May 15, 2007

Dear NCTA Seminar Participants,

I’m delighted that we will have the chance to study East Asian history and culture together this summer and to explore ways in which the material we cover can be incorporated into your teaching. Our lives and the lives of our students have become increasingly intertwined with the peoples of China, Korea and Japan, and this trend will become only more pronounced in the years to come. It is vital, therefore, that we have some understanding of these societies and cultures.

Colleagues at Indiana University’s East Asian Studies Center will provide you with information about the administrative details of the seminar. Let me take this opportunity to offer a general guide to the readings we will be doing. A full syllabus will reach you in June. The basic texts that we will be using in the seminar are:

- Donald Clark, *Culture and Customs of Korea* (Greenwood Press, 2000). A useful resource for the study of all aspects of Korean culture.

We’ll be reading and discussing sections of these books during the seminar but my hope is that they will serve as resources for you for years to come.
We will begin on Monday morning, July 16th, with a general orientation to China, Korea and Japan, focusing on geography and climate and getting a feel for these places through several short videos. In the afternoon, we will take up the first of China’s dynasties, the Shang and the Zhou (also referred to as the Chou; we’ll talk a bit about the transcription of Chinese, Korean and Japanese names into our alphabet in the seminar itself). You can find background information on these dynasties in Ebrey, “China in the Bronze Age” and “Philosophers and Warring States During the Eastern Zhou Period” (pp. 10-42). We will pay particular attention to the Zhou Dynasty (1045-256 B.C.E). In the latter part of the Zhou Dynasty, the native Chinese philosophies of Confucianism and Taoism took form. The Confucian Analects and the Taoist Tao Te Ching (The Classic of the Way and Its Power) arose at a time of warfare and disorder in China, and in our discussion of these classic texts, we will take note of the vision of an ordered society that each advocated as well their views of the path that must be followed to achieve it. Read Books I-IX in the Analects and at least Book One of the Tao Te Ching.

On Tuesday, July 17, we’ll shift our attention to another great Chinese dynasty, the Tang (581-960). After the Zhou Dynasty, China was reunited in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E -220 C.E), but soon China dissolved again into a number a smaller states. It was in the Tang Dynasty that China was united again and reached one of the great high points of it history—militarily, politically, and culturally. Read Ebrey, “The Cosmopolitan Empires of Sui and Tang China” (pp. 88-110) on this period. To get a sense of the cultural achievements of the Tang, we will read poems of one of the many great Tang poets, Wang Wei. Browse through David Hinton’s translation of Wang Wei’s verse. We will also take note of the spread of Buddhism during this dynasty. Although Buddhism entered China in the 1st century C.E., it was in the Tang that the religion spread throughout all regions and classes of Chinese society. Damien Keown’s short book on Buddhism will be useful in this regard; he provides an introduction to early or Theravada Buddhism, but more important for us are the section on Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) Buddhism, the branch that spread into East Asia, and the section on East Asian Buddhism.

On Tuesday afternoon, we will again leap down in time to the 19th and 20th centuries, when China comes into contact with the West, when the last of the traditional dynasties, the Qing (1644-1911) collapses, and when, after World War II, the Communists gain control. This history is too rich for us to cover in detail; we’ll focus in particular on the war and the post-war period. Read Ebrey, “War and Revolution in China,” “China under Mao,” and “China since Mao” (pp. 501-518, 546-564 and 565-5830. Two stories in Ha Jin’s collection of short stories will give us some sense of everyday life in contemporary China; read “The Bridegroom” and “After Cowboy Chicken Came to Town.”
We will turn to Korean history and culture on Wednesday, July 18. Donald Clark provides a good overview of Korean history in the first chapter of his *Culture and Customs of Korea*, “The Story of the Korean People.” That chapter and his chapters on “Thought and Religion” (in which he discusses Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity in Korea) and “Daily Life and Folkways” will be the focus of our morning sessions.

