Course Title : ‘CLASHES OF CIVILIZATIONS’ IN MODERN HISTORY: VALUE CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN ASIA AND THE WEST

Course Code : HST194/GEB294

No. of Credits/Term : 3

Mode of Tuition : Sectional

Class Contact Hours : 3 hours per week

Category in Major Prog. : General Education, Category B or Free Elective or History Elective for 2008-09 History major intake and onwards [Not open to 2007-08 intake History majors]
General Education, Category B or Free Elective for non-History majors

Prerequisite(s) : None

Co-requisite(s) : None

Exemption Requirement(s) : N/A

Brief Course Description : This course examines the interaction between Asian and Western value systems in modern history. Analysis will focus on particular historical moments when the interfacing of Asian and Western cultures caused conflict. By probing the reasons behind and perceptions of such conflict, the historical processes by which values are created, chosen, and maintained both within and between cultures will be explored.

Aims : This course prompts students to critically consider how and why moral and social value systems differ between cultures. In so doing, the underlying assumptions and internal logic of variant value systems will be highlighted, as well as the nature and significance of historical and cultural context in the formation of values.

Learning Outcomes : Students will learn to:
1) Explain how culture operates in the creation and perpetuation of value systems
2) Reflect on how their own cultural and historical context has shaped the formation of their values
3) Appreciate the nature of the choices made by themselves and others in making and maintaining value systems
4) Understand and empathize with value systems that are different from their own
5) Examine key historical moments when Asian and Western cultures have conflicted over the question of divergent value systems

Indicative Content: The indicative content may change from semester to semester as the focus is set differently according to region, historical events, and/or aspects considered. Some core content elements, however, will be maintained regardless of the focus chosen in any particular term.

Core elements include:
1) The importance and the function of culture in the formation of value systems
2) The construction of “Asia” and “West” as units representing culture and values
3) The complexity of the historical contexts that have brought different cultures into contact and sometimes conflict with each other because of or in terms of divergent value systems
4) The nature of the historical debates over the significance and relative supremacy of Asian vs. Western value systems
5) The multiplicity of facets—including intellectual, political, economic, educational, social—through which values manifest themselves

Sample foci and structures may include:

1. Questioning the Scientific Mind in China
   a. Early Encounters
      i. Jesuits Mappings of Earth and Sky
      ii. Organizing the Natural World in Chinese Thought
   b. Transitions and Debates
      i. The Qing ti-yong Dichotomy: Defining Science as “Function”
      ii. May Fourth Charges: Anti-scientific Chinese?
      iii. Arguments for a Chinese Rationality
   c. The Case of British Colonial Education
in Hong Kong
i. British Assumptions about the Requirements of Science
ii. Bases of Chinese Developments in Scientific Education

2. An American Japanese Constitution?
   Debates over Constitutional Revision during the U.S. Occupation of Japan
   a. Penning Rights into Law
      i. Meiji Concepts of Constitutionality
      ii. American Notions of “Rights” and “Citizenry”
   b. The Position of the Emperor
      i. Fusing Race, State, and Leadership in Japan
      ii. America’s Insistence on Divesting Divinity
   c. The Role of Political Parties
      i. Party Politics in Postwar Japan
      ii. The Cold War and America’s Global Vision
   d. Women and the State
      i. Femininity and Family in Japan
      ii. Changing American Ideas of Gender and Citizenship

3. The Voluntary Re-veiling Movement, 1980’s-Present: Paradoxes of Muslim Women at Work
   a. The Veiling of Women in History
      i. Islam and the Female Body
      ii. Christianity and the Female Body
   b. The 20th-century Workplace and Bodies
      i. The Development of Women’s Role in the Workplace
      ii. Changes in Clothing, Changes in Workplace Relations
   c. Western Feminist Attacks on Veiling
      i. Women’s Rights and Economic Independence
      ii. Changing Concepts of Modesty and Sexuality
   d. The Rationale of Re-veiling
      i. Tensions of Choice: Balancing Liberation and Purity
      ii. The Right to Choose: Veiling and Economic/Sexual Rights
Teaching Method : This course will use a combination of lecture and class discussion. Ideally the course would be team-taught and/or employ a variety of guest lecturers in order to highlight the multiplicity of perspectives converging on modern historical moments of cross-cultural value conflicts.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes : 1) In-class debates mimicking historical conflicts and discussion over differing value systems
2) Oral and written analysis of primary documents which show the first-hand perspective of peoples and cultures in conflict over values
3) Group term project involving an in-depth case study of an historical instance of value conflict

Assessment : Continuous Assessment 60%
Final Examination 40%

Required Readings: Readings would vary from semester to semester according to the focus chosen. Readings which suggest the range of possible topics include:
Supplementary Readings:


