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World*, chp. 2

6. Pan-Asianism, Race, and Regional Visions

Primary Sources:

- Sun Yat-sen, “Pan-Asianism,” in *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History*, Vol. 1, 75–86.
- “Tokutomi Sohō: A Japanese Nationalist’s View of the West and Asia,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 2, 798–811.

Secondary:

- Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, chps. Introduction and 4.

7. Militarism and Revolutionary Learning

Primary Sources:

- Mao, *On Protracted War*
(https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm)

Secondary:

- Rana Mitter, *China’s War with Japan*, chp. 7
- Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, chps. Introduction and 4.

8. War, Occupation, and Epistemic Collapse

Primary Sources:

- “Empire and War,” in *Sources of Japanese Traditions*, Vol 2., 198–1019

Secondary:

- Timothy Brook, *Collaboration*, chp. Introduction
- Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire*, chp. 6