



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
SAN ANTONIO

Fall 2025 HIST 3358 (13292)

# Asian History I

Thursday 12:30 – 1:45 pm  
Classroom Hall 207

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**Professor Zhaojin Zeng**

[zzeng@tamusa.edu](mailto:zzeng@tamusa.edu)

Office: CAB 313B

Office hours: TTH 10:45 am -12:15 pm

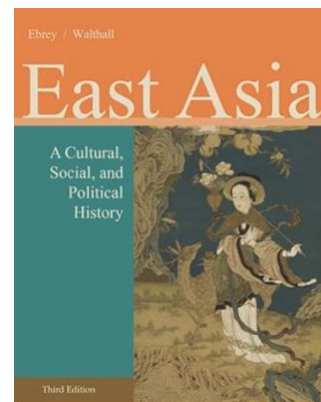
## Course Description and Goals

The course offers an introduction to **the history of Asia from its ancient times to 1800**. The geographical focus will be on East Asia (China, Japan, and Korea) as well as on the South and Southeast Asia. We will examine Asian societies, politics, and peoples as well as cultural and economic interconnections across regions and shifting power relations between different regimes. Weekly topics include philosophy and religion; population and economy; power and authority; gender, ethnicity, and cultural identity. Through lecture, reading, in-class and online discussions, and group work, students will gain opportunities to understand, analyze, and appreciate cultural unities, ethnic diversities, and social continuities and discontinuities that comprise the historical development of Asian civilization as a whole. Students will also learn to develop analytical skills in reading, writing, and using primary archives, interpretive articles, and documentary videos as well as digital tools to do research. At the end of the course, students will be able to establish a substantial understanding of Asian history and culture and become well equipped to continue exploring higher-level coursework or programs related to East Asian history, Asia studies, and World History. This course has no prerequisite - familiarity with the region or prior experience with Asia is *not* required.

## Course Texts and Study Resources

### 1. Required Textbook:

- Patricia Ebrey and Anne Walthall, *East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History*, Third Edition. Cengage Learning, 2013. ISBN 978-1133606475 (Earlier editions also okay).
- This book covers both Asian History I and II.



### 2. Supplemental Materials:

- Selected journal articles, newspaper reports, and book chapters (marked \*) are available in electronic format on Blackboard.

### 3. Online Study Guides on Asian History and Asian Studies

TAMUSA library: <https://libguides.tamusa.edu/HIST3358>

Texas A&M Library: <https://tamu.libguides.com/c.php?g=426260>

## Course Assignments & Grading

**1. Attendance (10%):** Students are required to attend all class meetings. Attendance for each class meeting is taken on a credit/non-credit basis in the formats of sign-up sheets, pop quizzes, and exit notes, among others. There is no make-up for missed attendance. Each absence results in a one-point deduction in your final grade. Exceptions can only be made with a doctor's note or other legitimate documentation for extreme conditions/causes.

**2. Class Participation (20%):** Students are required to fully engage in the class by asking and responding to questions, actively participating in discussions, carrying out group work, and performing other required class activities. The grade is based on the instructor's subjective, but very fair, evaluation of student involvement in class activities during the entire period of the course.

**3. Three-Minute Pre-Recorded Video Presentation (30%):** Students deliver a three-minute pre-recorded presentation to introduce a historical object from the broader historical context of modern Asia. The object could be a historical site, a scenic place, a book, an electronic product, an important figure, an animal, or other concrete historical objects. You may employ appropriate

digital technologies to animate your presentation. Refer to [the online document](#) for detailed instructions.

**4. Final Assignment “Debating the Past: A Critical Essay on Asian History” (40%):** For your final assignment, you will write an essay of 8 to 12 pages (double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman, standard margins) in which you *critically engage* with a specific argument, theme, or interpretation from the course. Your task is to debate the past by revisiting an idea presented in lectures and either questioning, nuancing, or expanding upon it through historical evidence and scholarly reasoning.

The purpose of this essay is not simply to agree or disagree, but to demonstrate independent thinking, the ability to analyze evidence, and skill in constructing a persuasive, well-structured argument. Strong essays will show mastery of relevant course materials, incorporate both primary and secondary sources where appropriate, and make a clear contribution to understanding the historical issue at stake. Refer to [the online document](#) for detailed instructions.

