



Midwest Institute for International-Intercultural Education

**An Invitation to Faculty
To
Participate in a Virtual Workshop on
Asia Rising: Domestic & Global Consequences
Friday, May 28, 2021
(9:00am-5:45pm, EASTERN TIME)**

In partnership with the University of Michigan

- **Center for East Asian Studies**
- **Center for South Asian Studies**
- **Center for Southeast Asian Studies**

Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96962665601?pwd=NmpYc3BJWGNWS2kvZldwMm83MzIBZz09>

Meeting ID: 969 6266 5601

Passcode: 792056



Workshop Program (9:00am to 5:45 pm, EASTERN TIME)

9:00 am – 9:10

Introductions and Acknowledgements

9:10 am - 10:10 am

The Rise of India and China: Fantasies, Facts, and Implications

By Badrinath Rao, Kettering University

Euphoric iterations of the purported rise of China and India in the 21st century have suffused the popular imagination to the point of obfuscating facts and fiction. China's grandiose plans for global domination and India's sinewy nationalism and its quest for recognition as a major player on the international stage bolster their image as emerging giants. While China and India have witnessed remarkable economic growth, their newfound prosperity masquerades deep fissures and longstanding fault lines which could nullify their achievements. There is an abyss between their ambitions and abilities that could be their undoing. Astute observers of India and China have laid bare the dark underbelly of their much-touted success manifesting as growing inequality, environmental degradation, social unrest, and a new spurt in regional rivalries. These developments are fraught with grim portents not just for Southeast Asia but also for the rest of the world. Any effort to meaningfully engage with India and China must begin with a sober appraisal of their strengths and shortcomings and their implications for the world. Otherwise, we risk forging policies and overtures that could be more chimerical than clearheaded.

10:15 am - 11:15 am

Japan's Racial Imagination in Global Perspective

By Reginald Jackson, University of Michigan

This presentation encourages participants to think critically and comparatively about how concepts of race have been constructed and deployed in the context of Japanese culture, across time and space. The primary goal of this presentation is to introduce instructors to texts and approaches that help students establish a critical awareness of racialization and its multifaceted histories. How should we historicize various "native" and "foreign" notions of race? What cultural blind spots or presenter assumptions might we need to avoid in teaching students about racism and cultural production prior to the modern era? With a focus on primary texts, three case studies will be used to illustrate how Japan's racial imagination has functioned: medieval debates about Japanese slavery; Jesuit missionary activities in Asia, as linked to the slave trade and conquest in the "New World"; and the legacies of Western colonialism and white supremacy as a catalyst for Japan's imperialism in Asia.

11:25 am - 12:25 pm

Digital Media and Society in China: Beyond Resistance and Control

By Sheng Zou, University of Michigan

Digital media technologies have been developing at a breakneck pace in China for the past few decades. Now nearly one billion Internet users in China are embracing a dazzling array of new media forms: WeChat, Weibo, Douyin (Chinese TikTok), live-streaming, multi-player online games, and VR, among others. All of these media are changing how people live, work, and interact, and what it means



to be a Chinese citizen-cum-consumer. In the meantime, the Party-state has enacted a highly sophisticated apparatus of propaganda and censorship, attracting increasing global attention and concern. How do digital media technologies influence and mediate state-society interactions in China? How do they alter the cultural scene? The ways people do business? The ways people communicate with one another? The ways people engage in politics? This talk presents a more nuanced picture of digital media and society in China beyond the dichotomy of control and resistance typically associated with authoritarian regimes.

12:25 pm - 1:10 pm Lunch Break

1:10 pm - 2:10 pm

The Interface of Identity and Ideology in Contemporary China

By Wen Yu, University of Michigan

“What is the ‘Chinese way’? How should China’s traditions speak to its future?” During the past three decades, China’s intellectuals have been increasingly preoccupied with defining the country’s cultural identity in its pursuit of political modernity. While their positions vary, intellectuals share the assumption that there are unique elements to China’s historical and cultural institutions, and that China’s future ought to be based on this legacy. This exceptionalist turn is unfolding at a time when the party-state is in search of a new ideology based on nationalism. This lecture explores how the quest for a Chinese cultural identity became central to debates over political and moral values in contemporary China, and how the influence of this debate on internal and international policy will shape China’s twenty-first century and its role on the world stage.

2:15 pm - 3:15 pm

South Asia and the Global Order: Empire, Migration, and the rise of Democracy

By Arighna Gupta and Anisha Padma, University of Michigan

We will begin with a history of migration from South Asia throughout the British Empire, beginning in the early nineteenth century. We will discuss the diasporas as resulting from this migration, primarily focusing on South Africa, the Caribbean, UK, and the US. We will then compare abolition of slavery (13th Amendment) in the USA to abolition of untouchability/casteism in India (Article 15), and argue how the migrant experience in two foremost thinkers of Modern India, i.e. Gandhi and Ambedkar helped shape democracy in India. While Gandhian principles of equality and democracy affected activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, Ambedkar briefly interacted with W.E.B. du Bois and framed his anti-caste thinking in close conjunction with Civil Rights Thinkers.

3:25 pm - 4:25 pm

Water for Rice at the Time of Climate Change: Lessons from Southeast Asian History

By Hieu Phung, University of Michigan

Today, rice is the main staple food of about one half of the world population. Two of the three biggest rice exporters in the global rice market are Thailand and Vietnam; the third is India. In addition, Indonesia and the Philippines are major rice consumers in this market. A water-intensive crop, rice demands Southeast Asian peoples to think critically about the sustainability of both water use and food production. This talk explores the different strategies utilized by the peoples in Southeast Asia



in the effort to find a timely water supply for their rice crops. By focusing on the premodern and traditional cultivation of rice in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia, the presentation argues that the long history of growing rice helped create a culture both of living with predictable seasonal rainfall as well as with the unexpected fluctuation of climate. While science and technology continue to seek for improved methods of predicting and adapting to environmental changes, local histories can shed light on the adaptive cultures of water use.

4:35 pm - 5:35 pm

Democratization in Southeast Asia: how dictators have (have not) learned to lose in the ASEAN regional context

By Megan Ryan, University of Michigan

This presentation will introduce concepts and theories of transitions to democracy and apply these frameworks to case studies in Southeast Asia. We will examine leading theories of the international and domestic factors that shape democratization, the relevant regional and country-level characteristics unique to Southeast Asian nations, and critically examine these frameworks through the lens of three Southeast Asian cases with highly divergent outcomes: Myanmar, Indonesia, and Thailand. The Myanmar case will utilize the lecturer's extensive fieldwork in the country and experience at the U.S. Department of State working on U.S.-Myanmar affairs to deepen our understanding of the longer trajectory of Myanmar's democratization process, the recent coup and the unfolding political and humanitarian crisis in the country. The lecture will then turn to historical examples of democratization in Indonesia and Thailand and compare these trajectories with Myanmar. We will examine questions, such as: How does the role of ASEAN and China in the region affect processes of democratization in Southeast Asia? What kinds of domestic historical legacies facilitate or inhibit democratic change in the region? Who are the key actors that propel/spoil democratization in different countries and how might this affect the outcome? This lecture aims to familiarize the audience with basic concepts in the subfield of democratization in political science and to enrich their understanding of how such political processes have played out in contemporary Southeast Asia.

5:35 pm - 5:45 pm

Concluding remarks and development of curriculum modules