



Wednesday Evening Seminar
Spring 2015 Syllabus
Cultivating Regional Literacy in the Asia-Pacific Region
Hawai'i Imin International Conference Center
January 28 – April 8, 2015
Wednesdays at 6:30 - 8:30 pm

INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 2014, the Wednesday Evening Seminar explored the broader concept of what regional literacy for the Asia-Pacific region might look like. In the Spring of 2015, we will explicitly advocate a way to cultivate it. We plan to link natural and biological sciences with political and economic challenges, and to historical and cultural issues, and to situate them around geographical similarities and differences. The theme, in short, helps us learn how to learn about key issues in the Asia-Pacific and how to strengthen the core values that connect us.

Throughout the semester, our explorations will interweave the natural forces, cultural dynamics, and political issues that affect us. By looking at the interactions of humans and the environment, we will examine the conditions of change, adaptations, emerging challenges, and recent advances across the region in responding to these challenges. We will explore how we respond to the weather, how we use fire, and how lands change, and ask important questions about how natural forces have shaped our societies. We will also examine the deeper questions about our communities, relationships, and, fundamentally, what makes us human - traversing the arts and highlighting the uniqueness of our differences across cultures, and the relevance of our similarities. Finally, we will confront the more contentious issues that revolve around politics, identity, and the interconnectedness of the global economy. The diverse perspectives of WES participants will provide a tremendous opportunity to craft new ways of cultivating regional literacy.

We continue to uphold the core tenets of this seminar series: to promote dialogue and build lasting relationships and thoughtful approaches to the challenges we face in the Asia-Pacific. Regional literacy nurtures the necessary capacity to perceive and understand our differences, search for common ground, and link ourselves and others into networks that enlighten, enrich, and empower our imaginations for a more peaceful, prosperous, and just future. It is our hope that East-West Center participants will carry these lessons of multiculturalism well beyond this seminar, and foster lasting and meaningful connections across the region.

We at the Wednesday Evening Seminar are firm believers in food based learning. Excellent refreshments and pupus will be provided, as well as opportunities to mingle and participate in groups.

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OVERVIEW OF THE WEDNESDAY EVENING SEMINAR

The Wednesday Evening Seminar (WES) is a weekly gathering of East-West Center participants in their first fall and spring semester. WES brings together graduate students, researchers, and other professionals from diverse academic disciplines, geographic areas, life experiences, and East-West Center programs to learn and dialogue on issues of common concern that impact the U.S. and Asia-Pacific region.

While the graduate student experience tends to focus attention on highly specialized fields of study at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, the WES challenges EWC participants to explore regional issues that may extend beyond their range of expertise or comfort zones. Issues are explored through invited speakers, films and facilitated small group discussions and activities. Through this process EWC fellows forge bonds among themselves through relating their personal or community concerns and experiences that ultimately strengthen the Center's diverse global community.

As with many innovative activities at the East-West Center, WES emerged from student recommendations and student-led action. EWC fellows perceived the need for a unifying intellectual experience in an increasingly diversified student program. WES began as a series of East-West Center-wide discussions to explore the concept, and emerged as a student leadership project that developed into a distinctive, on-going feature of the student program.

Currently, the seminar is planned and organized by East-West Center degree-fellow interns, with the support of the Center's Education and Research program staff. The Seminar is required for degree student fellows and affiliates during their first fall and spring semesters, and for Asia Pacific Leadership Program fellows during the fall semester. Continuing fellows are welcome to attend and often continue to participate in the seminar series.

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OBJECTIVES

The goal of the East-West Center is to contribute to a peaceful, prosperous, and just Asia-Pacific community, thus serving as a vigorous hub for cooperative research, education, and dialogue on critical issues of common concern to the Asia-Pacific region and the United States. The Wednesday Evening Seminar helps reach this goal by facilitating dialogue and mutual understanding among the students of the United States, Asia, and the Pacific who study together at the East-West Center.

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REQUIREMENTS: ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Students must attend all WES sessions and participate in group discussions and activities. If you are unable to attend a session, please contact Mendl Djunaidy (DjunaidM@eastwestcenter.org). Attendance will be kept.

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