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## Creating an Effective Online Syllabus

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**W**hether working alone or as part of a team to develop a course, the syllabus is an important part of course development, regardless of delivery format—online, in blended format, or face-to-face. Defining syllabus broadly here, we assume the traditional syllabus should include not only a schedule of topics, readings, activities, and assignments, but also such elements as goals, objectives, or expected outcomes for the course, grading policies, procedures, and any other information necessary for students to succeed.

Some instructors separate these various elements and call them “Course Information,” “Course Requirements,” “Grading,” “Schedule,” and so on. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we’ll cover all these essentials with the term syllabus.

Although the details of course requirements, expected outcomes, schedule, grading, and procedures are staple elements of any course syllabus, they are perhaps even more important for an online class. Students tend to feel somewhat disoriented without the familiar first-day speeches from the instructor, and they may wonder if any of the same old rules will apply in this new online territory.

It’s typical for first-time online instructors to include too little detail in their syllabi. One instructor we know changed nothing in his regular on-the-ground course syllabus except to add the words, “This course is delivered completely online.” Unfortunately, students had a hard time even finding his syllabus, as he posted no welcome at the “entrance” to his online course, and then they were puzzled by his schedule, which still listed “class

sessions” as once a week. Some students reasonably thought this phrase referred to online, real-time chat. Others wondered if the phrase meant that their asynchronous communications should be posted only once a week, on the particular day named in the schedule. As a result of this lack of clarity, the first week’s discussion forum was dominated entirely by questions about where, when, and how to do the assignments, and the main topics for that week were nearly forgotten in the confusion.

Even after the instructor’s hurried explanations, students continued to experience confusion about dates and times, procedures and grading. They could refer back to the first week’s forum and search through the various discussion **threads** in which these questions had been raised, but they had no clear reference document to which they could turn. One student even had a grade dispute with the instructor that arose from an ambiguity in the syllabus. In the syllabus, the instructor had declared that all late assignments would be penalized at the rate of one-quarter grade point each day, but hadn’t clearly specified that the due dates for assignments were based on the instructor’s time zone, not the student’s. Thus, the student claimed that, when he posted an assignment at 11:00 P.M. Pacific time, on the due date, he was unfairly penalized because the server on which the course was housed, located (like the instructor) on the East Coast of the United States, had recorded the time as 2:00 A.M. the following day. These examples, both serious and trivial, illustrate some of the problems that can ensue if online syllabi (and, naturally, subsequent directions) aren’t thorough and detailed.

In blended courses clear directions are equally vital. It’s important, for instance, to explain to students how the mixture of different venues will be integrated. Which course activities will take place in the on-campus classroom, which in the online classroom, and what’s the sequence of procedures students should follow each week? Imagine that, before the face-to-face class meeting on Wednesday, you want students to read the online lecture and post a preliminary report, but you want them to wait until after the class meeting to take part in that week’s online discussion. In many cases, they won’t understand that sequence unless it’s carefully explained to them.

There are three aspects of an online syllabus we want to emphasize in particular: the contract, the map, and the schedule.




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## The Contract

Increasingly, the syllabus has come to be the contract between students and instructor, laying out the terms of the class interaction—the expected responsibilities and duties, the grading criteria, the musts and don'ts of behavior. Let's look at some features of the contract that are especially important for an online course.

### Class Participation and Grading Criteria

What's meant by “participation” in the online setting won't be obvious to students. Participation should be defined. For example, is it posting, that is, sending messages to the classroom discussion board? Or is it just logging on and reading (an activity revealed to an instructor only when course management software has the capacity to track students' movements online)? Perhaps participation includes taking part in an online group presentation or showing up for a real-time chat.

 **Important!** *Whatever kind of participation you expect in your course, you should make that explicit in the syllabus.*

If you're going to count participation toward the final grade, you should define how that will be calculated. We recommend, in fact, that you always give a grade for active participation in the class, that is, for contributing to discussions and asking or answering questions. The plain fact is that if students aren't graded, the great majority won't actively participate. For a blended class, you will want to decide whether students are given participation grades for both face-to-face meetings as well as online participation, and how the grade for one, the other, or both should be divided up. Besides judging the quality of students' contributions in the class, you may want to set a minimum level for quantity of participation or require that a portion of postings be responses to classmates.

Another consideration in asynchronous courses is the degree of self-pacing allowed. Must students follow a chronological

order of topics in their participation, or can they go back and respond to previous weeks' topics?

Can they complete assignments at different times during the course? The answers to these questions really depend on the nature of your course. For example, if your course has a set number of tasks, which can be completed at any time or in any order within the twelve weeks of the course, then you may not be concerned about students' skipping about or restarting conversations about previous weeks' topics.

