Creating National Identity in 20th-Century China and Japan

Despite their radically different ideologies and political systems, governments (and people) in both China and Japan faced the challenge of defining their national identities in the 20th century world. There were several dimensions to this process. First, Chinese and Japanese intellectuals and politicians sought to carve out new roles for themselves within Asia. In addition, they tried to position themselves relative to perceptions of the West. Finally, they attempted to reconcile their national pasts with current identities. Furthermore, within each country, we see different opinions (and changing opinions over time) about how to represent the nation. Attempts to define national identity are not purely "historical" phenomena; they continue to shape society and culture in China and Japan—even as they create tensions that trouble regional and international relations today.

Readings
John Dower, War Without Mercy

Most materials are available through MSE Library e-Reserves.

This class has no prerequisites. Students are not expected to have prior knowledge of Chinese or Japanese history. For general context and information, students may wish to consult Jonathan Spence, Search for Modern China (2nd edition, 1999) and Andrew Gordon, A Modern History of Japan, which will be available through library reserves).

Because film has reflected and contributed to the formation of national identities in Asia and elsewhere (and because I have found certain movies helpful in thinking about questions related to this course), I have recommended a few films for optional viewing in conjunction with this class. These optional films are listed in the syllabus at points where they are most relevant. Students are encouraged to watch them as their schedules permit—or even to watch them at their leisure after the semester ends. Tests and papers will only cover films listed as “Required.”

Course Objectives:
Students will gain a deeper understanding of key concepts such as nationalism and national identity in historical, regional, and national contexts. They will make use of both primary and secondary readings to develop critical arguments and as they participate in civil and lively class discussions. They will have several formal opportunities to demonstrate mastery of course content and their developing skills as close and careful readers of sources. To situate their learning in its geographical context, students will be required to prepare for and pass a simple map quiz.

Grading
Class Participation: 20%
Generative Questions 20% Weekly, 9am Tuesday
2 Papers (5-6 pp/15% each) 30% Due at 11:59 pm, March 12 and April 23 respectively
Final Synthesis 20% Due at 9 am on May 13
Map Quiz 10% In class on 1/30

The class participation grade (20%) will be based on the students’ preparation for and contribution
to class discussion. This class will be run as a blended lecture and seminar and students are expected to provide substantial content. Students are required to complete the assigned readings before scheduled class meetings. Obviously, students cannot contribute to class discussion if they are absent; consequently, repeated unexcused absences will be reflected in their participation grade.

Generative Questions: Each week, by 9 am on Tuesday, students are expected to produce at least one “generative question” that they feel ought to be addressed by their classmates during class (these should be questions that generate discussion--not factual questions for the professor). A good question will demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the reading and strong preparation for discussion. It should thus reference specifically the assigned material and should be embedded in a paragraph. I will count the 10 highest graded “generative questions” toward the final grade and will drop the 2 lowest grades.

National identity and nationalism are sensitive and potentially uncomfortable topics. We should be prepared to disagree while maintaining a high degree of civility and a willingness to listen to alternative viewpoints. We will, together, discuss potentially contentious issues, test out new ideas, put forward tentative opinions or arguments, and discuss personal experiences. This sharing requires maximum mutual trust and respect.

Confidentiality/Privacy. The use of video and audio recording technology during class is strictly forbidden. Classmates’ comments are confidential unless the speaker gives you clear and specific permission that you may share her or his comments with others outside of class.

Unexcused late papers will be penalized 3 points per day (A becomes A-). In cases of illness, emergency, or deadline conflicts please request an extension from the instructor as early as is feasible. All papers should have page numbers.

*** A Note on Classroom Etiquette: Please turn off all electronic devices, including cellular phones, and shut down non-essential computer programs before the beginning of class. Please arrive punctually and if you must arrive late or depart early, do your best to avoid inconvenience to your fellow students by sitting close to the door! **

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

The use of AI (including Chat GPT) to complete course work is strictly forbidden.

Report any violations you witness to the instructor. See the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board web site (http://ethics.jhu.edu) for more information.

Class Schedule
1/22 The Useful Past: History and National Identity in East Asia—and beyond. Self-Introductions and Motivations.

1/29 Part 1: Theorizing National Identity: What is National? What is Identity? A Roundtable Discussion focused on the following readings:

Reading:


Intermission: **MAP QUIZ (10 minutes)**

Part 2: Empire and Nation

Mary B. Rankin, “Alarming Crises/Enticing Possibilities: Political and Cultural Changes in Late Nineteenth-Century China,” *Late Imperial China*, Special Issue in Honor of William T. Rowe, June 2008.


*China: The Sleep and the Awakening: A Reply to Marquis Tseng by “Sinensis” with the Text of the Marquis’ Article*, Hong Kong: Reprinted from the China Mail, 1887. Note: Marquis Tseng is Zeng Jize. Please read both the essay by Marquis Tseng and the reply.

