



The Beijing Center

北京中国学中心

Renewal of Ancient Routes in East Asia ASIA 297

Accreditation through Loyola University Chicago

Please Note: *This is a sample syllabus, subject to change. Students will receive the updated syllabus and textbook list prior to the start of each semester.*

Course Number: ASIA 297

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Course Description

This course will explore the surprising contemporary unfolding of some key Ancient Routes of East Asia by reading texts, visiting some milestones of those paths and making some simple but meaningful contribution within that renewal. The goal is to see how some ancient East-Asian routes, in their origin respectively conceived to reach different (commercial, spiritual, administrative, socio-religious, military, etc.) aims, are developing as ways of modern global multi-cultural encounters, in fact functioning as “cultural corridors”.

Globalization is inviting people from every corner of the world to smell and touch other human experiences with enough ancient taste to be considered as defining a “given culture”. This process goes on also in China and East Asia where the amount of national and international tourists is on the rise. People are on the search for paths of leisure, authenticity and immediacy with nature or history. State and institutional power along with thirst for novelty and spiritual curiosity, are colliding over these old routes and producing new touristic offers, unseen cultural products, and attractive opportunities for self- and communal-development.

Capitalizing on my ongoing experience of proposing in China the “Camino de Santiago as a global cultural phenomenon” (Wechat Platform 圣雅各之路, ID: elcamino_chinese; Website: www.buencamino.org), and seeing that arises so much interest here, this course

will be a lens to focus on phenomena as diverse (or, in my view, heuristically similar) as 丝绸之路 “The Silk Road” (with its new revival through the 一带一路 "One Belt, One Road" project), 五岳之道 “The Route of the Five Sacred Mountains”, 茶马古道 “The Ancient Tea Horse Road”, 京杭大运河 “The Grand Canal” (from Beijing to Hangzhou), 四国遍路 "The Shikoku Pilgrimage (walk around the smallest island of Japan according to the sacred Shintoist tradition), 长城 “The Great Wall”, 环岛 "Trip around the island" in Taiwan, etc.; phenomena which attract each year thousands and thousands of walkers and cyclists, tourists, businessmen, official institutions, investors, publishing houses and so on. We will read meaningful texts, visit relevant sites and conduct conversations with engaged actors and actresses, in order to gain a deeper insight of the ways in which the “ancient” is turning “new” in East Asia.

Course Outcomes

This course looks at the ways in which globalization is taking root in China and its entourage, by focusing on the current tendency of “experiencing a revival of the ancient”. By visiting some of these spots and paths of renewal, talking to engaged people, reading relevant texts, students will gain a grasp of how East-Asian individuals are reinterpreting their personal, historical and cultural identity.

Some of the key topics to be explored and questions to be answered are:

- Regardless of what was in their origin the main reason of their existence as "paths to be traversed", or which is nowadays the main interest which leads their different travelers to move through them, these routes are producing a similar outcome: first-hand international and intercultural exchange. What makes of this exchange –regarding the different cases- a source of prejudice, distant-proximity, dull consumption of exotic settings or rather a source of lasting admiration, friendship, intercultural respect?
- These "old ways" are not in the least losing their momentum and tend to act as "cultural corridors" where -in an increasingly global and international way- goods and participants cross their paths and create new cultural scenes not yet seen in history. Implies this a defilement of the original? What is the role this revival plays in globalized China for individuals, for politics, for local communities?
- The Camino de Santiago is just a version –in a European setting and with its own particularities- of the same kind of phenomenon. Accordingly, it is drawing more and more Chinese tourists and pilgrims to walk it. How does this interest merge with the fascination for the West? Which elements counterbalance in this “revival of an

Ancient Routes" the environmental mistrust and suspicion towards the West among Chinese citizens?

- These "cultural corridors" display in many cases the potential of a raising force opposing "nationalism" and countering the always understandable biased relationships among citizens of different countries. Which institutional forces oppose this kind of development in China, East-Asia and for which reasons?
- In the hypothesis of a war or open conflict of civilizations what would be the role of these renewed ancient routes?

Attendance Policy

Students are required to attend the seminar sessions and to submit in due time the outcome of their research. Only valid medical or family emergencies qualify as an absence.

Academic Honesty Statement

Please see the following link, and read the text carefully:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Assessment

Class Participation and Contributions 35%

Midterm Exam 25%

Final Paper 40%

Students will write a paper exploring the revival of these ancient routes, or make some kind of contribution within some of the networks these sites provide. The topic will be set with the instructor shortly before the mid-term.

Readings

Required Texts:

1. BISSKY, G., *Wearing Chinese Glasses: How (not) to Go Broke in Chinese Asia*, 2007
2. SCHACKLEY, M., *Atlas of Travel and Tourism Development*, Amsterdam 2007
3. RODRÍGUEZ ALISAL, M.; ACKERMAN, P.; MARTÍNEZ, D., (eds.) *Pilgrimages and spiritual quests in Japan*, London & NY 2007
4. CASANOVA, J., "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective", *The Hedgehog Review*, Spring & Summer 2006, 7-22 (<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5070/688a92302b694e7ea06cc89ac62e3e969470.pdf>)
5. FISHER, G., "The Spiritual Land Rush: Merit and Morality in New Chinese Buddhist

Temple Construction", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, No. 1, February 2008, 143-170

6. JOHSON, I., "Two Sides of a Mountain", *Journal of Daoist Studies* 5, 2012, 89-116
7. KANG, X.F., "Two Temples, Three Religions and a Tourist Attraction", *Modern China* 35, No. 3, May 2009, 227-255
8. SCHRIRE, D., "The camino de santiago: The interplay of european héritage and new traditions", *Ethnologia Europaea* 36, No. 2, 2006, 69-86 (http://www.academia.edu/3445097/The_camino_de_santiago_The_interplay_of_european_h%C3%A9ritage_and_new_traditions)