**5. Extra Credit Opportunities** (2 additional points towards final grade): In order to incentivize student participation in talks, lectures, or other extracurricular events on campus or in the city of San Antonio, one extra point, for each event you attend, will be given toward your final grade. Two points/events maximum for each student. Prior to attending the events, students need to consult by email and seek written approval from the professor. Upon returning from the extracurricular event, students will submit on Blackboard a 250-word report that briefly summarizes the event and shares your experience and thoughts.

#### **6. Final Grade Scale:**

A = 90 to 102, B = 80 to 89, C = 70 to 79, D = 60 to 69, F = 0 to 59.

\*Straight letter grades only, no plus or minus (+/-)

### **Course Policies**

**Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities:** Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us <https://www.tamusa.edu/DisabilitySupport-Services/index.html> or email us at [dss@tamusa.edu](mailto:dss@tamusa.edu). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory,

physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services as soon as possible.

**The Six-Drop Rule:** Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

**Financial Aid & Verification of Attendance:** According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which includes class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving Federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have his/her aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of his/her federal aid.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** Students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Academic Dishonesty for which a student is subject to penalty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submissions, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, and ethical misconduct. This includes holding other students to the same standards and reporting any incidents of alleged violation of the honesty policy to the instructor involved or, if necessary, to the appropriate academic department head. All students are responsible for being familiar with the Academic Dishonesty Policy, which may be found in the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook.

**Student Misconduct:** Appropriate conduct is essential to the effective functioning of the University. University policy defines unacceptable conduct, both academic and non-academic misconduct, and penalties for such behavior in The Student Handbook and The Student Code of Conduct. University policy prescribes serious consequences for acts of academic misconduct including, but not limited to, a grade of 'F' on the particular paper or assignment or a failing grade in the course. Also, a referral may be issued to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities where the sanctions can vary up to possible expulsion from the University. Considering the potential consequences of academic misconduct, it is obviously in students' best interests to avoid even the appearance of such behavior. If you are ever unclear whether a specific act might constitute academic misconduct, please contact your instructor for an assessment of the situation. All student term papers and other written assignments are subject to analysis by anti-plagiarism software.

**Course Writing Policy:** All assignments should be crafted originally and directly by students. In the meantime, all information/materials, created by others and then used in students' work, should be given credit to in the appropriate academic citation styles. Note that writing first in a language other than English and then having it translated into English through digital tools is prohibited.

**AI Policy:** Per University requirements, this course specifies the following rules regarding the use of generative AI tools, including but not limited to, GhatGPT, Google Gemini, Grok, Deepseek, etc. 1) Students should create original work for this course, and the use of AI can only be allowed when it serves as a *supplemental* tool for writing improvement, material/data locating, and other non-essential research processes. 2) AI-generated contents, as well as writings and sources created by others, should always be properly cited and acknowledged in your work; otherwise it is considered as plagiarism and violation of academic integrity. 3) If students do use AI tools in any process of their coursework, students must provide a detailed statement on how AI tools informed their research and writing process and the final product, including how you validated any AI-generated contents; this statement does not contribute to the word count of your assignments and does not automatically justify your use of AI tools. 4) The instructor reserves the right to request further information or reassign the assignment in the case of lack of transparency in the use of AI-generated contents in your work.

**Submission Policy.** Students need to follow the course instructions to submit all completed assignments, on time, to the correct places, online, in print, or in class, etc. *Submissions late for the first hour will be penalized for 5% deduction in grade and for 20% deduction if late between the 2<sup>nd</sup> hour and one day. Late assignments will NOT be accepted if submitted beyond 24 hours past the due time.*

**Grading.** Students wishing a reconsideration of their grades may consult the professor, and requests must be made by email within THREE days of the posting of the grades. In the case of regrading, assignments will be graded afresh. Grades may go up or down. Students should immediately inform the professor of any discrepancies between grades recorded on the course website and the grades they have received on assignments.

**Digital Device Policy or “No Screens” Policy.** On-screen distractions in class have become a besetting problem, frustrating other students and faculty alike. This course thus simply complies with the History Department’s “no screens” policy: *laptops or cellphones are NOT allowed to use during the class and must be stowed in your bags.* Students will be notified in advance if laptops will be needed during a particular session for a group activity, or to consult readings they may not have printed out.

