

Northern Arizona University  
Department of History

College of Arts and Letters  
Spring 2026

## HISTORY 251: MAKING OF MODERN ASIA

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**Office Hours:** Mon-Fri 12:25-1:25 pm  
and by appointment

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**Course Web page:** <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/makingmodernasia.html>

**A LIBERAL STUDIES COURSE IN THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL WORLDS BLOCK. FULFILLS NAU'S GLOBAL DIVERSITY REQUIREMENT. Policy Statements at: <https://nau.edu/university-policy-library/syllabus-requirements/>**

**A COPY OF THIS SYLLABUS CAN ALSO BE FOUND ON THE COURSE WEB PAGE**

### Course Description

This course examines transformations in the lives of people, economies, and governments in Asia from the 18th century to the mid-20th century. We use China, India, and Japan *as case studies* to understand how they were, in different ways, brought in contact with, and then subordinated to the interests of more powerful Western powers. We examine the transformations in the political economy of these three areas of Asia as a result of their interaction with Western colonialism, and the different strategies they adopted to overcome and adapt to the changes they confronted. We seek to understand *how and why the three places saw such different outcomes by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*. The aim of the course is not so much a mastery of the histories of three different nation-states, but rather to understand the **connections** (expressed through similarity and differences) which went into the making of modern Asia until the middle of the twentieth century.

### Course Structure/Approach

The format of the course consists of lectures and formal and informal discussions. Students are encouraged to raise questions and make comments throughout the course.

### Required Books

1. Barbara and Thomas Metcalf. *Concise History of Modern India*. Third Edition. Cambridge, 2006. **Available as an ebook to be checked out from Cline Library. [This is a direct link to the book.](#)**
2. Ranbir Vohra. *China's Path to Modernization*. Third Edition. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000. Relevant chapters available as links on schedule, below.
3. Kenneth B. Pyle. *The Making of Modern Japan. Second Edition*. Lexington, Mass., Toronto: D. C. Heath and Company, 1996. Relevant chapters available as links on schedule, below.

*IN ADDITION*, other sections of books, journal articles, short stories, films or videos will be used for this course, and will be made available electronically either through the course webpage or Canvas, as appropriate.

### Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will not only be familiar with the broad contours of the political, social, and cultural history of Asia from ca. 1750 to ca. 1945, but also be able to do the following:

- a. Critically read and interpret histories of India, China, and Japan and make arguments about the connections between these histories.
- b. Combine evidence from a variety of historical sources to get a sense of life in the times and places they are

reading about.

c. Be able to present a cogent argument well supported by evidence in exams, discussions, and most important, the final paper.

### Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course:

- I. Students will have learned, through reading, attending and taking notes at lectures, and participating in discussions, a general and thematic framework for analyzing and interpreting the historical experience of the people of India, China and Japan from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the broad contours of the empirical historical data on and related to that experience.
- II. Through the quizzes, students will demonstrate their knowledge of the basic historical data and the fundamental interpretive ideas that they have learned from the reading and from lectures that pertain to specific thematic topics in the historical experience of India, China and Japan in the period covered by the course
- III. Through the discussions, students will demonstrate competency in reading texts and examining ideas critically, interpreting different arguments and perspectives on Indian, Chinese and Japanese history and evaluating the merits of these historical and/or historiographical arguments.
- IV. Through the term paper exercise, students will learn to synthesize evidence from a variety of sources and genres of sources to present interpretive portrayals of life experiences of the people of India, China, and Japan in the historical context of the period covered by this course.
- V. In writing papers, conducting research, preparing for participation in discussions, students will present cogent arguments, listen and respond to other people's arguments, support viewpoints by evidence, and critique as well as defend their own as well as other people's points of view.

