What is East Asia, and how has its history shaped our contemporary world? Foundations of East Asian Civilizations (HIST 190) serves as an introduction for tackling these big questions by exploring aspects of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean traditional cultures from prehistory to the seventeenth century. We begin our study of East Asia in the “Classical Golden Age,” examining significant political and philosophical ideologies that continue to shape East Asia today. After exploring the worlds of the Buddha, Laozi, and Confucius, we examine pre-modern cosmopolitan China as well as the creation of classical literature in Japan, focusing on topics such as the proliferation of knowledge along the Silk Roads, technological innovations, and environmental transformation.

As warriors rise to prominence in the thirteenth century, we examine various conceptions of identity, gender, and power. Our course ends in the seventeenth century with the establishment of a new world order defined by constructed borders and boundaries that continue to define international relationships in the modern world. This survey requires no prior knowledge of East Asia and all course materials will be available on Canvas.