Course Description and Core Objectives

An oddity of modern political culture is the hereditary dictatorship, or the family dictatorship, countries or regimes that are dominated by a single family for more than one generation, or dominated by a single strong man for his entire life, often spanning several generations. The paradoxical nature of this institution is this: to maintain power, it depends wholly on the use of up-to-date control methods, including modern bureaucracies, high tech surveillance apparatus, a carefully constructed and forcefully articulated view of the world, perpetrated via sophisticated propaganda stratagems, and advanced military and police interventions. Yet this modern form of government exists within an antiquated framework, an archaic political idea, namely, the transfer of power from father to son, a notion dating to earliest recorded history.

Even the ancients, however, were aware of the perils of transferring power based not on merit or competence but on the sole qualification of possessing the same ‘blood’ as the previous generation. In China, for example, in high antiquity, circa the second millennium BCE, the culture heroes and the founders of China’s earliest historical dynasties, passed power not to their children, but to the meritorious. Departure from this practice, as occurred in China’s late classical age, is considered within China’s political culture the equivalent of eating the forbidden fruit and being cast from the Garden of Eden. Implicit in this critique is that all subsequent governments contained a fundamental flaw, a nepotistic kernel of corruption that might justify overthrowing the leadership. This radical idea, that the people could rebel, was an idea first argued by Confucius’s most famous disciple, Mencius (Mengzi), in the third century BCE. For this reason, even China’s hereditary emperors kept a wary eye on the sentiment of ‘the people,’ to the point of dispatching officials to collect and analyze folk songs, as a way of assessing popular feeling about the government.

This course focuses on Asia, specifically on three case studies, chosen for their diversity, and for the radically different outcomes of this authoritarian institution as it plays out in different times and different places.
The first case study is the most notorious among the hereditary dictatorships, the Kim family of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), now into its third generation, already in power for nearly seventy years. The Kim regime’s approach for maintaining power is totalistic: it aspires to create a seamless reality for North Korean citizens, attempting a hermetic separation from other countries. One example of this approach is the idea upheld by the state that people born inside North Korea have a distinct physiology, different from North Korea’s enemies (namely everyone), and thus citizens are susceptible to dangerous contagion if not assiduously protected, a role fulfilled by the Dear Leader. In sum, power holders in North Korea argue that the biological body cannot be separated from the body politic.

The second case study is the American-supported hereditary dictatorship, the Chiang family, first in China and then Taiwan (post-1949). A unique amalgam of Leninist organizational principles, Confucian values of benevolence, and fascist techniques of state building distinguished the Chiang dynasty. The Chiang hereditary dictatorship witnessed a surprise denouement, with Chiang Kai-shek’s son, Chiang Ching-kuo, shepherding Taiwan into a state of genuine democracy. Today, Taiwan witnesses ninety-percent of the electorate voting, voters that, remarkably, used their ballots to oust the Chiang family’s party, the Nationalist (Guomindang) from power, in 2000.

The third case study is Turkmenistan, focusing on the twenty-one years of rule by Saparmurat Niyazov, President for Life, from 1985 to 2006. As part of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan is an especially complex case. President Niyazov rose to power during the Soviet period and consolidated his control after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. On this level, Turkmenistan is an intriguing example of life in post-socialist societies, and the contradictory ways that post-Soviet societies attempted to refashion a national identity that had been impinged upon by Soviet power. This case will focus on President for Life Niyazov’s distinctive foreign policy of “permanent neutrality,” recognized by the United Nations, and his idiosyncratic domestic policies that involved such initiatives as renaming the days of the week after himself and his mother. Finally, this case will examine successor President Berdimuhamedow’s efforts to rationalize Turkmenistan’s relationship with the world.

The hereditary dictatorships on which this course focuses exist in the interstices of great power politics, and as such, their very existence embodies the global interconnectedness of international relations. These regimes dwell in the very essence of globalized culture, politics, and social change. North Korea came into existence in its present partitioned state after the global disaster of World War II. It then erupted into the first violent conflict of the Cold War due to the ongoing machinations of Stalin and the maneuvering of Kim Il-sung, Mao Zedong, and Truman. The North Korean regime survives only because of stubborn tensions between the pertinent regional and global powers: China, Russia, the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Taiwan, the second case study of this course, continues to exist as the principal expression of the 70 year-old unresolved drama of Nationalist-Communist and China-US strategic conflict in the West.
Pacific. Turkmenistan, the last case, is a surreal product of Central Asia’s complex role in global history, from the imperia of the nineteenth-century (and before) to the petrodri

ven sometimes hallucinatory regimes where citizens are invited to communicate telepathically with the supreme leaders.