### Assessment of Outcomes

The course uses primarily three types of instruments to assess your achievement of the learning objectives listed above: Five Quizzes (50% of the total points for the course, 10 % each), one medium-length paper (25% of the total course grade), and a response paper connecting extracts from Amitav Ghosh's novel, *River of Smoke* to the early part of the course material (15%). Ten percent of your course grade will be evaluated on the basis of your attendance and participation in the class and discussion groups. The quizzes will draw on material from the prescribed books for the course and may also have map-based questions to test your grasp of geography of modern Asian history. The paper is designed to test your ability to read critically and think creatively about the material on modern Asian history, and to be able to present it effectively in appropriate prose.

### Assignments and Exams

- I. **Term Paper:** You will write one 5 to 8 page analytical final paper comparing themes across the course. The paper will be assigned on March 26 and is due on April 25.
- II. **Five Online Quizzes:** The first three will focus on histories of India, China and Japan covered to the respective points in the course. The last two will be more comparative in nature.
- III. A 3 page **response paper** based on extracts from Amitav Ghosh's novel, *River of Smoke*. **Assigned February 8<sup>th</sup>, due February 29<sup>th</sup>**
- IV. **Class Participation:** My subjective assessment of your attendance and participation in class activities (including two informal discussions), will count toward 10 % of the total course grade.

### Grading System

Grades for the course will be determined according to the following criteria:

Five Online Quizzes	50%
Response Paper on Extract from <i>River of Smoke</i>	15%
Final Comparative Paper	25%
Class Attendance & Participation	10%
6 % on Two Discussions; 4% on attendance	

## TOTAL FOR COURSE

100%

The grading scale for the course will be as follows:

90%+ = A; 80 - 89% = B; 70-79% = C; 60-69% = D; below 60% = F.

## EVALUATION

The grading scale for the course will be as follows:

90+ = A; 80 - 89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; below 60 = F.

## Course Policies

**ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE ON CANVAS ON DAYS OUTLINED IN THE SCHEDULE BELOW, usually by end of day, but check the specific submission dates for each assignment.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** I do not give extensions, incompletes, or make-up exams, except in cases allowed for by University Policy.

Plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any of the assignments and will result in failing the course. Please consult the section on “Academic Integrity” and “Artificial Intelligence” in the *NAU Policy Statements* appended to this syllabus for further details. IT IS THE STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITY TO FAMILIARIZE HERSELF/HIMSELF WITH THESE MATTERS AS DEFINED BY THE UNIVERSITY.

## Attendance and Punctuality

Regular attendance is even more crucial than usual for all courses. Absences will be excused either based on medical documentation, or in cases allowed for by University policies. In rare cases, I will excuse absences for personal reasons, but these need to be discussed and approved by me, ideally in advance. I will allow for TWO unexcused absences over the semester. Beyond that you start losing participation points. More than FIVE unexcused absences over the semester will AUTOMATICALLY result in a failing grade, regardless of your performance in assignments. If you think your University-related activities, such as field trips, debates, athletic competitions or training might mean you will miss more than three classes during this semester, my advice would be not to take the course.

Whatever your reasons for arriving late or missing a class, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to arrange to contact a classmate and find out what happened in that class. I encourage you to form small “study groups” or at least make a “class buddy” whom you can contact for information about classes missed, study with for the exams, and discuss the proceedings of the class.

## In General

I expect you to come to class having done all the required reading and prepared to engage in discussion. I want you to be motivated to learn about the subject and to improve your skills as a historian. I will do my best to help you understand more about the subject. What you make of this course, however, is ultimately entirely up to you.

**PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE** I expect all students to have completed the readings assigned for the days below **BEFORE** coming to class.

*(All dates, readings and assignments subject to change. Depending on how we progress, I reserve the right to change the schedule or even the assigned readings for the course)*

## Introduction

January 12-14

Introduction to the Course.

## PART I: Toward Western Hegemony

January 14-23

*India: The Emergence and Consolidation of British Power.*

Readings:

[Metcalf and Metcalf](#), pp. 29-91.

Tentative Schedule: Jan. 14-16: pp. 29-55 (chapter 2).  
 Jan. 19: MLK Day holiday  
 .  
 Jan. 21: pp. 56-81  
 Jan. 23: pp. 81-91.

