DIGITAL AND CRITICAL APPROACHES TO ASIAN HISTORY

DESCRIPTION
This course approaches Asia not as a geographic place but as a malleable object of study. It begins by contextualizing the meta-geographical concept of Asia within other geo-bodies, from nations to continents, religious realms, oceans, and highlands. It then turns to three case studies to discuss how the intersection of topics and methodologies result in multiple conceptions of Asia. What does Asia look like, and what does it compare to, if we focus on sugar? How about human networks, ranging from biographies of a single individual to datasets that include thousands? What happens to Asia if we look at the world in terms of languages and scripts? In this way, this course explores a multiplicity of Asias, each of which is created as much by Asia as an object of study as by the position from which it is being approached.

While the first hour of each class will discuss these multiple Asias through a critical reading of recent scholarship, the second hour will turn to a study of the primary sources used for writing about Asia. Students will discuss how textual sources, visual sources, and datasets provide different understandings of Asia, what each source reveals, and what each obscures. Special attention will be paid to how large datasets can provide cross-national and global perspectives for understanding Asia. Students will learn to analyze such datasets using Tableau Online and will practice publicizing their results using data visualizations. In addition to weekly readings and discussions, students will write reviews of secondary and primary sources related to their own research. These will culminate in a final public blog post in which each student will present their own research using some of the approaches and methods studied in class.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS AND WORKFLOW
In this syllabus, under the date and heading for each class, you will see five sections:

1. The first section contains works or datasets that you are expected to either read, browse or analyze before each class.
   a. Read. These are labeled with an R. You are expected to read these works in their entirety, but you can, and are often encouraged to, do this through a combination of close reading and speed reading.
   b. Browse. These are labeled with a B. There will sometimes be works like dictionaries or encyclopedias, which you cannot and should not try to read in their entirety. Browsing means understanding the basic organizational structure of the text, which usually consists of looking at the table of contents and/or index and skimming a few sections.
c. Analyze. These are labeled with A. They are databases or datasets that you will be analyzing using Tableau Online or another application. You are not expected to have any experience digitally analyzing datasets and we will go through detailed tutorials and practice sessions before you do an analysis on your own. Even then, emphasis will be placed on providing you with help and support if and when you need it.

2. These are questions that you should be thinking about while doing the readings, browsing, or analyzing the above literature.

3. DISCUSSION LEADER (and discussion participants). Each week one of you will begin the conversation about the readings before class by starting a thread with a couple of paragraphs in the discussion board, due 48 hours before class. Between 48 hours and 24 hours before the start of class, everyone else is also expected to contribute two paragraphs that 1) respond to the group leader’s post, 2) respond to one of your other classmate’s post, 3) start your own thread if you want to discuss a different topic. At the beginning of class, the discussion leader will make a 15-minute presentation introducing the main text(s) and the author(s) who wrote them. For the remainder of the class, the discussion leader will help to lead class discussion along with the instructor. Anyone who cannot synchronously attend the class will be able to record their 15-minute presentation and submit it along with a list of discussion questions by the beginning of class.

4. ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS This is a list of all of what you are expected to do in preparation for each class.

5. WORKSHOP The second half of class will be a workshop during which students will do a variety of hands-on exercises such as creating reverse outlines of texts, discussing primary source from their own research, or learning to use Tableau by visualizing relevant datasets.

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS AND FINAL ASSIGNMENT
In addition to the above requirements, the class will feature three short assignments, all three of which will become part of one final assignment, a blogpost about your own research. The three short assignments are:

1. A review of a book or a set of articles relevant to your own research topic (due 9/16).
2. A review of three primary sources, one textual, one visual, and one digital relevant to your own research topic (due 10/21).
3. A data visualization relevant to your own research topic (due 12/2).

These three assignments will form the core of a public blogpost in which you will describe your own research, introduce secondary works related to it, and introduce sources related to it. This blogpost should be 3500 to 6000 words and is due three days after the last class, on 12/5 at midnight.
PARTICIPATION
Participation will consist of either synchronous participation in the Zoom meetings or asynchronous participation in the class discussion. You are strongly encouraged to attend the weekly class meetings on a regular basis and in a timely fashion. If you cannot participate in the synchronous class discussion, however, you should notify the instructor but need not give a reason as to why you cannot attend.

Students who do not attend a class should submit a set of discussion questions to the instructor before class and, after watching the video that summarizes the in-class discussion, should contribute another paragraph commenting on it to the discussion board by Monday of the following week.

GRADING (OUT OF 100 POINTS)
Discussion on bulletin board (12) 24
Discussion Leadership and in-Class Presentation 7 weekly assignments
Participation 12
Review of a book/article of your choice 9
Review of three primary sources of your choice 9 special assignments
Visualization of a dataset of your choice 9
Final Blogpost 30 final assignment

LATE WORK
Late work will be marked down one letter grade for the first day that it is late and 1/3 of a letter grade for every day thereafter. One week after the due date it will no longer be accepted.