**Communication Policy. In-Class Communication:** The physical or virtual classroom in this course also serves as an intellectual space for open and free academic conversations between class participants, which consist of the instructor and registered students. Visitors and

audit/outside students can be allowed only if the instructor grants approval in advance. Recording, and spread to outside outlets of, class conversations in any way is strictly prohibited unless there is written permission from the instructor. Email Communication: E-mail me directly any questions or concerns that you might have in relation to your coursework. Please do NOT use the “send message” function on the Blackboard platform. All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have a Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at [sahelp@tamusa.edu](mailto:sahelp@tamusa.edu) or 210-784-4357

**Etiquette.** Please arrive on time. Please do not come and go during the class period. If you are unavoidably late, as a courtesy to the class, please enter quietly so as not to interfere with the concentration of other students.

**Military Affairs:** Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots’ Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at [military.va@tamusa.edu](mailto:military.va@tamusa.edu) or (210)784-1397.

## **Student Support and Resources**

**Academic Learning Center:** The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the Tools section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing [tutoring@tamusa.edu](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu), calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

**The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center:** The center provides writing assistance to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges at Texas A&M-San Antonio. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Students can make individual or group appointments with a writing tutor. Email [writingcenter@tamusa.edu](mailto:writingcenter@tamusa.edu) to make an appointment.

**TAMUSA Library:** Librarians from the Archives & Special Collections offer one on one research assistance by appointment for history students. Topics include brainstorming a topic, search techniques, or even citation help. Feel free to make an appointment with the librarian via the link: <https://tamusa.libcal.com/appointments?u=30503>

## **Weekly Schedule**

### **Week 1 (August 28) Course Introduction**

**Reading:** Robert B. Marks, [“Asia in the Remaking of the Modern World.”](#)

## **Part One – Early Asian Cultures and Societies**

### **Week 2 (September 4) Foundations of East Asian Civilizations: Early Dynasties**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.1.

Optional: Watch short episode [“Foundations of Eastern Civilizations”](#)

### **Week 3 (September 11) Early Asian Cultures and Philosophies**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.2.

Watch video: [“Qing Ming Festival”](#)

**In-class video presentations start in Week 4!**

### **Week 4 (September 18) Early Chinese Empires**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.3&4.

Optional read: [“China's Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor's Legacy”](#) at Asian Art Museum

### **Week 5 (September 25) Early Korea to 935**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.6.

**Watch video:** [“Journey to Korea’s Ancient Silla Kingdom”](#) by Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art

### **Week 6 (October 2) Early State and Society in Japan (to 794)**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.7.

## **Part Two – Medieval Asia (800-1600)**

### **Week 7 (October 9) Sui and Tang China (581-960)**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.5.

**Watch: BBC video** [“Silk Road: The history behind key global trade region & China's renewed interest”](#)

**Week 8 (October 16) Feudal Japan from Heian to Kamakura to Muromachi (1)**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Chs. 9&11.

Optional read: [“Medieval Japan: An Introductory Essay”](#)

**Week 9 (October 23) Feudal Japan from Heian to Kamakura to Muromachi (2)**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch. 13.

**Week 10 (October 30) Goryeo Korea (935-1392)**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.10.

Optional: [‘Have you eaten?’ Inside Korea’s gastronomic love language](#)

**Week 11 (November 6) China from Song to Ming (1100-1600)**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Chs.8&14.

Optional Video: [“How did the Mongols Destroy Baghdad in 1258?”](#)

**Part Three – Early Modern Asia (1600-1800)**

**Week 12 (November 13) Joseon Korea (1392-1800)**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.15.

Optional online interactive material: [Hidden Facts You Didn't Know About Joseon Dynasty and Korean Empire — Google Arts & Culture](#)

**Week 13 (November 20) Edo Japan (1603-1800)**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.17.

**Week 14 (November 26) No Classes and Happy Holidays**

**Week 15 (December 4) The Rise of Qing (the Manchu Empire 1600-1800)**

**Reading:** Ebrey and Walthall, *East Asia*, Ch.16.

**Week 16 – Monday, December 8, 11:59:59 pm – Final Essay Due on Blackboard**