**Quiz One Assigned January 23, due END OF DAY January 30**

January 26 -February 4 *China: The Manchus, Traditional Chinese Society, and pressure from the West.*  
 Readings: Vohra, chapters 1, 2, 3.  
 Tentative Schedule: Jan 26-28: [Chapter One](#).  
 Jan 28-30: [Chapter Two](#).  
 Feb. 2-4: [Chapter Three](#).

**Quiz Two Assigned February 4, due END OF DAY, February 11**

February 6-9 *Connections between India and China: Opium Trade*  
 Readings: [Selections from Amitav Ghosh's novel, \*River of Smoke\*](#).

**Response Paper on *River of Smoke* Assigned February 9<sup>th</sup>, due END OF DAY March 6**

February 11-18 *Japan: The Tokugawa Shogunate and its downfall.*  
 Readings: Pyle, pp. 1-74.  
 Tentative Schedule: Feb. 11-13: pp. 1-27 (chapters [ONE](#) and [TWO](#)).  
 Feb. 16-18: pp. 29-74 (chapters [THREE](#), [FOUR](#) and [FIVE](#)).

**Discussion # 1 Questions Assigned February 16<sup>th</sup>.**

**Quiz Three Assigned February 18, due END OF DAY February 25<sup>th</sup>**

February 20 *Comparative Colonial Experiences and Early Responses.*  
 Readings: Revise all chapters from Metcalf and Metcalf, Vohra, Pyle, and Ghosh  
 (selections).

February 23 *Discussion #1*

**PART II: Colonialism, Reform, and Nationalism (Please keep in mind that the reading schedule, and the overall pace of the course becomes more challenging than in part I, and remains so till the end of the semester)**

February 25-March 4 *Colonialism and Early Response in India.*

**Reminder: Assignment**

**Response Paper on *River of Smoke*, due END OF DAY, March 6**

Readings: Metcalf and Metcalf, pp. 92-166.

Tentative Schedule: Feb. 25-27: pp. 92-120.  
 March 2: SKIM pp. 120-122 and READ pp. 123-166.

March 4

Watch: **No Class Meeting:**  
["Imperialism: Crash Course World History #35"](#) John Green, Crash Course in World History, #35

March 6 Catch up. No Class Meeting if we are on schedule.

March 9-13 *SPRING BREAK*

March 16-27 *Nationalist Revolutions in China.*  
Readings: Vohra, chapters [FOUR](#), [FIVE](#), and [SIX](#).  
Schedule: March 16-18 Vohra Chapter [FOUR](#)  
March 20-23 Vohra Chapter [FIVE](#)  
March 25-27 Vohra Chapter [SIX](#)

**TERM PAPER ASSIGNED March 27 (DUE April 27 on Canvas by end of day)**

March 30-April 10 *Meiji Nationalism in Japan.*  
Readings: Pyle, chapters [Six](#), [Seven](#), [Eight](#).  
Schedule: March 30: Chapter [Six](#)

**April 1-3 NO CLASS MEETING, catch up on your readings**

Watch: “[Samurai, Daimyo, Matthew Perry, and Nationalism](#)” John Green, Crash Course World History #34  
April 6: Chapter [Seven](#)  
April 8-10: Chapter [Eight](#)  
**Discussion # 2 Questions Assigned April 3.**

April 13 *Discussion #2*

**Quiz Four Assigned April 10<sup>th</sup>, due April 17<sup>th</sup> by end of day**

**PART III: Asia in the Modern World: Revolutions and Empires**

April 15-20 *India: Toward Independence.*  
Readings: Metcalf and Metcalf, pp. 167-230.  
Tentative Schedule: April 15: pp. 166-202.  
April 17-20: pp. 203-230.

April 22-27 *Japan: Toward Authoritarianism and Imperialism.*  
Readings: Pyle, chapters [Nine](#), [Ten](#), and [Eleven](#).  
Tentative Schedule: One chapter a class period.

