



# **BBA 320 ASIAN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTS**

## **UNIT OUTLINE**

### **SEMESTER TWO 2005**

**Lecturer in charge: Alex Blair**

#### **Objectives of the Subject:**

Our aim in this subject is to gain a real understanding of the economic, social and business context of the Asian economies. Yet in around forty class contact hours and a semester's worth of reading and discussion, we can only scratch the surface. So our method will be to give you a set of basic concepts and information. This knowledge will stay with you long after the subject is over. You will be able to use it to open up further areas of understanding of Asian business and the individual economies, in your own time and at your own speed. It should help you to do this in the other University subjects on Asia that you study; it should continue to do this long after you have left university.

For example, the literature on China often refers to the Qing dynasty, or on the key developments in the Cultural Revolution; similarly the literature on Japan often mentions the Tokugawa and Meiji periods. With good reason; as you will see in this course, these periods, the Qing in China, the Tokugawa and Meiji in Japan, were fundamentally important, in the development of these societies and economies as they are today. Yet the literature often mentions them without explaining them, without explaining their importance (or even telling you *when* they were). Understanding the point being made is therefore that much harder, and your ability to retain what you have read will be that much less.

So that determines our purpose in this subject. By the end of it you will know the fundamentals of the economy, society, and culture of key, representative parts of the Asian region. You can never learn everything there is to know about the Asian economies, and in a single University course you can barely begin. But the knowledge gained in this course will make it easier to learn later on, in other university subjects and in your subsequent career. You will know the major periods of East and South East Asian history, and an explanation of why they are important (not necessarily *the* explanation, but you can compare it with others you hear later on, and learn a great deal in the process). You will have a usable explanation and understanding of the economic crisis that recently afflicted some Asian economies, and is threatening in the background in most of them. You will be presented with a model of the origins of Asian economic success (again, not necessarily the definitive model, but a useful starting point). You will be given hands-on knowledge, as much as possible from experienced practitioners, of current Asian business practice; receive a glimpse of social and cultural institutions and trends; and begin to develop predictive techniques for mapping

out future trends. By the end of the semester you should have the basic facts and concepts, necessary to enter into, understand, and learn from any and all of the literature on Asian business.

A few more points:

Few areas are as prone to myth-making as is the study of the Asian economies. This subject will adopt a sceptical approach; we will argue that most of the academic truisms about Asia are questionable, or are, arguably, simply in error. At least we will provide alternative points of view to allow a dialectic approach to learning about the region.

In doing so, we will have to be selective: 40 hours of class contact does not allow both breadth and depth; the one will tend to obviate the other. We will need to concentrate on a certain number of economies and a certain spectrum of issues. However by this means we will be able to provide a model or method of approach which will allow further independent learning, both in your other university studies, and afterwards, about the places and issues we miss. A process of selection is both necessary and healthy, and you will have already seen it commence in the first lecture, with feedback from you.

Finally, this is a subject offered as part of the BBA program by the Department of Economics. It is an Applied Economics subject; theoretical models will be *used* here, rather than taught in full. Having said this, there are certain Economic concepts that are essential and that you are unlikely to have encountered elsewhere. Where such concepts are necessary, you will be taught them in class; while there are prerequisite subjects for taking of this Unit, there will be no assumed knowledge as such, and you can rely on being taught the concepts, in particular the Economic theory, that you need for its completion.

## **Textbook:**

The simple answer is that there is none – no textbook adequately covers the ground we wish to look at, and very few try. In the first few weeks we will rely entirely on handouts provided by the lecturer (these and the lectures themselves will be the major source for the mid-Semester Exam). After we have finished that material, then a pack of readings will be offered in ERIC and in the Library, or available for purchase at a saving relative to the photocopying costs.

## **Lecture Notes:**

For most (but not all) of the lectures I will be providing a single page (four pages miniaturised) of lecture points. This will save some time, and help you (and me) understand the structure of the lecture. However these abbreviated points are inevitably (and sometimes deliberately) cryptic, and they cannot be a substitute for attending the lecture and for taking your own notes within it. There will also be a profusion of handouts, especially on the economic theory that may be unfamiliar to you – these will be especially helpful for the Mid-Semester Exam, and the short answer sections of the Final Exam. All this material will be available **only** on the day of the relevant lecture, in the lecture (and not in ERIC or on the web). Of course you are free to make your own arrangements to obtain them, though you would be very unwise to miss the lecture that they are designed to accompany. (Notwithstanding the above, please note that ERIC, the Economic Resources Room on the ground floor of Building C5C, is an excellent research asset and we will make frequent use of it for teaching and admin purposes through the semester).

