

Crossing Empires: China, Japan, and the Politics of Civilization, 1850–1945

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This course explores the interconnected transformations of China and Japan from the mid-19th century to the end of World War II. It emphasizes the circulation of ideas about civilization, sovereignty, reform, and empire, as well as the intellectual and political actors who shaped, borrowed, and contested these ideas. From the Opium War to Japanese imperialism in Manchuria, students will investigate how both countries navigated colonialism, modernization, and national revival—often in direct response to each other.

Seminar Paper:

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 5000 words. All citations should adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style*:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Schedule and Reading:

Session 1: Introduction – East Asia and the World in 1850

- John Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order*, 1–19, 257–76.
- Bob Wakabayashi, *Modern Japanese Thought*, ch. Introduction.

Session 2: Civilization, Reform, and the Meiji Model

- Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Leaving Asia” (*Datsu-A Ron*), 1885.
- Shiga Shigetaka, “A Confession of the Principles Embraced by the *Japanese*,” 1888.
- Ian Nish, ed., *The Iwakura Mission in America and Europe*, ch. 2 and conclusion.

Session 3: China’s Late Qing Reforms and the Pull of Japan

- *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 254–273; 280–302; 308–313.
- Egas Moniz Bandeira, “Creating a Constitutional Absolute Monarchy: Li Jiaju, Dashou, and Late Qing Interpretations of the Japanese Parliament.”

Session 4: Asianism, Pan-Asianism, and Racial Hierarchies

- 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 History*, Vol. 2, 798–811.
- Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, chs. Introduction and 4.

Session 5: Anarchism and Transnational Radicalism

- Liu Shipei, “The Principle of Equality and Anarchism”
- Robert Graham, ed., *Anarchism: A Documentary History*, 336–54.
- Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, 238–258.

Session 6: Nation and Civilization: 1895–1919

- *Sources of Chinese Traditions*, 314–330.
- Lu Xun, “Diary of a Madman,” 1918. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lu-xun/1918/04/x01.htm>
- Leo Ou-fan Lee, “Incomplete Modernity: Rethinking the May Fourth Intellectual Project,” in *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital*, 29–65.

Session 7: Empire, Manchukuo, and the Crisis of Civilizational Legitimacy

- The “Japan-Manchukuo-China Joint Declaration” (1940)
- Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth*, chs. 1–4.
- Brian G. Martin, “Patriotic Collaboration?” in *Japan as the Occupier and the Occupied*, 152–71.

Session 8: War, Occupation, and Competing Modernities

- “Empire and War,” in *Sources of Japanese Traditions*, Vol 2., 198–1019.
- Jeremy A. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 1–24.
- Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire*, ch. 6.
- (Optional) Carol Gluck, “The Idea of Showa.”