

## History 339: Premodern China

CCN: 11253; Fall 2016; UNIV 201; MWF 2:30-3:30

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Consultation: Mondays, UNIV 218, 3:30-4; by appointment; occasionally, WebEx

### Course Description and Major Themes:

China has the oldest ongoing civilization in the world. Its rich and full history offers a diverse array of topics to study. While providing an overview of premodern Chinese history (Neolithic to the fall of the Ming), this course will focus on the following themes:

- (1) Governance and empire: how did China come to have an empire, and what were the challenges in governing such a large population and geographical area?
- (2) Continuity and discontinuity: why do Chinese think they have a continuous empire? What are the philosophical threadlines that run throughout Chinese history, especially in terms of daily life and culture? In what ways do periods of disruption challenge that vision?
- (3) Elite vs. Popular culture: What about women, children, and ethnic minorities in China?

### Course Goals

1. to instill an appreciation of Chinese culture, especially through the development of historical imagination of the lived past;
2. to create an understanding of historical methods, especially context,
3. to inspire an appreciation for how textual records were created, preserved, and transmitted, and how those processes affected their interpretation
4. to impart a nuanced understanding of historical processes as neither inevitable nor accidental

See *BrightSpace* for further information about university policies.

**Textbook reading:** Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *China: Cambridge Illustrated History*. [The Cambridge Illustrated History of China students.pdf](#) for students without the means to purchase a copy.

Optional textbook reading: John Major and Constance Cook, *Ancient China*, free to download [here](#).

Please refer to [this timeline](#)

*Readings, including textbook readings, are listed by week. It is recommended that you read them prior to a lecture, but may also read afterwards if you need to. Sometimes, there will be an indicated reading quiz or discussion, and you will need to read before class for those days.*

## Assessment

**In-class written tests (18x2=38)** are in a question-answer format. Students will write one paragraph as a short response based on their knowledge and insights into the readings. These are closed book. Students are not tested on spelling or basic information, but rather, their insights that result from their reading and thinking about major issues.

**Online Quizzes (10x4=40)** test your knowledge of the textbook and material covered in class. You will have access to your textbook, lecture notes, etc., at home while doing the test.

**Reading Quizzes (2x5=10)** are strictly due before the beginning of class. They quiz you on some basic data that you will encounter in your readings. There are seven readings, but we will drop two.

**Participation in class (10)** is based on citizenship, preparedness, and contributions. Active listening is considered a part of participation. During online days, please keep your computer monitor turned on.

**Homework (2x1):** Self-introduction and self-reflection.

Total: 100 points

If you have accommodations, please let me know/

## Class Schedule

Week 1 (starting 8/21): Introductions

Read the syllabus; [“Golden Age” Washington Post](#)

*Major concepts: slave society, patriarchy*

M Introduction to the class. Homework: Read the syllabus.

W Ancient Heroes and Banpo; Handout. Clips from [“China’s Bronze Age”](#)

F No class; virtual office hours:

Homework: Write a short self-introduction (300 words max) and what you hope to learn from this class (**Assignment** due by the Friday at midnight, P/F 1 point)

Week 2 (starting 8/28): The Origins of Chinese Civilization: Neolithic Period

Read Ebrey, Chapter 1; Keightly, “Shang” ; excerpts of oracle bones

M Lecture: 339 Shang Dynasty and Oracle Bones

W Discussion of Keightley (**Reading Quiz #1**)

**F Primary-source discussion day (virtual): Excerpts on Oracle Bones**

Week 3 (starting 9/4): The Zhou Conquest

*Major concepts: Duke of Zhou, Mandate of Heaven, wen vs wu*

Read Ebrey, Chapter 2; Allan and Bagley, "Art and Meaning"

**M Labor Day, No class**

W Lecture: 339 Zhou Conquest ; Handout :

F Discussion of bronzes, Allan and Bagley (**Reading Quiz #2**)

Week Four (starting 9/11): Philosophical Foundations: The Eastern Zhou

Read Ebrey, 38-55; excerpts from the Analects ; the Dao Dejing ; [the Xiao jing](#) (intro written by eds.)