<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Lectures</b>	<b>Notes – and Tutorials</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup> August	Sumo Wrestling in the Corridors of Academe - Economic Interpretations of East Asia	In this section of the Unit, we present a basic model, based on the Japanese experience, of an Asian economy – in later weeks we will see how applicable it is to the other economies of the region.
10 <sup>th</sup> August	Hanging Together - Key Institutions	
17 <sup>th</sup> August	The Sun Also Rises - the Origins of Greatness in Japan	
24 <sup>th</sup> August	High Noon – the Miracle, and Japan as Number One	
31 <sup>st</sup> August	The East is Red Ink - the Economic Crisis since 1997	<b>Tutorials begin next week</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> September	The Sun is a Red Giant – the PRC	Tutorial 1
14 <sup>th</sup> September	<i>We Need a Break from Lectures. Hey, how about a <b>MID-SEMESTER EXAM</b></i>	
	<b><i>MID-SEMESTER BREAK</i></b>	
5 <sup>th</sup> October	Let's all form a Quality Circle – Labour Relations, Management and Production Systems	Tutorial 2
12 <sup>th</sup> October	Chicken or Thousand Year Old Egg? - a different look at politics, education, and so on	Time to give me your <b>ESSAYS</b> (so, no tutes)
19 <sup>th</sup> October	The Hermit Emerges - South Korea	Tutorial 3
26 <sup>th</sup> October	Reverse Engineering - South East Asia Thailand....? or Malaysia....? or .....?	Tutorial 4
2 <sup>nd</sup> November	Sub-Continental Drift – Globalisation in India	Seminar 1 " <i>Watashi-no meishi desu</i> ", <i>guanxi</i> and other phenomena - how to do things, when to do them
9 <sup>th</sup> November	That was the Unit that was – some finishing up, revision, then spontaneous applause	Tutorial 5

The lecture program for the first half of semester is locked in and largely irreversible – for one thing, a large part of the content will be the basis of the Mid-Semester Exam. However there is some room for movement in the lecture topics for the second half of semester, based for example on your own particular preferences (as expressed to me in the first lecture). Management and production systems, politics and education, and the lecture on Korea are core components, but there is room to move on *which* countries we sample in South East Asia (or even *whether* we move down south – there is another Economics subject which does a similar job, and there may be other topics we might prefer to move into).

Also, I emphasise the importance of the material covered in the Mid-Semester Examination, and as noted below I will shift topics into subsequent weeks to spend more time on that material, if that seems warranted to maximise your grasp of that material. (This would probably mean that we would lose the final 'Revision' lecture, which is probably unnecessary anyway).

As the choice of words implies, the **Seminar** is different from the Tutorials. In the latter, you are required to give your presentations; on the other hand the Seminar is something of a mini-lecture, covering issues which I would generally summarise as concerning business best practice, procedures and etiquette. This will hopefully be undertaken by skilled professionals with first hand experience in the private sector, though precisely because their skills are in heavy and constant demand their presence in that Seminar can't be guaranteed (in which case we will undertake an alternative set of exercises).

## **Assessment:**

The aim of the assessment is as much to help with the learning process, and to give you usable skills and knowledge, as it is for the purpose of grading. The Mid-Session examination will help you focus on the useful information, the facts and concepts, that we want you to gain from the subject. The Final Examination will help here as well, with a section similar to the Mid-Session, but it will also contain an essay section where you will practice, and be tested on, your written communication skills. The tutorials will be set up to give you maximum practice in your verbal skills, and allow interactive learning. The Essay will allow you to develop your research abilities, and to work on your writing skills without the pressure of exam conditions. No assessment component is worth more than 30% of your final mark, so you can afford to make mistakes, and learn from them, without seriously affecting your final performance. Overall the assessment (out of 100 marks) in this subject will be based on the following components:

### **1. Mid-Semester Examination 30%**

Date: September 14<sup>th</sup> in the lecture.

The aim of this examination is to help with the learning process, as much as it is for purposes of assessment. The exam will focus on the ideas, facts and concepts that are the building blocks for understanding what is going on in our region. Most of it is amenable to rote learning, and perfect scores of 30 out of 30 are unlikely but not impossible. This is material that will be useful long after the subject is over. It is material we want you to understand, and we will spend as much time in class as is necessary to make sure you have a comfortable understanding of it. The examination itself will consist of short answers with an emphasis on facts and some theory. It will be of 1.5 hours duration.

### **2. Essay 25%**

Date Due:                      October 12th

Essay Length: *not less than 2,000 words, and not more than 3,000.*

The essay topic will be given in the lecture in Week 4, but it will be discussed in the second lecture. As the development of the student's written communication skills is an important aim of the subject, additional information will be given regarding requirements and suggestions for format, content and research methods for the essay.

### **3. Final Examination 30%**

The final exam will be of 2.5 hours duration, and consist of essay-style questions plus some short answer material. More details regarding the final exam will be given towards the end of the semester.

