Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology

COSM24, Asian Studies: Contemporary Japanese and Korean Societies, 15 credits

Asienstudier: Dagens japanska och koreanska samhällen, 15 högskolepoäng

Second Cycle / Avancerad nivå

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by The pro-dean for First-Cycle Studies at the Faculties of Humanities and Theology on 2019-10-23 and was last revised on 2026-09-08 by The Pro Dean of First and Second Cycle Studies at The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology (U 2026/504). The revised syllabus comes into effect 2026-09-13 and is valid from the spring semester 2027.

General information

The course is offered as an elective course in the second semester of the Master of Science Programme (120 credits) in Asian Studies. It is also offered as a freestanding course.

Language of instruction: English

Main field of study	*Specialisation*
Asian Studies	A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements
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Learning outcomes

On completion of the course, the student shall:

Knowledge and understanding

- be able to provide a basic account of the central and important issues in Japanese and Korean societies today
- be able to demonstrate an understanding of how different societal issues and phenomena are interrelated

- be able to demonstrate how different disciplines relate to Japan and Korea studies
- be able to give examples of current research trends in Japan and Korea studies

Competence and skills

- demonstrate the ability to identify and critically analyze social issues in the context of the current political systems
- in a scientific manner be able to apply and critically discuss studies of the Japanese and Korean societies

Judgement and approach

- be able to apply an interdisciplinary approach in relation to important issues in contemporary Japanese and Korean societies.

Course content

This course analyses contemporary Japan and Korea from historical, cultural, political, and social perspectives. It examines how each country's past continues to shape the ways people live, think, and relate to one another today.

The course begins with an overview of major political and social developments in Japan, North Korea, and South Korea during the 20th century. It explores how legacies such as colonialism, national division, and the Cold War continue to influence these societies.
Adopting a comparative approach, the course then examines Japan and South Korea more closely, highlighting both similarities and differences in areas such as gender and religion. A regional and global lens is emphasised throughout, with attention to Japan–South Korea relations, inter-Korean relations, and the global rise of Japanese and South Korean popular culture.

The course concludes by reflecting on pressing challenges—such as ageing, migration, and depopulation—and their potential impact on the future of these societies.

Throughout, students will be encouraged to adopt interdisciplinary perspectives to analyse these complex contexts and to consider how a deeper understanding of Japan and Korea can enrich our understanding of the wider world today.

Course design

The course consists of lectures, three to six seminars with oral presentations (of which two include a paper) and film screenings.

Participation in seminars is mandatory unless there is a special reason.

Absence from a compulsory seminar is compensated with a task according to the teacher's instructions.

Assessment

Assessment is based on two individual seminar assignments (total 9 credits, each assignment equals 4.5 credits) and a written on-campus exam (6 credits).

The course includes opportunities for assessment at a first examination, a re-sit close to the first examination and a second re-sit in the same year.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

Grades

Grading scale includes the grades: U=Fail, E=Sufficient, D=Satisfactory, C=Good, B=Very Good, A=Excellent
The highest grade is A and the lowest passing grade is E. The grade for a non-passing result is Fail.

The final course grade is calculated by combining the grades awarded for the three assessed components, weighted according to their number of credits. The grades are converted into numerical values as follows: A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2, and E=1. The two components worth 4.5 credits each are weighted at 30 per cent each, and the component worth 6 credits is weighted at 40 per cent. The weighted average is calculated according to the following formula:

(0.30 × grade for component 1) + (0.30 × grade for component 2) + (0.40 × grade for component 3).

The weighted average is then converted into a final course grade as follows: 4.50–5.00 = A; 3.50–4.49 = B; 2.50–3.49 = C; 1.50–2.49 = D; and 1.00–1.49 = E. Where the weighted average falls exactly halfway between two grade levels, that is, ends in .50, the higher grade is awarded.

To receive a passing grade (at least E) for the course as a whole, the student must have received at least a passing grade on all assessed components and must have participated in all compulsory components.

At the start of the course students are informed about the learning outcomes stated in the syllabus and about the grading scale and how it is applied in the course.

Entry requirements

To be admitted to the course, the student must have a Bachelor's degree in social sciences or humanities.

Oral and written language proficiency in English equivalent to English 6/B from Swedish upper secondary school is a requirement. International qualifications will be assessed in accordance with national guidelines.

A general exemption from the requirement of proficiency in Swedish is applied.

Further information

- The course is offered at the Department of History, Centre for East and South East Asia Studies
- The course replaces CÖSM24: Asian Studies: Contemporary Japanese and Korean Societies
- The credits allocated for course content that in whole or in part is commensurate with another course can only be credited once for a degree.
- For further details, see the current registration information and other relevant documentation.