

**PS 390 SPECIAL TOPICS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**  
**THE POLITICS OF EAST ASIA**  
**WINTER 2025**

Professor: Saera Lee

Office: 231 Scott Hall

Email: saera.lee@northwestern.edu

Office Hours: Tue & Wed 10:30-11:30 am or email for an appointment at other times

University Library 5722

Tue 1:00pm – 3:50pm

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course, by surveying the East Asian countries, aims to provide students with an overview of the history and current relations in East Asia, ranging from (South) Korea to Malaysia and Indonesia. A larger share of the course will be focused on Korea, Japan and China than on their smaller neighbors. The first half of the course will be devoted to reviewing the relations of Korea, Japan and China while the second half will cover other countries. We will examine issues affecting the region as a whole, such as the issues of territorial conflicts and economic integration in East Asia.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Class Participation and Attendance: 20%

Weekly Memos on Readings: 24.5% (3.5%\*7)

Presentation of Article to Class: 10% (5%)

Case Analysis Paper: 45%

Special Assignment on Week 6 (0.5%)

**Class Participation and Attendance (20%)**

Participation is a critical component of this course. Your participation grade is determined by your attendance as well as the quality and contribution of your participation. That is, you are awake, come to class prepared, paying attention, answering questions, and asking questions. I expect that you will come to class each week prepared to discuss the required readings. I expect no absences in the course, and I encourage you to discuss any circumstances with me that will preclude you from attending class.

To prepare for class discussions, it will be helpful to think about answers to the following questions:

1. What is the research question?
2. What is the main theoretical argument? What assumptions underlie this theory?
3. What evidence does the author provide to support the argument?
4. To what degree do you agree or disagree with the researcher?
5. Can you think of an alternative explanation?
6. What conclusions does the researcher draw? What are the most significant research findings?
7. Is there additional evidence that supports or casts doubts upon the author's conclusion?

Based on your readings and critiques, please post 2-3 **discussion questions** by 9 am on Tuesdays to the Canvas online forum. This is part of your participation grades.

**Weekly Memos on Readings: 24.5% (3.5%\*)**

Each week for which there are reading assignments, each student who is not doing an oral article presentation must submit a memo on the assigned reading. Your memo should combine a brief summary of the work with a reaction to it. The summaries ought to answer a few simple questions: (1) What is (are) the reading's chief argument(s)? (2) how do assigned readings speak to each other, work in collaboration, disagree/agree, etc.? (3) what is your opinion on the topic?

This assignment is designed to give you practice reflecting and synthesizing the week's readings and to help you prepare for discussion.

Memo must be double spaced with one-inch margins on all sides, written with proper grammar and spelling, Times New Roman and in a font size no smaller than 11 points. The memo must not exceed two pages. I will not accept longer papers. Memos are due by 9 am the day of the class. Students are going to submit 7 memos, and each worth 3.5 points.

**Presentation of Article to Class: 10%**

Once during the quarter, you will choose an article from assigned readings and present to the class (and each week, no more than two students will present). Your presentation should explain the motivation and purpose of the week; its argument, research design, and findings; your views on its strengths and weaknesses; and how you think it fits with the works assigned for the week. Your presentation should be no more than 20 minutes and will be followed by an opportunity for students to ask questions. You will be provided with a rubric by which your presentation will be evaluated at the beginning of the quarter.

**Case Analysis Paper (45%)**

Your major written assignment for the quarter is to write an analysis paper on relations of at least two East Asian countries. Each student will pick one issue area and conduct extensive research on it. To choose paper topic, students can follow below steps:

1. Which two (or more) East Asian countries do you want to study?
2. Which issue area do you want to study?
3. Which topic are you interested in inside of the issue area?

For instance, if you chose to study the relationship between South Korea and Japan, then you need to specify that you are interested in their economic relations. Then within economic relations, you'll specify that you are interested in trade disputes in 2019.