### **4. Presentation 15%**

Once in the session you will be required to give a short presentation on the tutorial topic for that week. Once again, the aim is on skills acquisition rather than simply as a means of assessing you. The aim is to be as clear and concise as possible; you will be penalised for presentations that are too long or which fail to be concise. Concentrate on giving the class a manageable amount of useable information. In general, you would be summarising the argument of a particular academic article (and stating its flaws and virtues and whether you agree or disagree with it), or explaining a particular concept. You will be assessed on your ability to do this succinctly. The lecturer can give you advice on sources if you need it, but with the wealth of material available in electronic catalogues, the Internet (though be careful in using it) and so on, you should have no trouble in securing high quality sources on which to base your presentation.

**Reading Lists:** When I was a student a list of recommended or required readings was a staple component of any Unit Guide at university level. There was good reason for this: even with a large library with a well-designed catalogue system, the information costs for students seeking relevant references were very high. With the introduction of electronic systems, on-line academic journals and so on, these costs are far lower, and a printed reading list seems more restrictive than helpful. Therefore I provide no such reading list; instead, please find below what I hope will be more helpful, a guide (not exhaustive) to the electronic reference systems available to you as a Macquarie University student. Note also that the BBA320 does provide one reading list, in the form of a pack of readings that may be particularly helpful in covering the ground before us. As noted earlier it is available (in limited numbers) from the Co-op Bookshop. Its price is below that of the corresponding photocopying cost and I recommend you acquire it.

## **Some further notes (and a warning on Assessment):**

**Presentations:** The assessment breakdown is designed, firstly, to combine the task of assessment with the task of skills enhancement. As with the ability to express yourself in writing, as discussed below, the ability to express yourself in front of a group is an essential life and employment skill. The ability to do so concisely and clearly is particularly rare. Therefore an essential and very useful component of the Unit is a verbal presentation, as part of a group but individually marked, **once during the Semester** (in tutorials). The presentation must be short – you will have an absolute maximum of **seven minutes**. You are invited (but not obligated) to use any of the technologies now available for this purpose, from transparencies, software such as Powerpoint, down to writing on the whiteboard. You have complete freedom in the choice of such technologies, including the right to eschew all such aids, with the only obligation that at least one week's notice is required for use of the Department's laptop computer and projector ('beamer'). The one thing that you must not do is stand reading a prepared speech: summary notes are acceptable (and transparencies and Powerpoint slides serve this purpose well), but if you read verbatim from a previously prepared text then you will be stopped in mid-sentence. Off-the-cuff speaking may be something of which you have already had practice. If not, this is a good opportunity to try it, in a situation where a less than wonderful performance will not lead to your being fired the next day. In fact, since the length of your presentation is a maximum of seven minutes down to as little as four or five, a presentation entirely without notes is not impossible (and will deeply impress your audience).

**Essays:** In keeping with the objectives of the Unit as a whole, the intention of the essay is as much as a teaching tool, and a means of enhancing your skills, as it is for purposes of assessment. The ability to express yourself in writing and in your own words is a vital life asset. There are certain skills that are essential for the science of essay writing. **Your essay will not be passed** if you demonstrate that you have not mastered those skills. These essential attributes include, but are not limited to:

1. presentation of a **sufficient number and quality of references** for your essay;
2. citation of sources within your text using a **recognised citation system**;
3. expression of the points you make **entirely in your own words**, apart from selected and quotations from **fully identified sources**.

You will be given a handout expanding on these points in great detail. If any doubts remain in your mind and any questions remain unanswered, then you should discuss those questions with the lecturer well before the time comes for submission of the essay. To emphasise emphatically this point, **the essay will not receive a Pass grade if any one of these attributes (and the others which we will discuss in your essay handout) are found to be lacking**. Therefore this alone is enough to jeopardise your passing the Unit.

**Passing BBA320:** The assessment breakdown is designed, firstly, to combine the task of assessment with the task of learning – it is designed to focus your learning. Secondly, it is structured so that students from any background, Economics or other, will have plenty of warning of the need to concentrate their efforts in order to pass the Unit. In other words it should be very difficult to fail for students who make a genuine effort. The Division of Economics and Financial Studies requires that 60% of assessment be in the form of unseen examination – this is an excellent principle which I would apply even if it were not required, as the clearest and fairest means of assessing a student’s progress in a subject. Half of that 60% is accounted for by the Mid-Semester exam. A poor result here would be received in plenty of time to correct whatever problem has emerged in your study habits, so that you can retrieve the situation by better performance in the other assessments. **Do heed the warnings given by the Mid-Semester exam, and by the other in-semester assessments.** If you do give a poor performance during the semester, but do not heed that warning, then it will be **next to impossible to pass the Unit**. Assessment of your performance in the Unit is not arbitrary. On the contrary, there are a set of clearly identifiable skills and knowledge that you must have in order to pass, and for those who will fail the Unit it will be because they have failed to master, by any fair and objective measure, those skills and that knowledge. You will have plenty of warning, through your performance in the Essay, Presentation, and Mid-Semester Exam, that you are in danger of falling into this group. There can be no other remedial action if you fail to heed those warnings.

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