### **Managing Student Expectations**

The task of managing student expectations is very important in the online classroom. Some students enroll in an online course expecting it to be much easier than a regular course. Others imagine that the course will be something like independent study. Still others think the instructor should be available for twenty-four real-time hours a day. Your syllabus as well as your introductory comments can help manage such expectations, correct false impressions, and set the stage for the smooth unfolding of your course.

It's also helpful if your institution has a general student orientation (or at least a student handbook or web tutorial) that explains how the online course will work, how much student-instructor interaction can be expected, and so forth. If your institution doesn't have such an orientation, or your class has a unique approach that goes beyond the typical online offerings at your institution, you may need to supply some of this information in your own syllabus. Michele Pacansky-Brock, now Director of Online and Hybrid Support with California State University East Bay, previously taught an online Art Appreciation class for Sierra College that was unusually rich in its use of technology and multimedia. In her syllabus she cautioned students about that fact, "Important!!! This online class is image intensive. Due to the visual nature of the content of this class, you will regularly download large files containing high resolution images and movies..."

A continuing-education instructor we know, who has a busy professional practice, complained after a few weeks of her online class that students had "unrealistic expectations." When

pressed to explain this remark, she commented that if she didn't reply to each and every student comment in the discussion forum or if she appeared not to be in the online classroom every day, she would receive plaintive email queries or even classroom postings inquiring about whether she had read a particular message. She further explained that she had expected students to work on their own during the first part of each week and only then to post their thoughts in the discussion forum. Unfortunately, neither her syllabus nor her introductory comments ever mentioned these teacher expectations.

This case shows that managing student expectations can also require an instructor to communicate his expectations for himself to the students. This type of problem can be handled by a simple statement in the syllabus to the effect that the instructor will look in frequently during the week but may not be in the classroom every day, or that students should work on the week's assignments during the first part of the week (say, Monday through Wednesday) and then post their responses later in the week (Thursday through Sunday).

For her blended class, Isabel Simões de Carvalho of Lisbon's Instituto Superior de Engenharia expressed her availability online in the following manner,

*Your teacher will be online with all of you at least every two days and will provide feedback within 48 hours maximum. However, if you have an urgent subject that you need to discuss with your teacher ... then you should send an email to the instructor and in this case, do not forget to fill in the course name within the subject line.*

Other information of a “contractual” nature that you might want to incorporate in your syllabus includes the following:

- your policy on late assignments;
- whether due dates are calculated by your time zone or the student's (or the server's, as that might actually be in a third time zone);
- your availability for real-time chat appointments (which some call “virtual office hours”);

- overall specifications for writing assignments (Formal essay? Informal journal? Of how many total words? MLA or APA style?);
- your institution’s policy on plagiarism and cheating.



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## The Map

In this new territory of the online classroom, students will seize upon your syllabus as if it were a map. Students will want to know how to proceed and where everything is located. So, one of the first things you must do, whether through the syllabus or in an introductory message, is to explain the “geography” of the course.

In fact, if the syllabus isn’t visible on the first level of the course, but instead can be arrived at only by one or two clicks of the mouse, then this introductory set of directions must be given in an announcement area or even delivered prior to the course, by email. For example, an announcement with explicit directions to the syllabus might say,

*Welcome, please click on the Class Information tab at the upper left hand corner of this webpage to find the links labeled syllabus, and weekly schedule. These will guide your work in this course, so I recommend that you print these sections out for handy reference. If you have any questions about these documents, please post a question in the Q&A forum portion of the discussion area.*

What else does “explaining the geography” mean? If your course consists of various web pages plus a discussion forum, you’ll need to let the students know where to find the component parts of the course and under what headings: “Lectures will be on the page whose link says ‘Lectures,’ and these are arranged by weeks.” If the discussion forum, a blog, or other software is hosted on an outside site, students need to be told that this link will take them off the university server, or that they must use a password given to them, and so on. If you’ve created a discussion forum dedicated to casual communications and

socializing for students, let them know that the area you have imaginatively labeled “Café Truckstop” is intended to be the online equivalent of a student lounge.

This is particularly important when using course management software that has its own unique and not easily customizable category headings or when your institution or department does not have a common classroom template. Students will need to know what you have stored behind each of the online classroom headings or where a particular link might lead.

While not essential, a narrated guide to the syllabus can be created by an instructor to reinforce the importance of the syllabus and to draw attention to it from the very first day of the course. You can use a simple series of screen shots within a PowerPoint narration or use video capture software as you click about the syllabus to point out the various sections of the document.