Ebrey has several chapters on Korea that I will refer to in the course of our conversations, but perhaps most interesting are those that deal with the modern period. Read Ebrey, “The Loss of Korean Independence and Colonial Rule” and “Korea (1945 to the Present)” (pp. 484-500 and 584-603). The Japanese occupation of Korea in the early 20th century, World War II, and the Korean War all had dramatic impacts on Korean life, which we will explore in the afternoon. Donald Clark’s chapters on “Life in Urban Korea” and “Gender, Marriage, and the Lives of Korean Women” are also likely to be of interest to you.

Thursday, July 19 will bring us to the Japan section of the seminar. Ebrey’s chapters on “Early State and Society in Japan” (pp. 137-152) and “Heian Japan” (pp. 192-207) will provide the background for our morning sessions. We will consider the interaction between Japan, Korea and China in Japan’s early history. We’ll also take note of the Japanese religion known as Shinto, as well as Buddhism and Confucianism as they spread into Japan from Korea and China. During the Heian Period (794-1185), court life flourished in the city that we now know as Kyoto, and we’ll take some time to talk about life at court and the early flourishing of Japanese literature, much of it written by women, during this period.

On Thursday afternoon, we will move down in time to the 17th through mid-19th centuries and the period known as the Edo or Tokugawa (1600-1868). Ebrey’s chapter on “Edo Japan” (pp. 331-347) will be useful in this regard. The office of shogun or military ruler of Japan first arose in the 12th century, but in the 17th century, after a period of nearly 140 years of chaos, the Tokugawa shoguns took power and established strict control of the country. The peace and order that they provided led to the growth of cities, the spread of literacy, and new types of art that catered to an expanding audience. We will take a look at the new cultural scene, paying particular attention to the new development in poetry called haiku. Chapter I in Henderson’s book on haiku gives a general introduction to the topic, but also read chapters III (on Matsuo Basho), chapter VI (on Buson) and chapter VIII (on Issa). This is easy but enjoyable reading.

In the morning of Friday, July 20, we will turn to the topic of modern Japan. Japan was the first of the East Asian countries to modernize and we’ll consider the course that it followed to achieve that goal as well as the benefits and costs of rapid modernization. Ebrey’s chapters on the “Rise of Modern
Japan” (pp. 465-483), the “War and Aftermath in Japan” (pp. 529-545), and “Contemporary Japan” (pp. 604-618) will set the stage for our discussion. We will also get a glimpse of contemporary life as portrayed by one of Japan’s most famous young authors in the novel *Kitchen* by Yoshimoto Banana.

My hope is that Friday afternoon will give us a chance to reflect on the ground that we will have covered, to discuss any questions that may have arisen over the course of our study, but also to consider one last topic, globalization. *Golden Arches East*, edited by James Watson, considers the case of McDonald’s, which can be found in virtually every major East Asian city. Read Watson’s introduction, “Transnationalism, Localization, and Fast Foods in East Asia,” and then select any of the other chapters that you’d like to read. They each deal with McDonald’s in a specific place (Beijing, Hong Kong, Seoul, etc.).

We will conclude our week with some time on Saturday morning, July 21, to think about how aspects of the material we’ve covered can be made accessible to your students. We hope to have an alum of the program with us to help us think about formulating teacher implementation plans.

Over the course of the week we will spend together, there will be several guests who visit the seminar to share their special expertise, and I’ll be showing segments of a number of videos that you may want to draw on in your own teaching. I’ll also be passing along information about other videos, DVDs, websites and the like. The reading may appear daunting at times, but do it as time allows in June and July before the seminar begins, taking notes on major points and topics of special interest to you. We can then work through the material together during the seminar.

I’m looking forward to meeting you all. I’ll do my best to make the seminar a rewarding experience for all of us. If you’d like to learn a bit about me, please go to DePauw University’s website (www.depauw.edu), click on Asian Studies and then on faculty.

With all best wishes,

Paul B. Watt
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