*Assignment Due*

**April 27: TERM PAPER DUE!**

April 29-May 1 *China: Toward Socialist Revolution.*  
Readings: Vohra, chapters [Seven](#) and [Eight](#).  
Schedule: One chapter a class period.  
Watch: “[Communists, Nationalists, and China's Revolutions](#)” John Green, Crash Course World History #37

**Quiz Five Assigned April 29<sup>th</sup>, due May 4<sup>th</sup> by end of day**

**THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM FOR THIS CLASS**

## SYLLABUS POLICY STATEMENTS

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

NAU expects every student to firmly adhere to a strong ethical code of academic integrity in all their scholarly pursuits. The primary attributes of academic integrity are honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and responsibility. As a student, you are expected to submit original work while giving proper credit to other people's ideas or contributions. Acting with academic integrity means completing your assignments independently while truthfully acknowledging all sources of information, or collaboration with others when appropriate. When you submit your work, you are implicitly declaring that the work is your own. Academic integrity is expected not only during formal coursework, but in all your relationships or interactions that are connected to the educational enterprise. All forms of academic deceit such as plagiarism, cheating, collusion, falsification or fabrication of results or records, permitting your work to be submitted by another, or inappropriately recycling your own work from one class to another, constitute academic misconduct that may result in serious disciplinary consequences. All students and faculty members are responsible for reporting suspected instances of academic misconduct. All students are encouraged to complete the online course entitled **Academic Integrity @NAU for Students** found in their Canvas Dashboard and review the full [NAU Academic Integrity Policy](#).

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies bring both opportunities and challenges. Ensuring honesty in academic work creates a culture of integrity and expectations of ethical behavior. The use of these technologies can depend on the instructional setting, varying by faculty member, program, course, and assignment. Please refer to course policies, any additional course-specific guidelines in the syllabus, or communicate with the instructor to understand expectations. NAU recognizes the role that these technologies will play in the current and future careers of our graduates and expects students to practice responsible and ethical use of AI technologies to assist with learning within the confines of course policies.

### COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

All lectures and course materials, including but not limited to exams, quizzes, study outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. These materials may not be shared, uploaded, distributed, reproduced, or publicly displayed without the express written permission of NAU. Sharing materials on websites such as Course Hero, Chegg, or related websites is considered copyright infringement subject to United States Copyright Law and a violation of NAU Student Code of Conduct. For more information on ABOR policies relating to course materials, please refer to [ABOR Policy 6-908 A\(2\)\(5\)](#).

### COURSE TIME COMMITMENT

Pursuant to Arizona Board of Regents guidance ([ABOR Policy 2-224](#), *Academic Credit*), each unit of credit requires a minimum of 45 hours of work by students, including but not limited to, class time, preparation, homework, and studying. For example, for a 3-credit course a student should expect to work at least 8.5 hours each week in a 16-week session and a minimum of 33 hours per week for a 3-credit course in a 4-week session.

### DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Membership in NAU's academic community entails a special obligation to maintain class environments that are conducive to learning, whether instruction is taking place in the classroom, a laboratory or clinical setting, during course-related fieldwork, or online. Students have the obligation to engage in the educational process in a manner that does not interfere with normal class activities or violate the rights of others. For more information, see the [Student Code of Conduct policy](#).

### NONDISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT

NAU prohibits discrimination and harassment based on sex, gender, gender identity, race, color, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status and genetic information. Certain consensual amorous or sexual relationships between faculty and students are also prohibited as set forth in the *Consensual Romantic and Sexual Relationships* policy. The Equity and Access Office (EAO) responds to complaints regarding discrimination and harassment that fall under NAU's *Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment* policy. To report a concern related to possible unlawful discrimination or harassment or to request a time to meet, please use the [Report an Issue Form](#). To file a complaint, please submit the online [Complaint Form](#). EAO also assists with religious accommodations. To request a religious accommodation, please use the [Religious Accommodation Request Intake Form](#). EAO additionally provides access to



lactation spaces, and please use to the [Lactation Space Request Form](#) to request use of a location. For additional information about nondiscrimination or anti-harassment, contact EAO at [EquityandAccess@nau.edu](mailto:EquityandAccess@nau.edu), or visit the EAO website at <https://nau.edu/equity-and-access>. The EAO is located in Old Main on the first floor.