Because each case study exists precisely in the international spaces created by ongoing, deep rooted structural conflicts in the broader global system, focusing on a single case would bring to light pertinent themes of global contexts. This course ambitiously aims to scrutinize the interplay of three discrete nodes existing within a distinct type of international political-cultural space that contains elements of both inertia and ongoing transformation.

Ultimately, this course aims to assess the impact of the hereditary dictatorship on the global order. While we focus on North Korea, Taiwan, and Turkmenistan, we will also contemplate the situation and impact on the global order of hereditary dictatorships in Cuba, Syria, and lastly Nepal, before the mass murder-suicide toppled the royal family and helped usher the Maoists into power.

This course satisfies Core Objective 11 of the Silver Core Curriculum:

**CO11. Global Contexts:** Students will apply and evaluate modes of academic inquiry, creative expression, or results of research to problems in historical and contemporary global contexts. Students will articulate connections among local, national, and international contexts and evaluate the ways that historical and contemporary global influences affect their current situations.

In addition, HIST 451 helps students to develop the skills described in Core Objective 1 (Effective Composition and Communication) and Core Objective 3 (Critical Analysis and Use of Information). These objectives are reinforced throughout the curriculum in other courses students take to fulfill core and major requirements. Through the assigned readings, essays, class discussions, presentations, and written assignments, students will practice critical thinking and communication skills that can be applied in other academic and professional contexts. In their research and written work, students will adhere to ethical principles that govern scholarly inquiry, including the accurate representation of evidence, proper citation of sources, and respectful interactions with colleagues.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Correlation to Core Objectives (COs)**

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

1. identify key transformations in diverse Asian social, political, economic, and cultural life during the late Cold War down to the present (CO11)
2. analyze and synthesize primary, secondary, and cultural sources (CO3)
3. find and use historical scholarship and sources to answer a research question (CO3)
4. present ideas in a clear and persuasive manner both orally and in writing, in accordance with the ethical principles governing scholarly inquiry (CO1, CO3)
5. analyze how hereditary dictatorships form and deform national identity within a shifting context of the broader international community (CO11).
6. analyze the interstices of great power politics, the political space in which these dictatorships exist, further scrutinizing the broader context of global interconnectedness of international relations. (CO11).

**Required texts:**


Sam Tranum, *Daily Life in Turkmenbashy's Golden Age* (Sam Tranum, 2010).


Articles, videos, and links posted to Webcampus.

The History Department is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. If you have a documented disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact me or the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

Academic Success Services: Your student fees cover usage of the Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or, www.unr.edu/writing_center/). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services.

The Department of History Writing Center is available to all students enrolled in history courses at UNR to provide help with assignments and to hone writing skills. Unlike the ASUN Writing Center, our center is discipline specific. During one-on-one consultations students can work on specific issues related to historical writing such as organization, argument, style, evidence, analysis, and citations. Don't know how to get started on a specific assignment? The center can help with that too. The Center is open Monday-Thursday 1 p.m.-6 p.m. and by appointment. Contact Amy Ghilieri (aghilieri@mac.com) to set up an appointment.

Statement on Audio and Video Recording: “Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.”

Requirements and evaluation

**COURSE GRADING:**

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
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<td>Informed Participation:</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly assignments:</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Quiz</td>
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<td>WebCT essays</td>
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<td>Bibliographic research</td>
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<td>Thematic research</td>
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<td>Leading Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Presentation:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper:</td>
<td>30%</td>
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All course requirements must be completed. Failure to do so will result in a fail grade. Students are responsible for all material posted to WebCampus.
Attendance: Mandatory.

Zero tolerance for missed class.

Exceptions: Military service.
Illness (documented by UNR physician).
Structured activity (such as athletics and other activities).

Please note: Doing favors for friends or family, such as picking people up at the airport, for example, are not legitimate exceptions. Inform your family and peer group that you cannot miss class.

Penalties.

Missing one unexcused class: Final grade lowered 5% or ½ a grade.
Missing two unexcused classes: Final grade lowered one entire grade.
Missing three unexcused classes: ‘Fail’ for the class.

On the other hand, by certain prescribed heroic actions, students will have extra credit opportunities to raise their grades.

BYE Policy:
Allows you to come to class when not prepared or not in the mood, and not be penalized for not participating, because you are in the classroom, absorbing what is going on.

