RPOS 399 Asian Security: Theory and Practice

Class Meeting Time and Location: Tuesday, 2:45-5:35 pm, PC 263
Office Hours: Tuesday, 9:30-11:30 am (Uptown Campus, Humanities B-16 Contact Office) By Appointment (Downtown Campus, Milne 220)

Course Description:
This course provides an introduction to problems of contemporary Asian security and the strategies and foreign policies pursued by the four major powers in Asia: India, China, Japan, and the United States. Together, these four states represent 44 percent of the global economy, 43 percent of the world’s population, and 53 percent of the world’s military spending. Do historic disputes make the region “ripe for rivalry”? Is China a rising power that seeks to upend the old international order? Will the 21st Century in Asia look like the 20th Century in Europe? Will trade, nuclear weapons, international institutions, or non-violent norms make Asia more peaceful than might be expected? To answer these and other questions, the course will introduce students to theories of foreign policy that may be applicable to modern Asia, along with more detailed studies of the specific policies and strategies pursued by the four major Asian powers. Students will leave the course with a greater knowledge of historical and contemporary events as well as a theoretical toolkit they can employ to understand international problems in other regions of the globe.

Assignments and Grading:

Participation: 10%
As a discussion-based course, active participation is a crucial component of the grade. This includes both regular attendance in class and contribution to class discussion. Students should therefore complete all readings before attending class.

Reading Notes: 10%
Each week students are responsible for selecting a passage from the readings (as short as a sentence but no longer than a paragraph) which they find particularly compelling. The excerpt must be e-mailed to me (ecnlp@albany.edu) by Monday evening each week, followed by a 3-5 sentences reflection by the student.

Memos: 30%
Over the course of the semester, students will prepare three types of documents commonly featured in the U.S. national security bureaucracy. An information memorandum summarizes new information that a more senior policymaker may need. An action memorandum prompts a more senior policymaker to take a specific action by offering the official at least two alternatives (one of which is always to continue with present policy, i.e. “do nothing”) and recommending an action to the policymaker for his/her acceptance or rejection. A reporting cable is sent to describe an event or situation to some government audience. Writing prompts will be distributed in class during the semester for each memorandum. Hard copies of the information memoranda are due on October 18. Hard copies of the action memoraand are due on November 1. Hard copies of the reporting cable are due on November 22.

Quizzes: 20%
Two short (15 minute) quizzes will be given. Quiz 1 will be administered on October 4. Quiz 2 will be administered on November 8. Students will be asked to answer three short (define-and-identify) questions on each quiz.
Final Examination: 30%
A final examination will be administered during finals period on Saturday, December 17, from 10:30am-12:30pm. The final examination will consist of five short (define-and-identify) questions and two essay questions.

Course Schedule:

Week 1 – Introduction [August 30]

Week 2 – Theories of International Politics [101 pages] [September 6]


Week 3 – Theories of Foreign Policy [120 pages] [September 13]


Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (October 1998), 144-172.

Week 4 – Is Asia Ripe for Rivalry? [92 pages] [September 27]


Week 5 – Alliances and Credible Commitments in Asia [102 pages] [October 4]

Quiz 1 at beginning of class.


Week 6 – NO CLASS (Yom Kippur) [October 11]

Week 7 – A Nuclearized Asia [132 pages] [October 18]

Information memorandum due in class.


Week 8 – Diversionary War? The External Consequences of Internal Problems [120 pages] [October 25]


Week 9 – Trade, Interdependence, and Conflict [95 pages] [November 1]
Action memorandum due in class.


Week 10 – Norms and Identity [91 pages] [November 8]

Quiz 2 at beginning of class.


Week 11 – Chinese Grand Strategy [123 pages] [November 15]


Week 12 – Indian Grand Strategy [88 pages] [November 22]

Reporting cable due in beginning of class.


Week 13 – Japanese Grand Strategy [106 pages] [November 29]


Week 14 – U.S. Grand Strategy in Asia [98 pages] [December 6]


*** Final Examination – SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 10:30AM-12:30PM ***