



# **BBA 320 ASIAN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTS**

## **UNIT OUTLINE**

### **SEMESTER TWO 2008**

**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 the store of information necessary 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, arguably, are 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 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:**

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).

There is no textbook that completely covers the ground we wish to look at, and very few try. After we have finished the material in your handouts, 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. In addition, a very useful text for the second part of the Unit is:

Chen, M. (2004) *Asian Management Systems*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Thompson

We would good use of this text, particularly for the topics on comparative management systems, and we will refer strongly to both the pack of readings and Chen for the Final Examination. Again, we do not need either for the first half of the Unit.

### **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.

<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Lectures</b>	<b>Tutorials</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> August	Sumo Wrestling in University Corridors - Economic Interpretations of East Asia	Relax, no tutorials this week
13 <sup>th</sup> August	United We Stand - Key Institutions	Let's get to know each other, in our first tutorial
20 <sup>th</sup> August	Hanging Together – More Vital Institutions	<b>Tutorial 2</b> The complex question of culture – read and bring the “culture” handout
27 <sup>th</sup> August	A Hermit in the Shadows - South Korea (S <sup>th</sup> Korea is our core economy this year)	<b>Tutorial 3</b> The origins of the Miracle in Asia- Read and bring the “Late Industrialisation” handout
3 <sup>rd</sup> September	High Noon – the “Asian Century” in the 1980s	<b>Tutorial 4</b> The Dismal Economist – let’s unlock the mysteries of economic models – handouts in tutes
10 <sup>th</sup> September	The East is Red Ink - the Economic Crisis from 1997 till .....	<b>Tutorial 5</b>
17 <sup>th</sup> September	<i>We Need a Break from Lectures. Hey, how about a <b>MID-SEMESTER EXAM</b></i>	<i>Sorry, no tutorials this week. You're disappointed, right?</i>
<b>20<sup>th</sup> September to 6<sup>th</sup> October</b>	<b><i>MID-SEMESTER BREAK</i></b>	
8 <sup>th</sup> October	The Sun Also Rises - the Origins of Greatness in Japan	<b>Tutorial 6</b> Business etiquette – what to do, when to do it
15 <sup>th</sup> October	The Sun is a Red Giant – the PRC	<b>Tutorial 7</b> Time to start your presentations
22 <sup>nd</sup> October	Home away from home – Labour Relations, Management and Production systems <i>(Time to give me your essays, too, at the beginning of the lecture)</i>	<b>Tutorial 8</b>
29 <sup>th</sup> October	Chicken or Thousand Year Old Egg? - a different look at politics, education, and so on	<b>Tutorial 9</b>
5 <sup>th</sup> November	Distant relatives - the South East and South Asian experience	<b>Tutorial 10</b>
12 <sup>th</sup> November	Big Brother - Global Markets in the Pacific Century	<b>Tutorial 11</b>

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. As noted below, if necessary I will shift topics into subsequent weeks to spend more time on that material, if that seems warranted to maximise your grasp of it. (This would probably mean that we would lose the final ‘Revision’ lecture, which is left intentionally broad for that reason).

More is said about the tutorials below. However in brief, the tutorials in the first half of the lecture will be extensions of the lecture. They will give us time to go into the material more deeply, and reinforce the information or concepts that you are troubled by. Reading for the tutorials will be quite specific and manageable, consisting entirely of one or two handouts distributed to you in lectures. These tutorials are very important; they will help you to pass the Mid-Semester Exam, which in turn is a major factor in achieving a passing grade in the Unit.

Tutorials in the second half of semester are more in the manner of seminars; you will be doing your own (brief) presentations, and also we hope to use at least one week of classes to provide a presentation by business people experienced in working in East Asia. The timetable for all this will be finalised (as much as possible) in the first tutorial in Week 2 (beginning 7<sup>th</sup> August).

## **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 17<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 22<sup>nd</sup>

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 3, 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. Your aim it 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 give your learning a focus. 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.

Alex Blair 2008

Department of Economics

Room	E4A 418
Telephone	9850 7897

[ablair@efs.mq.edu.au](mailto:ablair@efs.mq.edu.au)