In a blended course that combines face-to-face and online components, it's essential that you specify where to do each activity. For example, in Isabel Carvalho's blended Energy Production and Management syllabus she clearly stated, “Besides the weekly face-to-face sessions, this course has an online learning environment. The face-to-face and online components are not independent but instead are considered to be complementary.” She added,

*We will be together face-to-face 4.5 hours per week and I will expect you all to spend at least 2 hours a week online using the discussion forum, viewing and downloading course resources and materials, and interacting with your peers.*

Such general statements are then further detailed in the class schedule.

Other procedural and “geographical” issues you might want to cover in the syllabus include these:

- the URL for your home page, the companion web site for a text, or other resources;
- where to access and how additional technology tools will be used in the class;

- how emailed assignments are to be labeled in the subject line;
- which file types you'll accept for attached documents (for instance, Microsoft Word, Rich Text Format, PowerPoint, Excel);
- any contact information for technical and administrative support;
- the proper sequence for accomplishing weekly activities and assignments (for example, do the exercises before taking the quiz, post a message in discussion before emailing the assignment).



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## The Schedule

The course should be laid out by weeks for students, because this is commonly the unit by which students gauge their own participation and work. If your class starts on a Wednesday, then Tuesday will become the last day of your week unless you state otherwise.

We recommend that you think in terms of subdivisions of two- or three-day spreads. For example, if you post your lecture on Monday, allow students through Wednesday to read and comment on it rather than asking them to do so by Tuesday. Students can be told to log on every single day, but it is perhaps wiser to take advantage of the asynchronous flexibility of the online environment. Assume that some students will log on and read on Monday night, some on Tuesday morning, and others at midnight. The Monday reader may return on Tuesday night to reread and post. The Tuesday reader may respond with comments at once. This scheduling flexibility is even more important for those who have students in different time zones or in foreign countries.

It's also good to gauge your students' access to computers and their probable work schedules. This goes back to what we discussed in earlier chapters. If your students are accessing the course web site from a campus lab, the dorms, or branch campus libraries, then they'll follow a different pattern than will



typical working adults or continuing-education students, who may want to use the weekends to do most of the time-intensive assignments. A Monday or Tuesday due date for assignments will allow working adults to make the most of their study time out of the office.

### **A Checklist for Your Online Syllabus**

Here, in summary form, is a checklist for creating your online syllabus. You needn't include all of these items (some may be more appropriate for your class than others), nor do you have to include them all in one document called a "syllabus." You can distribute this information among several documents if desired.

- course title, authors' and instructor's names, registration number, and term information; syllabus web pages should bear creation or "last revised" dates if the term date isn't included at the top;
- course instructor's contact information, indication of instructor availability in classroom, for "office hours" and private communications. Contact information for technical support;
- course description, perhaps the same as the description used for a course catalog listing, but probably more detailed; should list any prerequisites or special technical requirements for the course;
- course objectives or expected outcomes; what students can expect to learn by completion of the course;
- required texts or materials: any books or other materials, such as software, not made available in the course but required for the course;
- explanation of grading criteria and components of total grade: a list of all quizzes, exams, graded assignments, and forms of class participation, with grade percentages or points; criteria for a passing grade; policies on late assignments. More detailed instructions for assignments should be included elsewhere but at the very least, the outlines and due dates of each major assignment should be listed first in the syllabus;
- participation standard: minimum number of postings per week in discussion and any standards for quality of participation. If a rubric will be used to evaluate participation, reference to the rubric and where it may be found can be provided rather than including the whole rubric in the syllabus;

- explanation of course geography and procedures: how the online classroom is organized; how students should proceed each week for class activities; how to label assignments sent by email; where to post materials in the classroom; any special instructions;
- week-by-week schedule: topics, assignments, readings, quizzes, activities, and web resources for each week, with specific dates;
- any relevant institutional or program policies, procedures, or resources not mentioned above. These may be available as links to institutional web pages.

Sometimes it's difficult to anticipate every issue that may arise during the class and to include that in your syllabus. There's obviously a balance between readable brevity and a syllabus so voluminous as to be intimidating. Whatever you do not include in your initial documents can be referenced for further examination—for example, "Discussion Participation is worth 20% of the grade. See the rubric for participation posted in the Major Assignments section of the online classroom"—or may still be introduced by means of announcements, weekly emails sent to all students, or postings in an appropriate forum. You will also want to use these means to reinforce important elements of your syllabus as the course progresses.

## Using Specific Dates

Instead of simply listing the course schedule for "Week One" and "Week Two," your schedule should include the specific dates for each unit, week, or topic area covered. This is particularly important for asynchronous courses in which students may be logging on at diverse times and days during the week. It's quite common for students to lose track of the weeks in the term when following an asynchronous online schedule. (And it's not unheard of for instructors to forget the dates, either!)

