

## COMM 256: Asian Political Rhetoric

### Syllabus (Spring 2021)

Professor	Rohini S. Singh, Department of Communication Studies, College of Wooster
Time and Place	MWF 9.15-10.05am Eastern Standard Time; Remote



#### What is this course about?

Welcome to COMM 256: Asian Political Rhetoric. In this course, we will examine how public figures in Asian countries use words, symbols, and public protest to address issues of public concern. For example, we will ask how leaders in Asia negotiate the intersections of their religion, gender, and family dynasty, given that many of Asia's leaders have been the daughters or widows of famous men? How have public figures used principles of nonviolence to struggle against occupiers and advocate for oppressed communities? And how do contemporary public figures in Asia adapt the rhetorical legacies of past leaders?

In tackling these questions, we will encounter heroes who have fallen from grace, protestors who splash themselves with blood, and activists who *speak without notes or food for over eleven days running*.<sup>1</sup> We will also learn how to research an unfamiliar political landscape and design a communication campaign responding to a public controversy in an Asian country of our choice.

Let's dive in.

<sup>1</sup> This is my professor #lifegoal.

### What are you going to learn?

Through this course, you are (I hope) going to learn how to:

- **Examine** the philosophical, political, and cultural contexts of public address and social protest in selected Asian countries.
- **Identify** some recurrent rhetorical contexts in Asian public address
- **Analyze** political speeches, social movements, symbols, and protest art in Asia.
- **Research** an issue of public concern in an Asian country and **create** a set of verbal and visual messages adapted to that national context.

### 3 Important Points

#### Turn. On. Your. Camera.

Keep your camera on throughout class. If you wish, you may blur your background or use a virtual background. You must have your camera on to be counted present. If your camera is off, you will be marked absent for the day *even if you spoke in class.* Why? Because it is incredibly difficult to teach to a screen of icons and black boxes; professors need to see your faces to gauge if you understand the content. This is also a point of professionalism: having your camera off gives the impression that you are doing something else rather than focusing on class.

\*\* If you cannot have your camera on, please email me ahead of time to explain so we can work something out. I am not unreasonable – if you have a good reason, talk to me and I will grant an exception.

#### Communicate.<sup>2</sup>

Speak to me early and regularly. If you are struggling for any reason, speak to me. I cannot help if I do not know what is going on.

#### Where is everything?

Moodle. Always, always, Moodle. If, after careful research, you cannot find an answer on Moodle, email me.

### How do we get in touch?

Check Moodle (told you everything was there) for a link to my office hours calendar, where you can sign up for an appointment. I also address queries by email ([rsingh@wooster.edu](mailto:rsingh@wooster.edu)). Please observe the norms of professionalism when emailing me – give each email a specific subject, do not be overly informal, do not send a blank email with an attachment (it happens!), proofread, avoid last minute requests, etc. On occasion, I will email the class. Therefore, check your email regularly.

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<sup>2</sup> What a cliché – a Communication Studies professor who wants you to communicate. What *will* we think of next?

## Assignments and Grading Scale

Assignment details and due dates are on TikTok.<sup>3</sup>

*Diagnostic Essay:* In this essay, you will synthesize the course material we have covered on Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar, find additional information, and write a news obituary encapsulating her life.

*Course Engagement:* Your engagement with the course material and with your peers will be assessed through your class participation and your completion of 5 reading tasks.

- **Class Participation:** Here, I am looking at the quality of your contributions to class discussions. I want to see whether you are listening closely to what others are saying and have done the work for class each day. Sometimes, I will call on people to ask about the readings, or to hear updates on how your semester project is going. Don't worry if you are a shy or reserved person – I am looking for quality and not quantity of participation. At the very least, if you know you are nervous speaking in class, you should jot down some ideas responding to the reading questions I provide. Those will give you a good sense of what we will discuss.
- **Reading Tasks:** These five tasks, spread out through the semester, take the form of brief reading responses, research tasks, or reading worksheets.

*Semester Project:* In this project, you will design a communication campaign through which a prominent Asian public figure or group addresses an issue of concern in an Asian country of your choice. The material you create can take numerous forms such as a series of op-eds and interviews in major news outlets, a speech to the UN or a national government assembly, a podcast script, a toolkit for a social movement complete with signs, mission statement, plans for a physical demonstration and social media posts, a website, a nationwide speaking tour, or some other form that you and I agree upon.

