

**Summer Session in East Asian Studies and Japanese Language  
Sophia University, Tokyo, June 14 - July 1, 2021  
Period 5 (17:20-19:00 Japanese Standard Time)**

**Development Issues: Asia and the World**

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**Course Overview**

This course will explore issues related to the promise of an Asian Century in the 21st Century, challenges for realizing an Asian Century and how Asia's renaissance is changing relationships between Asian countries, as well as the region's relationship with the rest of the world.

Asia's economies began growing rapidly after World War II. The continent's high-growth, economic-catch up started with Japan, and Hong Kong. South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan followed. Then growth took off in Southeast Asia, China, Vietnam and India. This led many analysts to speculate that Asian economies could dominate the 21st century, which could become the Asian Century.

These impressive economic advances notwithstanding, there are some very important differences between these economies that are relevant today. Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan all reached high income status. China may follow in their footsteps in the coming years. However, the others are still middle-income economies, and may never become high-income countries. What is the reason?

Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and China all have strong and effective states. This is evident in several factors – high quality infrastructure, a high level of education, openness to international trade and

investment, good health systems, relatively low levels of corruption, and well-managed urbanisation. The middle-income countries score much lower on all these fronts.

Despite Asia's rapid development, the journey towards an Asian Century has been a bumpy road, as Asia has had to deal with a number of shocks like -- oil price hikes in the 1970s, Asian financial crisis in 1997-98, global financial crisis in 2008-09; trade protectionism emanating from the US during the Trump administration, and now the COVID-19 epidemic. Looking ahead, Asia will likely be more vulnerable to natural disasters, due to the global warming underway. A key necessity for coping with these shocks is economic and social resilience. And it is here also that strong and effective states are necessary.

Economic development is never a straight line. The advanced economies of Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan were already growing much more slowly than during their high-growth periods before COVID-19. Growth slows naturally as economies mature and economic catchup gains are exhausted. Demographics are playing an important role through aging populations, especially in Japan whose potential growth is now less than 1%.

Most Asian economies also face the challenges of income inequality and environmental degradation. And the dramatic rise of China has fuelled great power competition between the US and China, which poses a threat to the prospects of an Asian Century,

These are some of the many issues that the course "Development Issues: Asia and the World" will explore.

### **Course modalities:**

The instructor will record his lectures on Youtube before the course which will enable students to listen to the lectures at their convenience. During the first and second weeks of the course, there will be student discussion

sessions on ZOOM, where students will be able to discuss both the substantive and administrative aspects of the course.

During the third week of the course, each student will make a presentation, via ZOOM, on one of the following topics: the role of social media in Asia's economic, social and political development; or the role of Asia's youth is forging a successful Asian Century.

### **Course Objectives:**

The main objectives of the course are to provide students with a basic understanding of the trends, challenges and opportunities of the emerging Asian Century in order to:

- commence a career in a business, governmental or non-governmental organisation which deals with Asia and the international economy;
- appreciate the relevance of the Asian Century to their own country;
- be equipped for postgraduate studies in Asian development issues.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation will be as follows: final paper -- 70%; class presentation -- 20%; and class participation -- 10%.

Final paper topic -- please assess the major challenges for Asia for realising an "Asian Century".

### **Textbook**

Asian Century ... on a Knife-edge. John West. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)  
<https://www.palgrave.com/br/book/9789811071812> The book is freely available through "Open Access".

## **Class Schedule**

June 14 -- Introduction to course.

June 15 -- Assessing Asia's developmental progress.

June 16 -- Some aspects of human well-being in Asia.

June 17 -- Economic catchup in Asia.

June 18 -- Student discussion session.

June 21 -- Overview of economic development in major Asian economies.

June 22 -- Asia's global value chains.

June 23 -- Urbanisation in Asia.

June 24 -- Asia's demographic dilemmas

June 25 -- Student discussion session.

June 28 -- Socially inclusive development

June 29 -- Student presentations

June 30 -- Democracy and governance

July 1 -- Great power politics and Asia's future