Analysis paper should address following points:

- 1) Describe the issue you are interested in
- 2) Explain why the issue is interesting and important
- 3) Research the cause of the issue
- 4) Based on current status, predict what will happen

The paper will be due in several stages:

F 2/14 11:59pm Paper topic memo (5pts)

Submit a one-page typed description on topic and explain why it is interesting and how it fits the topic of this class.

F 2/28 11:59pm Outline

Submit an outline of your paper. Identify primary characteristics of current, past and future relations. You need to provide a list of biography for the paper along with the outline.

F 3/7 11:59pm First draft

Submit the first draft.

T 3/18 11:59pm Final draft (40pts)

Students will submit a paper that addresses the feedback from each submission. Papers that do not incorporate previous feedback will receive a score of 0 on the final draft. Late papers will be penalized one half letter grade per day, including weekends, unless an extension has been granted by the instructor prior to the due date.

**I encourage you to work closely with me on your individual papers throughout the quarter.**  
I am happy to help you at every stage of the process from identifying the topic, to locating background literature, to developing your argument, and locating relevant data sources.

Only the final paper will be graded (except the paper topic memo), but the paper will receive a 0 if the intermediately steps are not completed.

Special Assignment on Week 6 (0.5pts)

On Week 6, we will discuss Asian values and the soft power of East Asia. For this class, I ask you to bring your favorite aspect of East Asian culture to share with the class. It can be anything! If you have a favorite Netflix show, tell us why you like it. If you have a favorite East Asian snack, let me know at least a week before class, and I'll bring it (if it's available at Hmart). This is a no-pressure, just-for-fun assignment—I want to introduce the soft power of East Asia and celebrate it together!

I calculate end-of-quarter grades as follows:

A = 93-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82; C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72; D = 60-69; F < 60.

## REQUIRED READINGS

All course readings will be available on Canvas. If a reading is unavailable, please contact me.

Useful Resources:

<https://www.duckofminerva.com>

<http://www.theory-talks.org>

Oxford Handbook of International Relations (<https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/34331>)

Oxford Handbook of International Security (<https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/34657>)

## COURSE POLICIES AND OTHER INFORMATION

### *Academic Integrity Statement*

Students enrolled in Northwestern courses are required to comply with [Northwestern's academic integrity policy](#). All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. Any form of cheating, including improper use of content generated by artificial intelligence, constitutes a violation of Northwestern's academic integrity policy. To download Academic Integrity: A Basic Guide go to <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/index.html>

### *Accessibility Statement*

Northwestern University is committed to providing a supportive environment for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact [AccessibleNU](#) to move forward with the university's established accommodation process. If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let your instructor know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we they can work with you to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

### *Prohibition of Recording of Class Session by Students*

Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact [AccessibleNU](#). Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University's [Copyright Policy](#), faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

### *Support for Wellness and Mental Health*

Northwestern University is committed to supporting the wellness of our students. Student Affairs has multiple resources to support student wellness and mental health. If you are feeling distressed or overwhelmed, please reach out for help. Students can access confidential resources through the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Religious and Spiritual Life (RSL) and the Center for Awareness, Response and Education (CARE). Additional information on all of the resources mentioned above can be found here:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/>

<https://www.northwestern.edu/religious-life/>

<https://www.northwestern.edu/care/>

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Difference enhances both the teaching and learning experiences. The classroom is a space where all students are welcome, regardless of age, dis/ability, ethnicity, gender identity and/or expression, national origin, race, religious non/belief, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious non/belief, and alignment with other identities or contexts. Furthermore, if any student has a particular consideration, including learning and participation style, that affects their ability to meet course expectations, please see me as soon as possible.

I am personally committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive learning environment for each and every student. Please, do not hesitate to contact me with specific needs or concerns, and the sooner the better. Maintaining transparency (and communication in general) with your instructor is not only a good professional skill, but also a good way to develop a more one-on-one relationship. Furthermore, accommodations are far easier and effective to arrange when planned than when rushed. In short, I will make every effort to ensure students' equal access.

### Exceptions to Class Modality

Class sessions for this course will occur in person. Individual students will not be granted permission to attend remotely except as the result of an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation as determined by AccessibleNU.

