Despite its small size, Taiwan society is a significant and worthwhile object of study. An island nation of 23 million people, Taiwan punches considerably above its weight in global trade, “soft power”, and geostrategic significance. For the social sciences, Taiwan’s experience presents signal examples of social change in the course of industrialization, integration within a global economy, the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, and identity formation under a succession of political regimes. Taiwan’s status is a pivotal issue in the Asia-Pacific region, and has some potential to precipitate a military conflict, because Taiwan’s very existence as a polity poses a challenge to Chinese political orthodoxy of national reunification under an authoritarian state. This seminar will consider broad developments in Taiwan society since the 17th century, emphasizing historical turning points and icons that still figure in contemporary discourses about Taiwan. The course readings are arranged in roughly chronological order with respect to subject matter, however, the main focus is on the events of recent decades and on current trends.

Conduct of the course: The basic mode of the class will be a discussion of the week’s readings. This activity will be supplemented by a feature film, a guest speaker, brief lectures, and student presentations.

Course requirements: Students will write a short commentary on the readings for eight of the nine substantive sessions. Also, each student will make a brief presentation on a Taiwan-related subject of their own choice. Grading will be based on the quality of students’ written work and contribution to seminar discussions. There will be no midterm or final examination.

Commentaries: Each week the instructor will pose a question or questions to be answered about the readings for the coming week. Students are asked to discuss these questions in an essay of around 400 words (about a page and a half of double-spaced text). Students should e-mail their essay to the instructor (lavely@uw.edu) no later than Sunday evening before class. Essays should be in MS WORD format (.doc or .docx file), double-spaced, and be e-mailed as an attachment. Please include your name in the filename, as well as the number of the essay.

Presentations: Once during the quarter each student will make a short (15-20 minute) presentation on a Taiwan-related subject of their choice, and lead a discussion on the topic. Students will have wide latitude in the subject-matter and mode of presentation. Students may assign a reading in advance. Each presentation should be accompanied by (at a minimum) a one-page handout that provides an abstract, relevant references, and optional appurtenances (such
as tables, graphics, and maps). Presentations should be scheduled with the instructor in advance so that they can be staggered across the quarter.

**Course readings:** All course readings are available on a password-protected course website at [http://courses.washington.edu/sisea521](http://courses.washington.edu/sisea521) (note, the web address doesn’t match the actual course number). Some book-length work (recommended readings) will be available on course reserve at the East Asia Library.

**Instructor availability:** Apart from regular office hours, students are encouraged to meet with the instructor by appointment, and address questions via e-mail.
Class Schedule

10/10  A Frontier society


Recommended:


10/17  Aboriginal Taiwan


Recommended:


10/24 Japanese colonial rule


Recommended


10/31 Retrocession and 2-28


Recommended:

11/7 The Making of an Industrial Chinese Society

Gold, Thomas B. 1986. “Chapter 1: Explaining the Taiwan Miracle,” and Chapter 8: State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle, in *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe), pp. 3-20 and 123-133.


Recommended:


11/14 Democratization and Identity


11/21 Women, Family and Marriage


Recommended:


11/28 Education and Stratification; Civil Society


Recommended:


12/5 Dilemmas for China