If you don't want to include dates on the main syllabus web pages because you want to reuse it for subsequent terms, and worry about making mistakes in updating it, then send students an email version of the syllabus or post a downloadable

document version with the relevant dates inserted. Some course management software includes a calendar feature that you may use to reinforce the dates for each segment of the course.

### **Supplying Information More Than Once**

It's easy to lose track of where and when something was said in threaded discussions or by email. When you give directions, it may not be possible for students to simply link back to them at a later date. For that reason, you should provide important instructions in more than one location. However, to maintain consistency and accuracy, you will either need to *repeat that information in full* or *refer students back to the complete directions* in the syllabus or other central document. Be very careful not to truncate your instructions for an assignment—in posting reminders, always refer students back to the most detailed version. For example, an announcement can note an upcoming due date for an assignment mentioned elsewhere, “Remember, papers are due this week and must be a minimum of 1000 words and based on at least three scholarly resources. Please review the assignment details for this paper found in the syllabus and under Major Projects.” Or you may respond to a question in the discussion area, “John, your paper must be on one of the topics listed and Wikipedia may not be one of the three scholarly resources. Please refer to the Major Projects area for full details on topics and resources for this assignment.”

 ***Important! In an online environment, redundancy is often better than elegant succinctness.***

Although students in some course management platforms may be able to use a search function to find your instructions, in most cases students will have to waste energy and time to sift through materials before they can locate that one crucial sentence of direction. Therefore, even if you intend to explain assignments and procedures later in the course, it's best to state them up front in the syllabus as well. Then, if your course is laid out entirely in web pages, make sure that each page permits students to link back easily to essential information in the syllabus.



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## **Sample Syllabi: Online and Blended Course Versions**

The following is a composite syllabus based on courses in Modern China taught by Susan Ko at a variety of institutions. The first is a syllabus for the fully online version, followed by one representing a blended version of the same course. Both are designed as ten-week courses, but only the first five weeks of the course appear in the schedule.

### **Modern China: History and Culture**

#### **HISTORY 415**

Delivered online, SomeUniversity Spring term, \*\*\*\* year

#### **Course Description**

This online course provides a survey approach to the history and culture of China in the modern period, from the mid-19th century through the year 2000.

#### **Contacts and Communications**

Instructor: Dr. Susan Ko, sko@someuniversity.edu

See my instructor's bio in the classroom link under my name. Please contact me via the email address above or feel free to use the classroom instant message (IM) tool when you see me among the names of those currently logged in.

I will log on to the classroom nearly every day and the discussion forum is generally the best place to ask most questions. But if you need to contact me on an individual basis, please use email and I will try to reply within 24 hours. Your communication is important to me! To ensure that I see your message among my email, please use the class name and number HIST 415 in your subject line. For those of you halfway across the world from the instructor's eastern US location, given the time differences you may have to allow up to 36 hours for a "prompt reply."

**Technical support** is available 24/7 by contacting tech24@7help.edu or calling 1-800-TECHELP.

## Your Online Classroom and Procedures

### Each class week begins on Monday and ends on Sunday.

Although all students will have taken the software orientation, at any point you may review the course management software features by clicking on the Guide link.

The **Announcements** area of the classroom that you see each time you log in will be used on at least a weekly basis to post updates and comments on class matters. The instructor will also email the class to remind students of important due dates. (If you prefer to receive text message versions of these emails, please let the instructor know by following the instructions posted in the classroom.)

The **Course Materials** area, arranged in folders by week, houses the content for the course. All materials for the course are posted and can be reviewed from the start of the class. There is also a folder within Course Materials labeled **Detailed Assignment Instructions** that provides full information, criteria, rubrics, and samples for completing each assignment.

The **Discussion area** contains at least one discussion forum for each week of the course. Each discussion forum will be opened for posting on the Saturday before each new week begins. There is a forum labeled “Student Lounge” for casual conversations as well as a general “Q&A” forum where questions about class requirements or other questions that do not fit into a weekly discussion may be asked.

The **Assignment Dropbox** is the place to submit individual assignments unless otherwise indicated in assignment instructions.

Remember that our classroom server is set to US Eastern time. Therefore all due dates are noted as of US Eastern time. Use the World Time Clock link available in the classroom to convert all times and dates.

## Introduction

This ten-week course provides a general survey of Chinese history and culture in the modern period, from the Qing dynastic period through the founding of the People’s Republic and post-Mao China through 2000. We will try to trace the continuing themes as well as changing conditions that mark China’s tumultuous modern history.

This course is conducted completely online. To do your best in this course, it is recommended that you print out this syllabus to keep as a reference, log on frequently (at least 3–4 times a week) to the online classroom and keep up with all assigned readings and web work.

