

Trends and Topics in Asian Studies 2 (A006815)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 3.0 **Study time 90 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2) English Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

De Jonckheere, Heleen LW21 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject China)	3	A
Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject India)	3	A
Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Japan)	3	A
Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Middle East Studies)	3	A
Master of Arts in Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies	3	A
Exchange Programme Cultures and Languages in Context	3	A
Exchange Programme Global Studies and World Societies	3	A
Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures	3	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Asia, India, China, Japan, humanities, philosophy, history, archaeology, literature, intellectual history, medicine, health, wellbeing, psychology, body, society, yoga, meditation.

Position of the course

This elective course allows students to broaden their view on the world by delving into some traditions and practices concerning the body and health in Asia, with an emphasis on Yoga, taking a cultural-historical perspective.

Contents

In this course, we will discuss topics and recent research concerning the body in Asian Studies. The course starts from the idea that a culture's imagination and practices of the body offers a window into its worldviews, its conceptualization of the self, and the tensions that arise when different values meet. We will explore medical systems, philosophies of wellbeing, psychologies, ritual bodily practices, and fitness within the contexts of India, China, and Japan. We will also look at how these forms of knowledge are evaluated and adapted in contemporary and diasporic societies.

The course will have a special emphasis on yoga as a mind-body practice that was transmitted to western audiences very successfully in the previous century. The classes that focus on yoga will introduce students to the meanings and purposes of yogic techniques, the relationship between yoga and Ayurvedic medicine, and how the adaptation of yoga in the Western world promoted an entirely new practice of wellness and health.

This course is designed for students of area studies, history, literature, anthropology, and philosophy, and is also relevant to students from other

programmes, including medicine.

Initial competences

No prior knowledge is necessary, but the student should be acquainted with the methods and basic concepts of the Humanities.

Final competences

- 1 In-depth understanding of the topics addressed in class.
- 2 The ability to critically assess discourses on the body in historical and contemporary societies.
- 3 The ability to formulate research questions related to the body, health, wellbeing and society in Asian contexts.
- 4 The ability to use primary and secondary sources to independently formulate an argument about cultural ideas and practices concerning the body and wellbeing.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

- **Lecture:** the lecturer gives an exposé on their background material (very broad state of the art), research questions, hypotheses, methodologies and outcomes. Recordings of the lectures will be available upon request to students with a special status or when a student could by exception not attend class.
- **Seminar:** in groups, students discuss the material to develop their own research questions, hypotheses, etc.
- **Independent work:** the teacher gives the students articles, excerpts (translated in English), and videos, etc. to go through prior to the lectures.

Study material

Type: Syllabus

Name: Contemporary Asian Academic Debates 2: Muslim Cultures and Societies across the Indian Ocean

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: yes

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

References per module will be provided well in advance via Ufora.

For the classes on yoga, students can consult the following references:

Mallinson, James, and Mark Singleton. 2017. *Roots of Yoga*. London: Penguin Random House.

Singleton Mark. 2010. *The Yoga Body. The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Course content-related study coaching

Upon appointment (face-to-face or on MS Teams) or by email with lecturers

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Written assessment open-book

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

- **Essay:** a short essay based on ideas and materials related to the subject taught in the course.
- **Oral exam:** an interactive session with each student to assess the ability to analyse and comprehend the ideas and materials taught in the classroom.
- **Participation:** the student attends classes, completes assigned readings, and participates in class discussions.

Calculation of the examination mark

- **Essay:** 40%
- **Oral exam:** 45%
- **(Group) presentation and participation:** 15%

Facilities for Working Students

1. Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance
2. Possible alternative examination on a different time in the same academic year
3. Alternative time for feedback: possible through email, telephone, or upon appointment