The only exceptions are documented emergencies. The sooner the student notifies the instructor of the emergency, or of a situation that may result in an emergency, the easier it will be to accommodate for the situation.

THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON CANVAS
The instructor will post some of the following materials on Canvas:

- Wrap-up videos that summarize the synchronous in-class discussion from the previous class. These will be useful for both students who missed the discussion as well as for those who participated in the discussion. They will be posted by 5 am the day after each class (so by 5 am on Thursdays).
- Videos that supplement the course material.
- Tutorials for using various tools such as Tableau.
- Links to resources that are not on the syllabus, but which will be discussed in the videos and/or during the synchronous in-class discussion.
- Announcements. Please be sure to read all of the class announcements posted on Canvas and make sure to turn on Canvas notifications so that you do not miss any of the announcements.
TEXTS
Most, but not all, of the texts used in this course are available as e-books through the Pitt library or are posted on Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining the other texts in a timely manner.

RECORDING OR FILMING A CLASS (READ CAREFULLY)
The present University policy reads: “To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student’s own private use.” In this class, we will approach this issue as follows:

• Synchronous classes will be held over Zoom and neither the instructor nor any student will record it. To ensure that everyone in the class can express themselves freely, there will be no exceptions to this policy.
• By the next morning, I will record an after-class video in which I will anonymously summarize and develop some of the points and questions that were discussed in class. This after-class video will serve as a summary of the discussion for students who were not able to synchronously participate in the class, but it will also be of benefit to students who did participate in the synchronous discussion. Everyone is required to watch it.
• The instructor will post videos, whether lectures or otherwise, for students to view before or during class. These videos are the property of the instructor and under no circumstances should students use these videos for anything other than personal study. Reposting, emailing, or otherwise disseminating any of this content without the express written consent of the instructor is strictly forbidden and constitutes an integrity violation.

STATEMENT ON DISABILITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES
If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

ACCESSIBILITY
The Canvas LMS platform was built using the most modern HTML and CSS technologies and is committed to W3C’s Web Accessibility Initiative and Section 508 guidelines. Specific details regarding individual feature compliance are documented and updated regularly.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY ON CHEATING/PLAGIARISM
Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, from the February 1974 Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam, or paper will be imposed. View the complete policy at www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html.
THE E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY
Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your University account, go to http://accounts.pitt.edu, log into your account, click on Edit Forwarding Addresses, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (For the full E-mail Communication Policy, go to www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html.)

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES
Any student who needs special accommodations because of their religious belief will be given an opportunity to make up what they have missed. They should inform the instructor of any observance conflicts in a timely manner.

WRITING ASSISTANCE
Students are encouraged to visit the Writing Center, where tutors can provide strategies for improving writing skills. See http://www.writingcenter.pitt.edu/.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF
Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax. Despite what you might hear, using your time to take care of yourself will actually help you achieve your academic goals more than spending too much time studying.

All of us benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available at Pitt. An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Take the time to learn about all that’s available and take advantage of it. Ask for support sooner rather than later – this always helps. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or difficult feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help.

The University Counseling Center is here for you: call 412-648-7930 and visit their website.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, call someone immediately, day or night:

- University Counseling Center (UCC): 412 648-7930
- University Counseling Center Mental Health Crisis Response: 412-648-7930 x1
- Resolve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226 (888-7-YOU-CAN)

If the situation is life threatening, call the Police:

- On-campus: Pitt Police: 412-268-2121
• Off-campus: 911

**OFFICE HOURS**

Individual office hours: Mondays 3:00-4:00 PM, Tuesdays 9:00-10:00 PM, or by appointment. You can make an appointment for individual office hours on Canvas. Instructions are [here](#). Or you can just email me.

The meeting for individual office hours is at my Zoom Personal Meeting ID: 540 432 4493 ([link](#)).

*The content of this syllabus is subject to change.*

*This course will remain web-based even if the university moves to a guarded risk posture.*
## Class Overview

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AUGUST 19

Introduction: This course, our class, and your research


◊ How have digitized sources affected scholars who do not work in the digital humanities?
◊ How should graduate school education change in the twenty-first century?

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS
1. Read the article.

WORKSHOP Discuss sources, classroom technologies, and your research.

AUGUST 26

Nations


◊ Why, according to Winichakul, does the geo-body matter?
◊ What primary sources does Winichakul use?
◊ What is your take on the book before reading the book reviews?
◊ Which book reviews do you agree with and which do you disagree with?