## Course Objectives

- Describe the major cultural, political, and social elements of traditional China.
- Trace recurring themes and concepts in Chinese history.
- Identify the major historical figures and events that have shaped modern Chinese history.
- Analyze the underlying themes and issues in the modernization process, including those in the economic, political, and social spheres.
- Differentiate the characteristics of the Chinese state in the Mao and post-Mao era.
- Demonstrate an appreciation for Chinese arts or literature as a reflection of Chinese society and values in different historical periods.

## Course Textbook and Materials

Main textbook: J. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd edition only. See the link to **Buy Textbooks** in the classroom if you have not already obtained your book or check on Amazon.com for used copies.

If you are not already familiar with Chinese names and their pronunciation, you may find that in the beginning, you may have a little trouble remembering and identifying the names of people, places, and events.

I recommend that you take notes while you read and refer often to the Glossary contained at the end of the textbook. When referring to Chinese names, places, and events, I will try to include short identifications whenever possible. If you are ever in doubt about what I am referring to in my commentary or in the conference discussions, please don't hesitate to ask!

We will be using many web resource readings as well as periodical articles available through our electronic reserves of the library. The latter are labeled Library Electronic Reserve Readings and are also found under Course Materials for the week indicated. The instructor will also introduce numerous multimedia resources from the Web, especially during the last half of the course. (There will be alternative assignments for those who are unable to access the multimedia resources.)

Finally, the instructor will provide short commentary on a weekly basis to help elucidate the issues from our readings and provide additional perspectives. These commentaries are posted in the Course Materials area of our classroom.

### **Grading Information**

Grades are based on a scale of 100 points and are distributed among major assignments as follows:

- Participation on a weekly basis: 30 points
- Group summary and question based on reading: 10 points for group work, 5 for individual contribution
- Short essay paper: 10 points
- Proctored exam: 25 points
- Final analytic paper or project: 20 points
- Grading scale:
  - A: 90–100
  - B: 80–89
  - C: 70–79
  - D: 60–69
  - F: 59 points or below

### **Timelines**

Participation in discussions must be completed within the week assigned.

Other assignments are due according to the posted dates and as described in instructions, either submitted via the assignment Dropbox or posted in a designated discussion forum.

Unless otherwise noted, grades will be posted in the Gradebook no later than the end of the week following the due date of the assignment.

This university maintains a strict academic integrity policy. Please follow [this link](#) to read the policy related to plagiarism.

## Assignment Descriptions

### 1. Participation

Students are expected to participate by responding to the instructor's questions as well as to ask questions or comment on the responses of their classmates. A good question is as valuable as a comment. See the Participation Rubric posted under Course Materials to understand grading criteria and expectations. There are ten graded weeks of participation.

### 2. Group summary and question based on reading

Each student will be assigned to a group by the beginning of the third week of class and group postings will begin in Week 5. You will work within groups of four or five to prepare a weekly summary ending in one or more discussion questions based on one of the weekly chapter reading assignments from the Spence text. The group will post the summary as pasted-in text and discussion question(s) in the weekly conference, creating a thread with the subject line, *Reading Summary, Chapter \_\_\_\_*. The group members will then be in charge of conducting the discussion.

Up to **ten points** will be awarded based on the criteria posted under "Group Summary" in the Course Materials, Detailed Assignments Instructions folder. This also includes some tips for organizing your group.

The summary and question must be posted in the online classroom no later than each Wednesday of the week assigned to your group. This will allow for sufficient discussion time. You will receive a grade of up to **five points** for your individual contribution. This grade will be based on the instructor's observation as well as a peer evaluation. See under Course Materials for the Peer Evaluation Rubric. You will be asked to evaluate yourself as well as your peers.



### 3. *Short essay paper*

This is a short essay, 2–4 pages in length, due at the end of week 4, February 20 of this course. Submit your assignment through the Dropbox and label the file **Firstinitial+Lastname+ShortE**.

The choice of topic questions and some guidelines are posted under the Course Materials area, Detailed Assignments Instructions folder. The style of this paper will be very much like the type of essay questions you will encounter in the proctored final exam.

### 4. *Proctored exam*

There is a mandatory proctored exam that must be completed no later than April 23. To schedule your proctored exam with an approved proctor near you, see the classroom link for “Exam Appointments.”

Our exam will be short-essay and identification questions. Short-essay questions will ask you to reflect on what we have learned and draw connections between different events, themes, and facts. Identification questions require a short paragraph to explain the who, what, when, or importance of something we have studied. My own philosophy is that students shouldn’t be surprised or “tricked” by what they encounter on the exam—if you have paid attention and kept up with your reading, discussion, and assignments, the questions should not be unexpected.