2/5 Part 1: Regional War and National Identity in Meiji Japan and Qing China


Part 2: Picturing Meiji: Inventing Traditions for Emperor and Nation

Optional: Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, pp. 42-72

2/12
Part 1: Japanese Intellectuals Rethink Their Place in the World (1870s-early 1900s)
Uchimura Kanzō, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, v. 2, 1162-1168

Reading:

Anti-Manchu Nationalism (1895-1911)

National Awakening (1911-1925)

Lu Xun, introduction to *A Call to Arms* and “Diary of a Madman”
Wen Yiduo, “I am Chinese”—Meyer-Fong handout

2/19
Part 1: Hokkaido (Japan) as Frontier or Colony

Part 2: Japan’s Colonial Empire: Origins, Histories, and Legacies
Reading:

Takekoshi Yosaburo, "Japanese Rule in Formosa" (1907)

http://books.google.com/books?id=TnkLAAAAIAAJ&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false


2/26  Part 1: Gender, Modernity and National Identities in inter-War Japan
Reading: Tanizaki Junichiro, “Aguri” in *Seven Japanese Tales*, pp.186-204.

Optional Film: *The Makioka Sisters* (available from MSEL e-reserves as “Sasameyuki”)

Part 2: Gender, Modernity and National Identities in inter-War China
Reading: Lu Xun, “The New Year’s Sacrifice,” in *Selected Stories of Lu Xun*, PAGE NUMBERS.
Required Film: *New Women* (1935)

3.5 Crucible of National and Political Identities: The Long War against Japanese Aggression
Part 1: War and Resistance


The document from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is cited as: Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Relations of Japan with Manchuria and Mongolia, Document B, Tokyo 1932, pp. 126-129. It was part of a collection of materials justifying Japan’s position in Manchuria written in English by a team at Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.


Part 2: Resistance: The Yan’an Way
Reading: Mao Zedong, “Talks at the Yenan [Yan’an] Forum on Literature and Art”

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm
Mao Zedong, “On New Democracy,”
Ding Ling, “New Faith” in Barlow, I Myself am a Woman, 280-297

3.12 Race in the Pacific War: Identities and Atrocities—FULL SESSION?
Reading: Dower, War without Mercy, pp. 3-76, 203-292.

Recommended Film: Momotaro: Divine Sea Warriors
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdzrgJA_iWA&t=198s

PAPER #1 DUE at 11:59 pm.

3/18-3/24 SPRING BREAK!!


Recommended Film: Children of the Beehive, Shimizu Hiroshi (1948)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IY7o89G73kA

Reading:
“The Chinese People Have Stood Up,” Opening address by Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, at the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. September 21, 1949. (I think this is in Selected Works of Mao Zedong and it can also be found online here: )


Part 1: The Problem of History, National Identity after the Cultural Revolution

Part 1: In Class Film: *Deathsong of a River* (River Elegy)

Part 2: Rebuilding National Identity in the Deng Era


**Recommended Film:** The Yellow Earth (Huang tudi, 1984) Chen Kaige, dir.

Optional Film: The Gate of Heavenly Peace
Part 1: The Long Shadow of Defeat, Japan

Reading:

Sensô: The Japanese Remember the Pacific War (Letters to the Editor of Asahi Shimbun [1986]), ed. Frank Gibney, pp. 65-6, 73-75, 81.


Part 2: The Date Debate: How the CCP Rewrote China's World War II, guest speaker, Emily Matson, Georgetown University


Optional Film: Devils on the Doorstep (Guizi laile)

4/23 Resurgent Nationalism in East Asia, the 1990s and Beyond

Part 1:


Excerpt from Kobayashi Yoshinori, Theory of War 3, New Prideology Manifesto (Meyer-Fong translation, handout).


Optional Reference Viewing:
Cultural Symbolism at the Nagano Winter Olympics (1998)—watch selectively: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aGNei01fzQ

Tokyo (2020) Summer Olympics—Highlights
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luJGosl3CxQ

Cultural symbolism at the Beijing Olympics (2008): “Incredible Highlights of the Opening Ceremony” (focus on minutes 1-6)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOijH0xinTE

Part 2: Roundtable Discussion: Reinventing Tradition: National Identity in Twenty-first Century Asia (Submit questions and observations tying together themes of course as whole for class discussion to Prof. M-F via email by 5 pm Monday, 5/5). You may wish to refer to specific or multiple specific readings to help facilitate comparisons)

PAPER #2 Due at 11:59 pm on TURNITIN!!!

Final Synthesis exercise is due at time of scheduled final exam for this class.

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Optional Unit: Globalization and Uniqueness—Eating National Identity in China and Japan
Optional Films: Tampopo (Japan), Jiro Dreams of Sushi (Japan) and Eat, Drink, Man, Woman (Taiwan)