

Course: **SOVEREIGNS, SAMURAI, AND SILK: EAST ASIA TO 1800**  
Instructor: Kyle E. David  
Course level: Lower-level undergraduate  
Enrollment: 20 – 30+

What is East Asia? What characteristics bind this area together as a coherent whole? How has the region developed within a global context, and what has it contributed to world history? This course traces the development of East Asia from the origins of civilization to the late eighteenth century to answer these guiding questions. Students will pay particular attention to how state power, religion, philosophy, and trade connected East Asia into a vibrantly intertwined region and a global powerhouse.

The primary textbook for this course is Charles Holcombe's *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century*. This will be supplemented with excerpts from other texts, such as Daniel Gardner's *The Four Books*, Timothy Brook's *Vermeer's Hat*, Joanna Waley-Cohen's *The Sextants of Beijing*, and Steven Topik and Kenneth Pomeranz's *The World That Trade Created*. In addition to quizzes and mid-term and final exams, the course's major assignment requires students to choose one theme, pattern, tradition, etc. and follow its development throughout East Asia during the period studied in the course. Students may choose topics including but not limited to Buddhism, architecture, elite fashion, leisure, food, wedding or funerary practices, etc. Students will submit an eight- to ten-page paper on the topic at the end of the semester. They will also present their findings at a student symposium held during the last week of the course.

- Week 1: What is East Asia?
- Week 2: Lands and Language of East Asia
- Week 3: The Origins of Civilization in East Asia
- Week 4: The Formative Era: The Age of the Classics
- Week 5: Confucian Thought throughout East Asia
- Week 6: The Age of Cosmopolitanism
- Week 7: Participation in the Silk Road Trade
- Week 8: Buddhism Comes to East Asia
- Week 9: The Creation of a Community
- Week 10: Neo-Confucianism Across East Asia
- Week 11: Early Modern East Asia and Global Commerce
- Week 12: Early Encounters with the West
- Week 13: Women and Traditional Life
- Week 14: Art and Literature in Early Modern East Asia
- Week 15: Early Modern Economic Development
- Week 16: On the Eve of Divergence