### Electronic Etiquette

Cellphones may not be used during class. If you anticipate an important phone call (e.g. family emergency) put your phone on vibrate and leave the classroom should you need to answer it. Other electronic devices like laptops or tablets are only allowed for classroom purposes. This policy is aimed at providing the best possible learning environment for all students.

### Email Communication

All email communication with the professor should include a subject line that begins with PS 390 followed by more specific information regarding the purpose of the email. For example, "PS 390: meeting to discuss paper ideas." I check email periodically, and you can expect me to respond within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours or more over the weekend or holiday. Yet, if the answers to questions are already found in the syllabus, you may not receive an answer to your email. Always consult the syllabus before emailing a question.

Email is a useful way to ask quick questions. Replying to long questions about the readings/lectures, however, is highly inefficient for both you and me. If you want to talk about something you don't understand, come to office hours! While I respond to student emails, I prefer to talk in person.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

*NOTE: Readings subject to change*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1/7	Introduction

1/14	Understanding East Asian Relations: History of East Asia
1/21	Understanding East Asian Relations: Contemporary East Asian Relations
1/28	Conflicts in East Asia: Case Study 1
2/4	Conflicts in East Asia: Case Study 2
2/11	Why there is no "Asian Union?" & Soft Power in East Asia
2/18	North Korea; to include or exclude?
2/25	The rise of China and the neighbors
3/4	US in the region: a helper or a spoiler?

