

ASIAN 208/308 WRITING SYSTEMS IN EAST ASIAN CULTURES

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Lecture times: Tues. 1:00 – 3:00 pm (OGGB Rm 005)

Tutorial times: Fri. 9:00 – 10:00, 12:00 – 1:00 (ASIAN 208), Fri. 11:00 – 12:00 (ASIAN 308)

Description: The East Asian region contains three scripts that derive from the shared written tradition of ancient China but which operate on quite distinct principles. Chinese characters show clear similarities in their development and use with historical scripts like Egyptian hieroglyphs or Sumerian/Akkadian cuneiform; Japanese shows a complex mixture of Chinese characters used for lexical items and the *kana* syllabary used for grammatical endings; while the Korean *han'gŭl* is a unique example of a featural script whose graphs are modelled on the shape of the articulatory organs. But apart from their sheer linguistic significance, writing systems in these countries have always attracted the interest of scholars and artists, as shown by the high rank given to calligraphy as an art form, as well as being implicated in discourses of nationalism and cultural distinctiveness, particularly in contrast to Western alphabets. An understanding of the functioning and value of writing systems in East Asia is thus highly relevant to the concerns of Asian Studies.

Note: Attendance is expected at all lectures and the weekly tutorial.

Cell phones are to be turned off during class time.

Coursework will **NOT** be accepted after the due date unless prior arrangement is made with the lecturer.

Students are advised to read the Student Academic Conduct Statute

at <http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/home/about/teaching-learning/honesty/tl-uni-regs-statutes-guidelines>

. Any student with a disability who may require alternative arrangements in this course is encouraged to seek advice and assistance from Disability Services as soon as possible after enrolment. Contact details: Disability Services, Room 036, Basement Level, ClockTower. Phone extn. 88808 or 87330; Email: disabilities@auckland.ac.nz.

Assessment (stage II course):

<i>assessment</i>	<i>weighting</i>	<i>topics given out</i>	<i>due</i>
<u>coursework</u>	<u>50%</u>		
mid-semester test:	10%		Week 6
response paper	10%	Week 5	Week 7
research essay:	30%	Week 8	end of Week 11
<u>exam</u>	<u>50%</u>		
total	100%		

Assessment (stage III course):

<i>assessment</i>	<i>weighting</i>	<i>topics given out</i>	<i>due</i>
<u>coursework</u>	<u>60%</u>		
mid-semester test:	10%		Week 6
lit. review/essay plan:	10%	Week 5	Week 7
research essay:	40%	Week 5	end of Week 11
<u>exam</u>	<u>40%</u>		
total	100%		

Breakdown of Assessment

mid-semester test: 10%

- definitions
- short answer questions (2-3 lines)
- short essay questions (1-2 paragraphs)

STAGE II

response report (max. 500 words): 10%

- detailed response to narrowly focused question

research essay (approx. 1500 words): 30%

- discussion
- analysis
- explanation

final examination : 50%

- 4 short answer questions (1-2 paragraphs)
- 2 essays

STAGE III

lit. review/essay plan: 10%

- selection and annotation
- what approach will be taken
- subsection titles for the essay

research essay (approx. 2000 words): 40%

- discussion
- analysis
- explanation
- critique

final examination : 40%

- 2 short answer questions (2-3 paragraphs)
- 1 essay

Outline:

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lecture</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Tutorial</i>
1	July 19	Writing systems in East Asia: The “character” region	July 22	What is a writing system?
2	26	The Chinese writing system	29	Chinese writing system
3	Aug. 2	The Japanese writing system	Aug. 5	Japanese writing system
4	9	The Korean writing system	12	Korean writing system
5	16	Historical origins of Chinese characters	19	response report preparation (st. II) lit. review/essay plan prep. (st. III)
6	23	Pre-modern Vietnamese writing system Mid-semester test	26	Comparison
[Mid-Semester Break 29 Aug. - 9 Sept.]				
7	Sept. 13	Pre- <i>hangŭl</i> Korean writing response report due (st. II) lit. rev./essay plan due (st. III)	Sept. 16	Mid-semester test review
8	20	History of the use of <i>hangŭl</i>	23	Korean
9	27	History of the Japanese writing system	30	research essay preparation
10	Oct. 4	Enjoying the Japanese writing system	Oct. 7	Japanese
11	11	Chinese script reform, orientalism, and ideographs	14	Egyptian hieroglyphics, ideographs, and Chinese characters research essay due (end of Sat. 15th)
12	18	Writing systems and technology Hittite cuneiform	21	overview and revision

General theoretical questions to be explored

- What do we mean by **writing system**? How does it differ from the notion of a **script**, or from other graphic/symbolic forms?
- What sort of relationship(s) are possible between the elements of the writing system – its **graphs** – and the **units** of the language? What sort of information does the shape of the graphs give about the linguistic unit or units being represented?
- What is the difference between a writing system and a **written language**?
- What sorts of relationships exist between written language and **spoken language**? What different roles are played by each? How does the nature of the writing system influence these relationships?

Historical evolutionary questions to be explored

- What were the **origins** of the particular writing system? Did it develop locally or was it borrowed from elsewhere?
- For what **purposes** was the writing system originally used or envisaged? Have these purposes changed over the course of its history?
- What stages of **development** has the writing system gone through? Have the relationships between graphs and linguistic units changed in the course of this development?
- What sorts of **influences** have operated between the writing system and other related or unrelated writing systems during the course of its development? Have these influences been mainly one-way or have they operated in both directions?
- Have there been **reforms** of the particular writing system? Have these been directed by some sort of authoritative body, or come about through general use?

Practical questions to be explored

- What sort of **reading** practices are associated with the writing system? How does a reader make sense of graphs and groups of graphs? What other graphic features are used to aid the reading process?
- Which units of the language does the writing system directly **represent**? How are the other units inferred in the process of reading?
- What sorts of **reading aids** – lists of graphs, dictionaries etc. – are traditionally used for the writing system? How are these aids used? What light do these practices throw on the nature of the writing system?
- What sorts of **writing** practices are associated with the writing system? Are there different forms of the writing system associated with different types of use or different kinds of user?
- What sorts of **learning** practices are associated with the writing system?

Cultural and ideological questions to be explored

- What sort of cultural or symbolic **role** does the writing system play in the society or societies in which it is used?
- What is the **status** of the writing system in its own and other societies?
- What cultural **practices** is the writing system associated with?
- How is the writing system implicated in notions of national **identity** or cultural distinctiveness?