M Lecture: Eastern Zhou

W Lecture: Schools of Thought

F **Discussion day:** Selections on gender and family relations

Week Five (starting 9/18): The Chu (Ebrey, p. 55-59)

*Major concept: "All Under Heaven"*

Read "[Defining Chu](#)"; "The Battle Between Chu and Jin"

M Lecture: The problem with the State of Chu

W Discussion on the Chu (**Reading quiz #3**)

F **Online Quiz #1 (WFH)**

Week 6 (starting 9/25): The Qin Conquest

**Primary source discussion day: Sima Qian on Xiang Yu (primary source)**

Read Ebrey, Chapter 3; Annals of [Xiang Yu.pdf](#)

M Lecture: The Qin Conquest; Clip from "Hero"

W Lecture: Sima Qian [Sima Qian Presentation.pptx](#)

**F Virtual discussion of Xiang Yu (primary source)**

Week 7 (starting 10/2): The Start of Empire

Read [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/debate\\_salt\\_iron.pdf](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/debate_salt_iron.pdf)

M Lecture on the Han, Salt and Iron Debates

W Lecture: [339 Gender and Law](#)

**F In-class test #1**

Week 8 (starting 10/9): Aristocracy and Alien Rulers

Read Ebrey, Chapter 4

Read [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/hanyu\\_bone\\_of\\_buddha.pdf](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/hanyu_bone_of_buddha.pdf)

[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/emperor\\_wuzong\\_suppress\\_buddhism.pdf](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/emperor_wuzong_suppress_buddhism.pdf)

Read excerpts of *The Water Margin*

M **No class; Indigenous People Day**

W Lecture: Age of Division (220-589 AD)

F Lecture: The Battle of Red Cliff (AD 208–209); Clips & Discussion

Week 9 (starting 10/16): Buddhism

Read excerpts of Cheng'en, Wu., Julia. Lovell, and Gene Luen. Yang. *Monkey King : Journey to the West*. New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2021. Find online at the [Purdue University Library](#).

M Lecture: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism

Buddhism: [339 Buddhism.pptx](#) ; Handout: [339 Buddhism HO](#)

W Virtual discussion on *The Monkey King*

**F Quiz # 2 WFH**

Week 10 (starting 10/23): Tang Dynasty

Read Ebrey, Chapter 5, Edward Schafer, *Golden Peaches of Samarkand*  
[https://purdue.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01PURDUE\\_PUWL/uc5e95/alma99169459362101081](https://purdue.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01PURDUE_PUWL/uc5e95/alma99169459362101081)

- M: Lecture: Tang: A Taste of Empire (powerpoint)
- W: Discussion of Schaefer (**Reading Quiz #4 due**)
- F: Lecture: Decline of the Tang

Week 11 (starting 10/30): Five Dynasties and Song Dynasty

Read Ebrey, Chapter 6; Steve West, "Playing with Food"

- M Lecture: Five dynasties
- W Lecture: Song Overview
- F Short Lecture: Kaifeng // Discussion of Steven West's "Playing with Food"  
**(Reading Quiz #5 due before class)**

Week 12 (starting 11/6): The Song Dynasty

Read: *The Gunpowder Epic*

- M Lecture: Lecture: Song Military
- W Discussion of "Mulan"
- F **Quiz 3: WFH**

Week 13 (starting 11/13): Yuan Dynasty

Read Ebrey, Chapter 7; Hoyt Tillman, "Disorder as Trauma: A Case Study of the Mongol Conquest," forthcoming. You may read it [here](#).

- M Lecture: Yuan Conquest [339 Yuan revised.docx](#)  
Includes clip from The Quest for Genghis Kahn's Lost Tomb  
Clip: Morris Rossabi, "Great Myths and Legends: Genghis Kahn"  
**Homework due on Wednesday at midnight: one question for the Hoyt Tillman**  
**Reading Quiz # 6 due before class on Wednesday (5 points)**
- W Virtual discussion: Meet the author, Hoyt Tillman, "Trauma" (1 point)

F Lecture: Contributions of the Yuan

Week 14 (starting 11/20): No class

M **No class; Virtual Office Hours**

W **No class; Thanksgiving**

F **No class; Thanksgiving**

Week 15 (starting 11/27) : Ming Dynasty

Ready Ebrey, Chapter 8; Ray Huang, "Wanli," A Year of No Significance.

M Lecture: Ming Society; [339 Ming Beginnings.docx](#) (Handouts)

Clips of Sarah Schneewind, "The Dark World of the Dead in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty"

W Wanli Emperor (**Reading Quiz #7 due**)

F **In-class written test #2**

Week 16 (starting 12/4) : End of the Ming dynasty

M Fall of Ming

W Course Review

F **No class; Quiz 4 due December 11**

Homework: Write a short self-reflection (300 words max) on something significant that you learned, or the reading that you most enjoyed. Due Friday at midnight on BrightSpace, P/F 1 point)

***The syllabus is subject to change. Please check BrightSpace and your email regularly for updates.***