## **TITLE IX**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, protects individuals from discrimination based on sex in any educational program or activity operated by recipients of federal financial assistance. In accordance with Title IX, Northern Arizona University prohibits discrimination based on sex or gender in all its programs or activities. Sex discrimination includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. NAU does not discriminate on the basis of sex in the education programs or activities that it operates, including in admission and employment. NAU is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination based on sex or gender and provides a number of supportive measures that assist students, faculty and staff employees, and covered guests.

One may direct inquiries concerning the application of Title IX to either or both the university Title IX Coordinator or the U.S. Department of Education, Assistant Secretary, Office of Civil Rights. You may contact NAU's Title IX Coordinator at [titleix@nau.edu](mailto:titleix@nau.edu) or by phone at 928-523-5434. In furtherance of its Title IX obligations, NAU promptly will investigate or equitably resolve all reports of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct and will eliminate any hostile environment as defined by law. To submit a report, please use the [File a Report Form](#). The Office for the Resolution of Sexual Misconduct (ORMS): Title IX Institutional Compliance, Prevention & Response addresses matters that fall under the university's [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#). ORSM also facilitates reasonable modifications for pregnant or parenting individuals. Additional important information and related resources, including how to request help or confidential support following conduct covered by the Sexual Misconduct Policy, is available on the [ORMS web site](#), and you also may contact the office at [titleix@nau.edu](mailto:titleix@nau.edu). The ORSM is located in Gammage on the third floor.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

Professional disability specialists are available at Disability Resources to facilitate a range of academic support services and accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability, you can request assistance by contacting Disability Resources at 928-523-8773 (voice), 928-523-8747 (fax), or [dr@nau.edu](mailto:dr@nau.edu) (e-mail). Once eligibility has been determined, students register with Disability Resources every semester to activate their approved accommodations. Although a student may request an accommodation at any time, it is best to initiate the application process at least four weeks before a student wishes to receive an accommodation. Students may begin the accommodation process by submitting a [self-identification form](#) online or by contacting Disability Resources. The Director of Disability Resources, Jamie Axelrod, serves as NAU's Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator and Section 504 Compliance Officer. He can be reached at [jamie.axelrod@nau.edu](mailto:jamie.axelrod@nau.edu)

## **RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH**

Students who engage in research at NAU must receive appropriate Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training. This instruction is designed to help ensure proper awareness and application of well-established professional norms and ethical principles related to the performance of all scientific research activities. For more information and details, students are encouraged to navigate to the complete policy on [Responsible Conduct of Research Training](#).

## **MISCONDUCT IN RESEARCH**

As noted, NAU expects every student to firmly adhere to a strong code of academic integrity in all their scholarly pursuits. This includes avoiding fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism when conducting research or reporting research results. Engaging in research misconduct may result in serious disciplinary consequences. Students must also report any suspected or actual instances of research misconduct of which they become aware. Allegations of research misconduct should be reported to your instructor or the University's Research Integrity Officer, Scott Pryor, who can be reached at [scott.pryor@nau.edu](mailto:scott.pryor@nau.edu) or 928-523-5927. Students are encouraged to view the complete policy on [Misconduct in Research](#).

## **SENSITIVE COURSE MATERIALS**

University education aims to expand student understanding and awareness. Thus, it necessarily involves engagement with a wide range of information, ideas, and creative representations. In their college studies, students can expect to encounter and to critically appraise materials that may differ from and perhaps challenge familiar understandings, ideas, and beliefs. Students are encouraged to discuss these matters with faculty.

Last revised August 14, 2025