### 5. *Final analytic paper or project*

This assignment is an analysis of a continuing issue or theme that you have followed since the beginning of the course. For example, you may want to concentrate on economic development in China, the status of women, local officials versus central party control, China’s relationships with its neighbors in East Asia, role of intellectuals and artists, etc. A full list of possible topics and issues as well as format and other requirements is contained under the detailed instructions for this assignment in Course Materials. This paper is due the end of the 9th week of this class but you must submit your topic for approval at the end of Week 5. There is a multimedia option for those students who may prefer to work in audio or video. See detailed instructions under Course Materials, Detailed Assignments Instructions folder

for more information. Once you have submitted your project or paper, you are invited to share it online with your classmates during Week 10.

## Other Resources

Need Some Review of Skills or Assistance?

For help in navigating the various types of writing assignments, follow the link to the Writing tutorial center in the resource list at the top right of the online classroom.

See the links in the classroom to **Library** and **Student Advising** for additional support if needed.

## Schedule

*Week 1, January 24–January 30*

*Traditional China under the Qing*

Readings:

- Spence, Chapter 3, bottom page 53–top page 69, Chapters 5 and 6, pp. 96–137
- Instructor commentary under Course Materials for Week 1
- Visit web resources indicated under Course Materials for Week 1

*Discussion forum:*

Introduce yourself in the Introductions forum, then participate in Week 1 discussion forum.

*Week 2, January 31–February 6*

*China's Dual Crises, External and Internal*

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 7 and 8, pp. 141–191, and pp. 202–214
- Instructor commentary for week 2

See list of topic questions for Short Essay assignment under Course Materials, Detailed Assignment Instructions folder.

Participate in Week 2 discussion forum.

*Week 3, February 7–February 13*

*The End of Dynastic China*

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 10 and 11, 215–263
- Instructor commentary for Week 3
- Library electronic reserve reading #1

Participate in Week 3 discussion forum.

Locate and check in with your group in the designated Group area.

*Week 4, February 14–February 20*

*The New Chinese Republic*

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 12 and 13, pp. 267–313
- Instructor commentary for Week 4
- Visit web resources for this week

Participate in Week 4 discussion forum.

**Short essay due end of this week, via Dropbox. Label the file Firstinitial+Lastname+ShortE.**

*Week 5, February 21–27*

*Union and Disunion*

Readings:

Topics under Course Content

- Spence, Chapters 14, pp. 314–341 and Chapter 15, pp. 342–374
- Instructor commentary for Week 5
- Library electronic reserve reading #2

Participate in Week 5 conference discussion. Group presentations begin.

**Submit your final paper/project topic choice to instructor via email for approval by the end of this week.**

**Put HIST 415 and Final Topic in the subject line of your email.**

## **Modern China: History and Culture**

### **HISTORY 415**

Delivered in blended format, SomeUniversity Spring term, \*\*\*\*  
year

### **Contacts**

*Instructor: Dr. Susan Ko, sko@someuniversity.edu*

**Office hours on campus: Tuesdays, 3–5 p.m., Room 210 of Miller Building. Phone: 321-568-3987**

Please contact the instructor via the email address above, or by phone, or feel free to use the online classroom instant message feature when you see the instructor among the names of those currently logged in to our online classroom.

The instructor will log on to the online classroom nearly every day, whether or not the class is meeting face-to-face in a particular week. The discussion forum is generally the best place to ask most questions. But if you need to contact me on an individual basis, please use email and I will try to reply within 24 hours. Your communication is important to me! To ensure that I see your message among my email, please use the class name and number HIST 415 in your subject line.

**Technical support** is available 24/7 by contacting tech24@7help.edu or calling 1-800-TECHELP.

### **Course Description**

A survey approach to the history and culture of China in the modern period, from the mid nineteenth century through the year 2000.

## Introduction

This is a **blended** course. That means we will meet face-to-face every other week and for the last class meeting in Week 10, but that we will only meet online during the other weeks. Attendance at the face-to-face meetings and participation in all online activities is required. You will find that the online and face-to-face elements of this course are interdependent and integrated. Online participation is required every week – you will be expected to go online, preferably within 72 hours of a face-to-face meeting, to continue discussion or complete other activities.

**The dates during which we meet face to face are clearly indicated in bold font on the syllabus schedule.**

This course provides a general survey of Chinese history and culture in the modern period, from the Qing dynastic period through the founding of the People's Republic and post-Mao China through 2000. We will try to trace the continuing themes as well as changing conditions that mark China's tumultuous modern history.