During the course, each member will be allowed two ‘byes’ for discussion, meaning that they will not be required to participate by speaking.

Twice, participants can take a pass on speaking up, for whatever reason.

During the ‘bye’ day, participants still must come to class.
(Please inform instructor in writing if you are selecting a ‘bye’ week).

Observe protocol: Be punctual. Class begins at 1:00 pm sharp. Late arrivals are disruptive. If you ever must leave early or arrive late, please notify the instructor in advance.

Cell phones must never be used inside the classroom. This means no text messaging, retrieving messages, anything. Before class or during class break: Cell phones can only be used outside of the classroom.
In emergencies, please notify the instructor.

Reasons for this:
The early 21st-century classroom and the cell phone cannot co-exist, and bears on the Future of Civilization and the Human Mind.

Informed Participation (30%):
Attendance is mandatory. This seminar is driven by informed participation. By this I mean coming to class having organized your thoughts in such a way that permits the productive exchange of ideas in class with your peers. While seminar members are required to participate energetically, this does not mean dominating discussion. Endeavor to be skillful listeners, comprehending what your classmates articulate. Perceptive listening—and response—is as important as giving voice to one’s own ideas.

Interactive mentoring can be extremely productive. Throughout the semester, members will be responsible for providing constructive feedback on each other’s ideas. Members will also carefully read and constructively critique work presented during the course of the semester.

Reading: Reading must be completed prior to the beginning of each week's session. This means not simply coming to class having done the reading, but having thought about what was read, and then organizing your thoughts in such a way that permits the exchange ideas in class. The close, critical reading of texts means understanding what the author is expressing and entails basic work such as looking up unknown words.

Be sure to leave enough time to read with care. Do not rush. The close reading of texts must also entail basic acts such as looking up unknown words, in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), available on-line through the University’s webpage.

Leading discussion and Presentations: Seminar members will be responsible for leading class discussion. The aim of discussion leaders is to facilitate and enhance discussion, not dominate. Leaders will have five minutes to open discussion, but then it is open to the seminar.

Weekly assignments (30%):
Different weeks, assignments will differ.

Each week, the class will focus on a particular theme emerging from the reading.

Two ‘byes’ allowed for weekly assignment. Must inform instructor on WebCT email

WebCT essays
Two-hundred-fifty-word essay on that week’s reading, to be posted on WebCT. Please note: These are to be polished essays, and not journal entries, although keeping a reading journal is a good strategy for keeping track of our ideas for an essay.

Bibliographic research
Locate and study a relevant piece of scholarship related to the themes under discussion. This can be a scholarly article, book, dissertation, or similar item.

The title will then be posted to WebCT, along with an explanation of the work’s pertinence to the themes under analysis that week.
**Leading questions**
Generate an astute, insightful, penetrating, or perceptive question based on that week’s reading. The question will be posted to WebCT.

**All work must be submitted to WebCT by noon, the Tuesday of class.**

**Weekly Quiz, to be announced in advance.**

**Final paper (30%):**
During the semester, seminar members will begin formulating topics for analysis and research. More will be said on this in class.

**Final presentation of research projects. 10% TBA.**

Hint: Keep track of your ideas as they occur to you. If you have an idea while reading, write it down immediately. Ideas/perceptions that are vividly experienced in a moment of insight can be easily forgotten.

Plagiarism or dishonest work of any form (e.g., cheating) is an automatic “F” for the course.

**Grading scale**

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-87</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>86-83</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
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**Read the articles and view videos posted to Webcampus.**
Reading schedule:

Week One: Global Order After the Cold War


Week Two: Framing Korea in the Post-Cold War Order


Week Three: Korea: The Cleanest Race


Week Four: Korea: The Gulag


Week Five: Korea: Commander Ga


Week Six: Framing Taiwan in the Cold War and Post-Cold War Order


Week Seven: The Generalissimo: Fascistic Militarist to Confucian Patriarch


Week Eight: The Generalissimo’s Son: Shanghai Tiger to Uncle Chiang


Week Nine: Central Asia after Gorbachev

**Week Ten: Utopic Turkmenistan**

http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/05/28/the-golden-man

**Week Eleven: Turkmenistan: Environmental Degradation, Social Suffocation, and Kleptocracy**

Sam Tranum, *Daily Life in Turkmenbashy's Golden Age* (Sam Tranum, 2010).

**Week Twelve and Thirteen: Global Order Reconsidered: Origins and Current Manifestations**


**Weeks Fourteen and Fifteen: Presentation of Research**

Articles posted to Webcampus.