## READINGS

	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
1/7	<p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saadia M. Pekkanen et al. 2014. The International Relations of Asia. Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia, Chapter 1.</li> <li>• Jordan and Zanna. 1999. How to Read a Journal Article in Social Psychology in R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), <i>The Self in Social Psychology</i> (pp. 461-470). Philadelphia: Psychology Press</li> </ul>
1/14	<p><b>UNDERSTANDING EAST ASIAN RELATIONS: HISTORY OF EAST ASIA</b></p> <p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese History in Brief: <a href="https://www.history.com/topics/asian-history/china-timeline">https://www.history.com/topics/asian-history/china-timeline</a></li> <li>• Korean History in Brief: <a href="https://www.koreanculture.org/korea-information-history">https://www.koreanculture.org/korea-information-history</a></li> <li>• Japanese History in Brief: <a href="https://www.japanpitt.pitt.edu/timeline">https://www.japanpitt.pitt.edu/timeline</a></li> <li>• Kang, D (2003) Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks. <i>International Security</i>, 27(4), 57-85.</li> <li>• Kang, David C. "Hierarchy and Legitimacy in International Systems: The Tribute System in Early Modern East Asia." <i>Security Studies</i>, vol. 19, no. 4, 2010, pp. 591–622</li> <li>• Ham, Chae-bong. (2004) The Ironies of Confucianism. <i>Journal of Democracy</i>, 15(3), 93-107.</li> <li>• Zarakol, Ayşe, <i>Why Hierarchy? From Hierarchies in World Politics</i>. Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp.266-274</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yongjin, Zhang, and Barry Buzan. "The Tributary System as International Society in Theory and Practice." <i>The Chinese Journal of International Politics</i>, vol. 5, no. 1, 2012, pp. 3–36</li> <li>• Hevia, James L. "Tribute, Asymmetry, and Imperial Formations: Rethinking Relations of Power in East Asia." <i>The Journal of American-East Asian Relations</i>, vol. 16, no. 1–2, 2009, pp. 69–83</li> </ul>
1/21	<p><b>UNDERSTANDING EAST ASIAN RELATIONS: CONTEMPORARY EAST ASIAN RELATIONS</b></p> <p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kim, Y. (2008). Intra-party politics and minority coalition government in South Korea. <i>Japanese Journal of Political Science</i> 9(3): 367-398.</li> <li>• Inoguchi, T. (2008) Parliamentary Opposition under (Post-)One-Party Rule: Japan. <i>Journal of Legislative Studies</i>, 14(1), 113-132.</li> <li>• Das, Dilip K. 2013. "China and the Asian Economies: Mutual Acceptance, Economic Interaction and Interactive Dynamics." <i>Journal of Contemporary China</i>, Volume 22, Issue 84, November, Pages 1089-1105.</li> <li>• Lin, G. (2004) Leadership Transition, Intra-Party Democracy, and Institution Building in China. <i>Asian Survey</i>, 44(2), 255-275.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kim, S. S. (2004) Regionalization and Regionalism in East Asia. <i>Journal of East Asian Studies</i>, 4(1), 39-67</li> <li>• Haggard, S. (2004) The Balance of Power, Globalization, and Democracy: International Relations Theory in Northeast Asia. <i>Journal of East Asian Studies</i>, 4(1), 1-38.</li> <li>• Alagappa, M. (1998) 'International politics in Asia: The historical context', in: Alagappa, M. <i>Asian security practice : material and ideational influences</i>. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 65-114.</li> <li>• Ross, R.S. (1999) The Geography of Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century. <i>International Security</i>, 23(4), 81-118.</li> <li>• Kenji E. Kushida and Phillip Y. Lipsky, "The Rise and Fall of the Democratic Party of Japan," introduction to Japan under the DPJ: The Politics of Transition and Governance (Shorenstein Center, Stanford, 2013), pp. 3-42,</li> </ul>
1/28	<p><b>CONFLICTS IN EAST ASIA: CASE STUDY 1</b></p> <p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denny Roy, "Prospects for Taiwan Maintaining its Autonomy Under Chinese Pressure, <i>Asian Survey</i> 57:6, November/December 2017, pp. 1135-1158</li> <li>• Richard C. Bush, "The United States Security Partnership with Taiwan," <i>Asian Alliances Working Paper #7</i>, July 2016</li> <li>• The Official Position of the Republic of China (Taiwan) on the People's Republic of China's Anti-Secession (Anti-Separation) Law</li> </ul>
2/4	<p><b>CONFLICTS IN EAST ASIA: CASE STUDY 2</b></p> <p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bec Strating, "Japan-South Korea: The Symbolic Politics of the Dokdo-Takeshima Dispute," <i>The Interpreter</i>, Lowry Institute, December 6, 2017  <a href="https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/symbolic-politics-dokdotakeshima-dispute">https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/symbolic-politics-dokdotakeshima-dispute</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youngshik D Bong, "Built to last: The Dokdo territorial controversy; baseline conditions in the domestic politics and international security of Japan and South Korea," in <i>Memory Studies</i>, Vol. 6 No. 2, April 2013, pp. 191-203</li> <li>Kim, Ji Young. "Escaping the Vicious Cycle: Symbolic Politics and History Disputes Between South Korea and Japan." <i>Asian Perspective</i>, vol. 38, no. 1, 2014, pp. 31–60</li> <li>Kimura Kan, "Why Can't Seoul and Tokyo Get Along?" in Nippon.com, January 30, 2014</li> </ul>