## Course Objectives

- Describe the major cultural, political, and social elements of traditional China.
- Trace recurring themes and concepts in Chinese history.
- Identify the major historical figures and events that have shaped modern Chinese history.
- Analyze the underlying themes and issues in the modernization process, including those in the economic, political, and social spheres.
- Differentiate the characteristics of the Chinese state in the Mao and post-Mao eras.
- Demonstrate an appreciation for Chinese arts or literature as a reflection of Chinese society and values in different historical periods.

## Information and Procedures

**Each class week begins online on Monday and ends on Sunday.** Our face-to-face on-campus meetings all take place on **Tuesday evenings, 6:30–9:30 p.m. in the Seely Center, room**

## **2009. The Center is equipped with wifi and you are welcome to bring your laptop to class.**

Face-to-face meetings will be a combination of instructor lecture, discussion, and student presentations. If you miss a face-to-face meeting you will be required to do additional makeup work online.

### **Online Classroom**

A brief overview of the online classroom will be given at the first class meeting. At any point you may review the course management software features by clicking on the **Guide** link. Here is a quick guide:

The **Announcements** area of the classroom that you see each time you log in will be used on at least a weekly basis to post updates and comments on class matters. The instructor will also email the class to remind students of important due dates. (If you prefer to receive text message versions of these emails, please let the instructor know by following the instructions posted in the classroom.)

The **Course Materials** area, arranged in folders by week, houses the content for the course. All materials for the course are posted and can be reviewed from the start of the class. There is also a folder labeled **Detailed Assignment Instructions** that provides full information, criteria, rubrics, and samples for completing each assignment. As noted below, read the instructor commentary before attending the face-to-face class.

The **Discussion** area contains at least one discussion forum for each week of the course, whether or not we are meeting face-to-face in a particular week. Each discussion forum will be opened on the Saturday before each new week begins. There is a forum labeled “Student Lounge” for casual conversations as well as a general “Q&A” forum where questions about class requirements or other questions that do not fit into a weekly discussion may be asked.

*Important: Do not wait till the class meets face-to-face to ask a question! Post it online!*

The **Assignment Dropbox** is the place to submit individual assignments unless otherwise indicated in assignment instructions. *Please do not bring assignments to the face-to-face class meetings to hand in to the instructor.*

## Course Textbook and Materials

Main text: J. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd edition only. See the link to **Buy Textbooks** in the classroom if you have not already obtained your book, or check on Amazon.com for used copies.

If you are not already familiar with Chinese names and their pronunciation, you may find that in the beginning, you may have a little trouble remembering and identifying the names of people, places, and events.

I recommend that you take notes while you read and refer often to the Glossary contained at the end of the textbook. When referring to Chinese names, places, and events, I will try to include short identifications whenever possible. If you are ever in doubt about what I am referring to in my commentary or in the conference discussions, please don't hesitate to ask!

We will be using many web resource readings as well as periodical articles available through our electronic reserves of the library. The instructor will also introduce numerous multimedia resources from the Web, especially during the last half of the course. If you are unable to access the multimedia resources from home, you are expected to use the campus labs to complete this work.

Finally, the instructor will provide short commentary on a weekly basis to help elucidate the issues from our readings and provide additional perspectives. These commentaries are posted in the Course Materials area of our classroom. During weeks that the class meets face to face, it is recommended that you read the instructor commentary **before** coming to class.

## Grading Information

Grades are based on a scale of 100 points and are distributed among major assignments as follows:

- Participation on a weekly basis: 30 points
- Group summary and question based on reading: 10 points for group work, 5 for individual contribution
- Short essay paper: 10 points
- Proctored exam: 25 points

- Final analytic paper: 20 points
- Grading scale:
  - A: 90–100
  - B: 80–89
  - C: 70–79
  - D: 60–69
  - F: 59 points or below

## **Timeliness**

Participation in online discussions must be completed within the week assigned.

Other assignments are due according to the posted dates and as described in instructions, either submitted via the assignment dropbox or posted in a designated discussion forum.

Unless otherwise noted, grades will be posted in the online gradebook no later than the end of the week following the due date of the assignment. This university maintains a strict academic integrity policy. Please follow [this link](#) to read the policy related to plagiarism.

## **Assignment Descriptions**

### *1. Participation*

Students are expected to participate by responding to the instructor's questions as well as to ask questions or comment on the responses of their classmates in the online classroom. A good question is as valued as a comment. See the Participation Rubric posted under Course Materials to understand grading criteria and expectations.

Additionally, during weeks in which we meet face to face, you may receive credit for participation in either the face-to-face class and/or the online classroom. This is detailed in the Participation rubric.

