

Area Study 4: Asian Studies

The field this course aims to cover is incredibly large — a variety of perspectives are competing to approach two thirds of humanity and more than 4000 years of history. Its content and design are thus more a problem of preference, and, being taught in a department of International Relations, one appropriate for the specifics of this academic structure was chosen. In order to achieve a certain understanding of current Asian issues it is imperative to look at their origins and developments, so that a powerful historical component is indispensable, for roughly two thirds of the course.

For transmitting as fast and comprehensively as possible the minimum necessary, the course is based on visual presentations (maps, cartoons, photos etc.). But it is obvious that it is impossible to assume both the necessary in-depth knowledge and the desired academic neutrality to discuss an enormous variety of possible issues of alien societies. If any, the course adopted the perspective of Critical Geopolitics, trying to identify and problematize the European/Western perception of Asia, imbued in the dominant conception of International Relations.

In the final part of the course, the students are asked to suggest themes to discuss. The themes which are potentially covered are so many and so diverse that their perspectives should be considered legitimate. They can address political, economic, social, and cultural issues that they consider to be relevant for this area and for their interests.

The seminars are, of course, interactive, based on texts relevant to the content of the course. Due to its peculiarities, the main aim of this course is, in fact, to build curiosity and the necessary opening in approaching alien societies, which, in the contemporary world, are at once very close and very distant.