BBA 320 ASIAN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTS

UNIT OUTLINE

SEMESTER TWO 2004

Lecturer in charge: Alex Blair

Room C5C 367
Telephone 9850 7897
Mobile 0410 611 500

ablair@efs.mq.edu.au

Aim and 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 currently afflicting some Asian economies, and 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 and Sources:

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 available for purchase.
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. Essay 25%
   
   Date Due: October 13th
   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.

2. Mid-Semester Examination 30%
   
   Examination September 15th in the lecture.

   The aim of this examination is to help with the learning process as much as 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. 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 as necessary in tutorials and lectures 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.

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day (Wed.)</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Tutorial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4th August</td>
<td>Introduction - mainly admin</td>
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<tr>
<td>11th August</td>
<td>The Sun Also Rises - the origins of greatness in Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>18th August</td>
<td>Hanging Together - Key Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>25th August</td>
<td>Sumo Wrestling in the Corridors of Academe - Academic Interpretations of East Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st September</td>
<td>The East is Red Ink - the Economic Crisis</td>
<td>Tutorial 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th September</td>
<td>The Sun Also Rises a Little Further West - South Korea</td>
<td>Tutorial 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>15th September</td>
<td>We Need a Break from Lectures. Hey, how about a MID-SEMESTER EXAM</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th October</td>
<td>Asia's Misunderstood Giant – the PRC</td>
<td>Some of us are still at the beach getting a tan, so no tutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>13th October</td>
<td>A Less than Exact Copy - South East Asia Thailand.....? or Malaysia.....? or ..........?</td>
<td>Time to give me your ESSAYS (so, no tutes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20th October</td>
<td>Chicken or Thousand Year Old Egg? - a different look at politics, education, and so on</td>
<td>Tutorial 3</td>
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<td>27th October</td>
<td>It’s who you know……..guanxi and other phenomena</td>
<td>Tutorial 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd November</td>
<td>&quot;Watashi-no meishi desu&quot; - how to do things, when to do them</td>
<td>Tutorial 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th November</td>
<td>Time to Finish Up, Some Revision, then some Spontaneous Applause</td>
<td>Tutorial 6</td>
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I reserve the option to vary to some degree the programme in the second half of the semester. For example, I am considering putting the 3rd November lecture – the so-called “etiquette lecture” - into tutes. Maybe also place the guanxi lecture as a part of a lecture on a broader topic. And do we really need a Revision lecture? This sort of change would allow me to introduce other topics that should be interesting, such as “Production Systems and Management Styles” – which will be more interesting than it sounds. I will let you know, and of course seek your consent (and then do it anyway).

Anything else you need? Reading lists? Tutorial questions? These will be coming as needed, in separate handouts.

Alex Blair

Department of Economics
2004