### *2. Group presentation and facilitated discussion*

Each student will be assigned to a group during the face-to-face class meeting of the third week of class and will be able to hold their first organizational meeting face to face. Students will work



online in the Groups area to prepare a five-minute presentation and at least three discussion questions based on an assigned topic from one of the weekly chapter readings from the Spence text, a Library reserved reading, or a web resource site. The group will present and facilitate a discussion (with help from the instructor) during a 15-minute period at each face-to-face meeting, starting with Week five.

Up to **10 points** will be awarded to each group for their live presentation, facilitation of discussion, and online preparation based on the criteria posted under “Group Summary” in Course Materials which also includes some tips for organizing your group. You will also receive a grade of up to 5 points for your individual contribution. This grade will be based on the instructor’s observation of your preparatory work online, the presentation and discussion on-campus, as well as a peer evaluation. See under Course Materials for the peer-evaluation rubric. You will be asked to evaluate yourself as well as your group peers.

### 3. *Short essay paper*

This is a short essay, 2–4 pages in length, due at the end of Week 4, February 20, of this course. Submit your assignment via the Dropbox and label the file **Firstinitial+Lastname+ShortE**.

The choice of topic questions and some guidelines are posted under the Course Materials, Detailed Assignment Instructions folder. The style of this paper will be very much like the type of essay questions you will encounter in the proctored final exam.

### 4. *Proctored exam*

In Week 11 there is a mandatory proctored exam on campus in our regular meeting room. See the university website in February for the examination schedule for this course.

Our exam will be short essay and identification questions. Short essay questions will ask you to reflect on what we have learned and draw connections between different events, themes, and facts. Identification questions require a short paragraph to explain the who, what, when, or importance of something we have studied. My own philosophy is that students shouldn’t be surprised or “tricked” by what they encounter on the exam—if you have paid attention and kept up with your reading, discussion, and assignments, the questions should not be unexpected.

### 5. *Final analytic paper/project*

This paper is an analysis of a continuing issue or theme that you have followed since the beginning of the course. For example, you may want to concentrate on economic development in China, the status of women, local officials versus central party control, China's relationships with its neighbors in East Asia, role of intellectuals and artists, etc. A full list of possible topics and issues as well as format and other requirements is contained under the detailed instructions for this assignment in Course Materials. This paper is due at the end of the ninth week, April 10, of this class but you must submit your topic for approval by the end of Week 4. Final projects will be shared with the class at the last face-to-face meeting. There is a multimedia option for those students who prefer to work in audio or video. See detailed instructions for more information.

### **Other Resources**

Need some review of skills or assistance?

For help in navigating the various types of writing assignments, follow the link to the Writing Tutorial Center in the resource list at the top right of the online classroom.

See the links in the online classroom to **Library** and **Student Advising** for additional support if needed.

### **Schedule**

*Week 1, January 24–January 30*

#### **Face-to-face class meeting, January 25**

*Traditional China under the Qing*

Readings:

- Spence, Chapter 3, bottom page 53–top page 69, Chapters 5 and 6, pp. 96–137
- Instructor commentary under Course Materials for Week 1
- Visit web resources indicated under Course Materials for Week 1

In-class overview of online classroom.

*Online Discussion forum:*

Introduce yourself in the Introductions forum, then participate in Week 1 discussions after the January 25 meeting, with your first posting by January 28.

*Week 2, January 31–February 6***China's Dual Crises, External and Internal**

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 7 and 8, pp. 141–191 and 202–214
- Instructor's commentary for Week 2

Participate in Week 2 discussion online.

See list of topic questions for Short Essay assignment under Course Materials.

*Week 3, February 7–February 13***Face-to-face class meeting, February 8***The End of Dynastic China*

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 10 and 11, pp. 215–263
- Instructor's commentary for Week 3

Participate in Week 3 discussion online after February 8 with your first posting by February 11.

Group work: On February 8th, assemble with your group, receive your topic and date for presenting.

*Week 4, February 14–February 20***The New Chinese Republic**

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 12 and 13, pp. 267–313
- Instructor's commentary for Week 4
- Visit web resources for this week

Participate in Week 4 discussion online.

**Short essay due end of this week, via Dropbox. Label the file Firstinitial+Lastname+ShortE.**

*Week 5, February 21–27*

**Face-to-face class meeting, February 22**

*Union and Disunion*

Readings:

- Spence, Chapters 14, pp. 314–341 and Chapter 15, pp. 342–374
- Instructor commentary for Week 5

**Groups 1 and 2 present and help lead discussion on February 22.**

Participate in Week 5 discussion online after February 22, with your first posting by February 25.

**Submit your final topic choice to instructor via email for approval by the end of this week. Put HIST 415 and Final Topic in the subject line.**