Assignments	Points
<b>Diagnostic Essay</b>	50
<b>Course Engagement</b>	50
- Reading Tasks (5 x 5pts)	
- Class Participation (25pts)	
<b>Semester Project</b>	200
- News Brief (10 pts)	
- Topic Proposal (50pts) + A Bib (15pts)	
- Comm Strategy & Material (75pts)	
- Video Presentation & Final Memo (50 pts)	
<b>Course Total</b>	300

Grading Scale	
Letter	Percentage
A	94 –100%
A-	90-93.9%
B+	87-89.9%
B	84-86.9%
B-	80-83.9%
C+	77-79.9%
C	74-76.9%
C-	70-73.9%
D	60-69.9%
F	0-59.9%

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<sup>3</sup> Nonsense. They're on Moodle. Just checking that you're still reading this thing.

## Major Units

Weeks 1-4

- Course Introduction
- Studying 'Other' Cultures & Rhetorical Traditions
- The Lens into Asia: ASSK of Myanmar
- **Diagnostic Essay Due**

Weeks 5-8

- Dynasty and Destiny: The Political Women of Asia
- Rhetorical Legacies: The Shadow of Old Heroes
- Nonviolence
- **Topic Proposal + A Bib Due**

Weeks 9-12

- Visual and Body Politics
- Prep for Comm Strategy & Material
- **Comm Strategy & Material Due**
- Foreign Policy Rhetoric and Views of the US

Weeks 13-15

- Foreign Policy Rhetoric and Views of the US (continued)
- Prep for Semester Project Video Presentation
- Topic of your choice
- Course Wrap Up

**FINAL**  
Monday May 3

- **Video Presentation + Memo Due for Semester Project**

**FINE PRINT YOU NEVER READ BUT REALLY SHOULD BECAUSE I WILL TEST YOU ON IT DAY 1 OF CLASS**<sup>4</sup>

**Turning in work:** Turn in all work on the stated deadline. Late work will receive a 5% grade reduction per day late (including weekend days), beginning the minute the assignment is due. Please do not email me your assignment in lieu of turning it in. If you know you will be absent on the day an assignment is due, please inform me ahead of time to arrange an alternative date to turn in the work.

**Format:** Unless I tell you otherwise, all work should be in Times New Roman font size 12, double-spaced, with page numbers at the bottom right of each page, and your name and the title of the assignment at the top of the first page. Please use the Modern Language Association (MLA) citation style. For guidelines on how to use this style to cite sources in your work, consult the “MLA Formatting and Style Guide” at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html)

**Attendance:** You are an adult. You decide how often you will attend class. When you show up, be on time; being 5 minutes late counts as being tardy and 3 tardies count as an absence. ***Note that having your camera off counts as an absence.***

Sometimes, life intervenes and you don't make it to class. That is fine. You are permitted 3 absences with no questions asked. Each additional absence reduces your course grade by 8 points, or about 3%, off your overall course grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed by first checking the syllabus and Moodle, completing the readings, getting notes from peers, and then dropping by my office hours if you have questions.

**Academic Integrity:** Original work is expected and required, in accordance with college policy and The Wooster Ethic. Dishonesty in any of your academic work is a serious breach of The College's Code of Academic Integrity and is grounds for an “F” for the entire course. Such violations include turning in another person's work as your own, copying from any source without proper citation, submitting an assignment produced for a second course without the authorization of all the instructors, and lying in connection with your academic work. Intentional or not, the improper use of materials is a violation of academic honesty. If you are unsure as to what is permissible, please consult *The Scot's Key* and/or discuss with me.

**Learning Accommodations and Academic Support:** The Learning Center, located in APEX (Gault library) offers academic support for all students in areas such as time management, class preparation tips, and test taking strategies. In addition, the Center coordinates peer-tutoring for several academic departments. Students are encouraged to schedule an appointment at the APEX front desk or call x2595. The Learning Center also coordinates accommodations for students with diagnosed disabilities. At the beginning of the semester, students should contact Amber Larson, Director of the Learning Center (ext. 2595; [alarson@wooster.edu](mailto:alarson@wooster.edu)), to make arrangements for securing appropriate accommodations. Although the Learning Center will notify professors of students with approved accommodations, it is the responsibility of the students to speak with professors during the first week of each semester. If a student does not request accommodations or does not provide documentation, faculty are under no obligation to provide accommodations.

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<sup>4</sup>I am a lot of fun. You will learn to love me.