DISCUSSION LEADER: DAVID

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS
1. Read the book (but not the book reviews). Take notes and think about the above questions.
2. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.
3. Read the book reviews.
4. Bring a bibliography of secondary sources about your own research to class.

WORKSHOP Discuss your bibliographies of secondary sources.

SEPTEMBER 2

Continents


Review of *The Myth of Continents* by James Blaut in the *Journal of World History* (on Canvas).

Reply to Review of *The Myth of Continents* by Blaut in the *Journal of World History* (on Canvas).

Do you agree that continents are a myth?
If “Asia” is not a continent, what else can it be?
What primary sources do Lewis and Wigen use?
How would you divide up the world?
Which book reviews to you agree with and which do you disagree with?

**DISCUSSION LEADER: SHARON**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS**
1. Read the book (but not the book reviews). Take notes and think about the above questions.
2. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.
3. Read the book reviews.

**WORKSHOP** The anatomy of a book review.

**SEPTEMBER 9**

**Religions/Civilizations**


Book reviews TBD


Why according to Aydin is the idea of the Muslim world problematic?
Do you think that other religious worlds, such as Christendom or Buddhistdom, are problematic?
What primary sources does Aydin use?
Comparing the different geo-bodies discussed over the last three classes, do you find some preferable to others? When? How?
Which book reviews to you agree with and which do you disagree with?

**DISCUSSION LEADER: MIKE**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS**
1. Read the book (but not the book reviews). Take notes and think about the above questions.
2. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.
3. Read the book reviews.
4. Think about all of the book reviews that we read in this class, about which ones you found useful, which ones you found not useful, and why.

**WORKSHOP** Discuss types of book reviews and vote on your favorite review. Outline your own book review.

**SEPTEMBER 16**

**Oceans**


- How is maritime East Asia similar to other maritime realms like the Indian Ocean or the Mediterranean? How is it different?
- How does the book chapter that you chose address the themes that we have been talking about in this course?

**DISCUSSION LEADER: GRAY**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS**

1. In 1000 to 1500 words, review one book or a series of articles that are important for your own research. You should describe the book or articles, compare and contrast them to other books and articles in the field, discuss the primary sources that they use, and critically assess their contribution (due 9/16 at the beginning of class).
2. Read the introduction and one chapter of this book. Take notes and think about the above questions.
3. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.

**WORKSHOP** Discussion of archives and primary sources.

**SEPTEMBER 23**

**Highlands**


- Book reviews TBD

- What is the relationship between boundaries, topographies, and technologies?
- Do you find Scott’s argument convincing?
- What primary sources does Scott use?
- Comparing the different geo-bodies discussed over the last five classes, do you find some preferable to others? When? How?
Which book reviews do you agree with and which do you disagree with?

**DISCUSSION LEADER: JAHAN**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS**

1. Read the book (but not the book reviews). Take notes and think about the above questions.
2. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.
3. Read the book reviews.
4. Bring a bibliography of primary sources about your own research to class. Include as many textual, visual, and digital sources as you can.

**WORKSHOP** Discuss your bibliography of textual primary sources.

**SEPTEMBER 30**

**What Histories can Sugar Write? I**


What are the labor regimes central to each of these three texts?

What primary sources does each use?

How have these texts change your understanding of sugar? Can you imagine other texts that would give you yet another understanding of sugar?

Think of two commodities other than sugar and imagine what kind of histories they would lead to. How would studying them give different insights from studying sugar?

**DISCUSSION LEADER: VICKY**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS**

1. Sign up for Tableau Online here (link) and complete the tutorial. It may take a few days to get your Tableau license, so do this as soon as possible.
2. Read and browse the above works in the order that they are listed. Take notes and think about the questions.
3. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.

**WORKSHOP** Analyze data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (link) using Tableau.
What Histories can Sugar Write? 2


A Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. FAOSTAT Statistical Database. [Rome]:FAO, 2020 (link).

◊ What does a focus on Taiwan, Japan, and Hawaii add to last week’s literature about sugar?
◊ Does the research on sugar have anything to offer scholars who are not interested in sugar?
◊ How does Dusinberre’s use of sources differ from that of the other authors?
◊ Do you think that a digital approach using the FAO data, or similar quantitative data that goes back further in time, could contribute something to the scholarship on sugar?

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS

1. Read and browse the above works in the order that they are listed. Take notes and think about the questions.
2. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.
3. Complete the data visualization that you began in class using Tableau and the FAO data.

WORKSHOP Analyze data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (link) using Tableau. Compare visualizations and the role they could play in your research.

OCTOBER 21

Biography, Prosopography, and Database 1


Ʀ Book reviews TBD


◊ What does Sachsenmaier’s biography of a single person reveal?
◊ Is Sachsenmaier’s work successful or do you prefer other ways to do world history (looking at more people, looking at people who travelled, starting out not with a person but with social or cultural movements, etc.)?
◊ Where does Sachsenmaier’s work fit into the different genres described by Keats-Rohan?
According to Keats-Rohan, what is the benefit of datasets and databases of individuals?