2/11	<p><b>WHY THERE IS NO "ASIAN UNION?" &amp; SOFT POWER IN EAST ASIA</b></p> <p><b><u>Required:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acharya, A. (2004) How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism. <i>International Organization</i>, 58(2), 239-75.</li> <li>Nabers, D. (2003) The social construction of international institutions: the case of ASEAN + 3. <i>International Relations of the Asia-Pacific</i>, 3, 113-136.</li> <li>Hemmer, C. and Katzenstein, P. (2002) Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism. <i>International Organization</i> 56(3), 575-607.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Recommended:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blondel, J. and T. Inoguchi (2002) Political Cultures Do Matter: Citizens and Politics in Western Europe and East and Southeast Asia. <i>Japanese Journal of Political Science</i>, 3(2), 151-171.</li> <li>Zakaria, F. (1994) Culture Is Destiny; A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew. <i>Foreign Affairs</i>, 73(2), 109-126.</li> <li>Kim Dae-jung (1994) Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values. <i>Foreign Affairs</i>, November/December.</li> </ul>
2/18	<p><b>NORTH KOREA; TO INCLUDE OR EXCLUDE?</b></p> <p><b><u>Required:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cha, Victor and Kang, David (2004) Can North Korea be Engaged? An Exchange between Victor Cha and David Kang. <i>Survival</i>, 46(2), 89-108</li> <li>Scobell, Andrew. "Making Sense of North Korea: Pyongyang and Comparative Communism." <i>Asian Security</i> (Philadelphia, Pa.), vol. 1, no. 3, 2005, pp. 245–66,</li> <li>Walter Hatch, "North Korea is nuclear: Live with it, and help it feel less cornered," Seattle Times, August 22, 2017 <a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/north-korea-is-nuclear-live-with-it-and-help-it-feel-lesscornered/">https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/north-korea-is-nuclear-live-with-it-and-help-it-feel-lesscornered/</a></li> <li>Edward Luttwak, "It's Time to Bomb North Korea," Foreign Policy, January 8, 2018 <a href="http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/08/its-time-to-bomb-north-korea/">http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/08/its-time-to-bomb-north-korea/</a></li> </ul> <p><b><u>Recommended:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, "The Debate over North Korea," in <i>Political Science Quarterly</i>, Vol 119, No. 2 (summer 2004), pp. 229-254</li> <li>Ariel Levite and Toby Dalton, "If Denuclearization is a Fantasy, what can North Korean Negotiations Achieve, War on the Rocks, January 31, 2020 <a href="https://warontherocks.com/2020/01/if-denuclearization-is-a-fantasy-what-can-north-korean-negotiations-achieve/">https://warontherocks.com/2020/01/if-denuclearization-is-a-fantasy-what-can-north-korean-negotiations-achieve/</a></li> <li>Discovery Channel (with NYT), "Nuclear Nightmare: Understanding North Korea" <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gapw_EAjkpE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gapw_EAjkpE</a></li> </ul>
2/25	<p><b>THE RISE OF CHINA AND NEIGHBORS</b></p> <p><b><u>Required:</u></b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Callahan, W.A. (2008) Chinese Visions of World Order: Post-hegemonic or a New Hegemony? <i>International Studies Review</i>, 10(4), 749-761.</li> <li>• Xiaoyu Pu “Socialisation as a Two-way Process: Emerging Powers and the Diffusion of International Norms” <i>The Chinese Journal of International Politics</i>, Vol. 5, 2012, 341–367</li> <li>• Ringmar, Erik (2012) ‘Performing International Systems: Two East-Asian Alternatives to the Westphalian Order,’ <i>International Organization</i>, 66(1), 1-25.</li> <li>• US DOD, Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Randall L. Schweller &amp; Xiaoyu Pu “After the Unipolarity: China’s Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline” <i>International Security</i>, Vo.36 No.1 (Summer,2011)</li> <li>• Friedberg, A. (2012) Bucking Beijing. <i>Foreign Affairs</i>, 91 (5), 48-58.</li> </ul>
3/4	<p><b>US IN THE REGION: HELPER OR SPOILER?</b></p> <p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beverly Loke. (2019) “China’s rise and U.S. hegemony: navigating great power management in East Asia,” <i>Asia Policy</i>, pp. 41-60</li> <li>• Inoguchi, T. and P. Bacon (2005). Empire, Hierarchy, and hegemony: American grand strategy and the construction of order in the Asia-Pacific. <i>International Relations of the Asia-Pacific</i>, 5(2), 117-132.</li> <li>• Ness, P. V. (2002) Hegemony, not anarchy: why China and Japan are not balancing US unipolar power. <i>International Relations of the Asia-Pacific</i>, 2(1), 131-150.</li> <li>• The White House. 2023. <i>National Security Strategy</i>. Pp. 23-25 &amp; 37</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beeson, M. (2009) Hegemonic Transition in East Asia? The dynamics of Chinese and American Power. <i>Review of International Studies</i>, 35, 95-112.</li> </ul>