**DISCUSSION LEADER: YUANZIYI**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS**

1. In 1000 to 1500 words, write a review of three primary sources, one textual, one visual, and one digital. Your review should contextualize each primary source in the context of other sources, noting the insights that it provides and those what it obscures (due 10/21 at the beginning of class).
2. Read the book (but not the book reviews). Take notes and think about the above questions.
3. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.
4. Read the book reviews.

**WORKSHOP** Discuss datasets in the Republic of Letters ([link](#)) and Six Degrees of Francis Bacon ([link](#)) projects.

**OCTOBER 28**

**Biography, Prosopography, and Database 2**

- The Correspondence Network of Benjamin Franklin: The London Decades. Stanford Digital Repository ([link](#)).
- Analyze. Ming Jinshi List ([link](#)), Harvard University, Academia Sinica, and Peking University, China Biographical Database ([link](#)).
- Analyze. "Francis Bacon Network." Six Degrees of Francis Bacon ([link](#)).

According to Bol, what does the Chinese Biographical Database reveal that previous approaches do not?

Do you agree? What does it hide?

Compare the Chinese Biographical Database to the Republic of Letters and Six Degrees of Francis Bacon projects. What sources are each based on?

Do you think that the different way in which these three databases visualize information affect scholarship about these topics?

**DISCUSSION LEADER: ARKO**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS**
1. Read and browse the above works in the order that they are listed. Take notes and think about the questions.
2. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.
3. Bring one visualization based on data in either of these three databases/datasets to class.

**WORKSHOP** Compare visualizations and the role they could play in your research.

**NOVEMBER 4**

**Languages and Scripts 1**


◊ What are the advantages and limits of discussing a single script (Mair)?
◊ What are the advantages and limits of comparing scripts (Damrosch)?
◊ What do encyclopedias of world scripts (Daniels and Bright, Coulmas) make visible and possible? What do they emphasize? What do they obscure?
◊ What does a map that uses big data make visible and possible and how does it differ from what other sources do? What does it de-emphasize (Adal)? Other than mapping, what forms of digital analysis would work for this data?

**DISCUSSION LEADER: ALEXIS**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS**

1. Read and browse the above works in the order that they are listed. Take notes and think about the questions.
2. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.

**WORKSHOP** Analyze the Ethnologue Global Dataset using Tableau.
November 11

Languages and Scripts 2


◊ Browse. Ethnologue (Online Database). Dallas, TX: SIL International Publications, 2013 (available here through PittCat).


◊ Who created the Ethnologue website and for what purpose?
◊ How is the Ethnologue website structured by the goals of its founders?
◊ How could it be structured otherwise
◊ For what purpose might you want to use the data in the Ethnologue dataset?

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS

1. Read and browse the above works in the order that they are listed. Take notes and think about the questions.
2. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.
3. Using the Ethnologue dataset, think of a question that it could answer then go about answering it using Tableau.

WORKSHOP Discuss your analysis of the Ethnologue Global Dataset using Tableau.

November 18

“Asia” as a Category of Historical Analysis


◊ Book reviews TBD


◊ How does Duara define “Asia”?
◊ What sort of work does the concept of “Asia” do for Duara?
◊ Do you see yourself using the concept of “Asia” in your own work? In what way? Why?
◊ In light of all of the works that we’ve read, how would you formulate a critique of Duara?

DISCUSSION LEADER: BRYAN

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS

1. Read the book (but not the book reviews). Take notes and think about the above questions.
2. At least 24 hours before class, post two paragraphs on the class bulletin board.
3. Read the book reviews.

**WORKSHOP** Discuss the sort of work that the concept of “Asia” can do in your own research.

**DECEMBER 2**

**Area, Discipline, and Mission**


◊ In the reading for today, how would you classify all of the different approaches to the relationship between area and discipline?
◊ How does the question of discipline relate to the questions of geo-body and of sources that we’ve discussed in this course?
◊ Imagine yourself as the editor of this journal. How would you conceptualize its mission?

**DISCUSSION LEADER: KAYLA**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS CLASS**

1. Submit one or more data visualization that relates to your own work. Accompanying it should be a 750 to 1500 word description of the source of the visualization, its goals, its biases, what it shows, what it hides, and how it compares to and complements other types of sources that you are using in your research (due 12/2 at the beginning of class).
2. Read and browse the above statements. Take notes and think about the questions.
3. Work on your final blog.

**WORKSHOP** Discuss the possibilities, limitations, and challenges of your data visualization. Discuss the final blog.

Final blog due on 12/5 at midnight.