

LATE IMPERIAL CHINESE CULTURE & SOCIETY

History HIEA 122, Winter 2003

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In this course, we will examine the experiences of a wide range of political actors from emperors to peasants, scholar-officials to merchants, and women in Chinese society. The lectures and in-class discussions will be thematic and topical, following a historical chronology from the establishment of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) in the late fourteenth-century to the end eighteenth-century during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). This course will introduce you to major issues and debates in the field of late imperial Chinese history as well as provide you with a general historical narrative of the period.

The focus will be on the following questions: What are the larger historical debates in which historians of China today participate such as the “Rise of the West” argument, interpretations of the “dynastic cycle” of the rise and fall of the Chinese dynasties, and whose lives should historians be writing about in the first place? What is the place of China in world history from a global and ecological perspective? What are the themes of change and continuity within late imperial Chinese history? What is the range of primary sources historians of Chinese use to write history? How do we know about Chinese lives in the Ming and Qing dynasties? Whose lives do we know the most and the least about? How does knowledge of Chinese history change received conceptions of the history of Western civilization? Moreover, how can you, as a student of Chinese history, evaluate for yourself the reliability, historical value, and relevance of books on Chinese history for the modern world we live in today?

Required Books

For Ming 1368-1644

1. *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative*. Robert B. Marks. Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002.
2. *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*. Timothy Brook. University of California Press, 1999.
3. *Stories from a Ming Collection: The Art of the Chinese Story Teller*. Cyril Birch, Translator. Grove Press, 1958.

For Qing 1644-1911

4. Part I of *The Search for Modern China*. Jonathan D. Spence. W.W. Norton, 1990.
5. *The Death of Woman Wang*. Spence. Penguin Books, 1978.
6. *Emperor of China: Self-Portrait of K'ang-hsi*. Spence. Vintage Books, 1975.

The reader for this course has copied Part I of book 4 and a few other readings for the second half of this course. It will be available at the Old Student Center's Copy Services. All books and the reader will also be available on reserve at Geisel library.

Your final grade will be based on the following possible 100 points:

4 out of 5 Responses, 2 pages	40 (10 each, give to Elena)
Mid-term	20
Final	40
Extra credit: Do all 5 responses	5

Goal of Assignments

The primary goal of the writing assignments, mid-term, and final in this course is to give you opportunities to evaluate secondary sources on Chinese history as an historian. History books are not straightforward and self-evident accounts of the past. Historians construct their narratives of the past. By using their critical faculties to judge the quality of sources, assess their reliability, and evaluate their typicality, historians determine the relative value of extant primary sources as evidence for their arguments. Historians cannot present a completely objective, unproblematic, and self-evident account of the past; rather their craft is to construct the most persuasive narrative possible based on the sources available to them.

Your primary task in the assignments for this course will be to evaluate how persuasive each of the required books is on the aspect of Chinese culture and history they set out to describe. Use the following questions as a guideline: What assumptions did you have about Chinese culture before you read this book? What perspective does the author come from? What are his or her arguments and did they change your assumptions? What were the primary sources used? Do you believe the authors of these sources? How do you judge their truthfulness? How does the specific experience of the individual(s) in the primary source relate to a broader trend in society? How do we as historians generalize about Chinese history from the specific experiences of those who participated in that history? The 4-5 responses to the readings give you opportunities to judge for yourself how historians use primary sources from the past to construct a reliable version of Chinese history.

Conceptual basis of weekly writing assignments

You should use the following questions as the basis for all your writing assignments:

- 1-author's argument, perspective, and bias: What is the author's lens?
- 2-evidence and sources used (1ary and 2ary): What did the author have available as sources for seeing into Chinese culture and society?
- 3-main contribution to Chinese history: What does the author show us that changes our understanding of Chinese culture and society?
- 4-shortcomings and limitations: What do we not see of Chinese culture and society either because of the author's approach or because of the lack of primary sources?

For students taking this class pass/fail, all assignments must be turned in to pass. If there are any problems, you are responsible for informing the T.A. as well as me. You are welcome to come to both of our office hours to discuss your ideas, questions, and writing concerns. Use the writing handouts as guidelines for improving the quality of your writing for the responses. It is also recommended that you use the writing resources at OASIS and in your colleges should you have further questions about writing.

If you are thinking of asking for a recommendation, you must make a concerted effort to make yourself known to the T.A and me. It would be helpful if you let us know in advance. You are all expected to participate actively in class discussions, turn in your best quality work for all assignments, and contribute to the success of the course.

WEEK 1	The Place of China in the Origins of the Modern World	
Jan. 6	M	Introduction to the Course
Jan. 8	W	The Rise of the West? (Ch. 1)
Jan. 10	F	Starting with China (Ch. 2)
Readings:	Marks, <i>Origins of the Modern World</i> , Intro., Chs. 1 & 2, 1-66.	
WEEK 2	Western Imperialism, the Industrial Revolution, and the Gap, 1500-1850	
Jan. 13	M	Empires, States, and the New World, 1500-1775 (Ch. 3)
Jan. 15	W	The Industrial Revolution and Its Consequences, 1750-1850 (Ch. 4)
Jan. 17	F	Discussion 1: The Gap, Change or Continuity? (Ch. 5, Conc.)
	First response to readings due in class on Friday, Jan. 17	
Readings:	Marks, <i>Origins of the Modern World</i> , Chs. 3-5, Conclusion, 67-162.	
Response #1:	What are the criticisms of the “Rise of the West” narrative? How does the case of China change current historical perspectives on the “Origins of the Modern World”? Did this book change your perspectives? In what way? Use specific examples from the book and conclude with reasons why you either agree or disagree with Marks. What else, if anything, should be discussed on this issue? (Use Guidelines under Goals of Assignments)	
WEEK 3	Winter: The First Century (1368-1450)	
Jan. 22	W	Establishment of the Ming: Labor, Communication, & Transport (1-56)
Jan. 24	F	Living in the Ming: Publishing, the Economy, & Social Inequity (56-85)
Readings:	1. Brook, <i>Confusions</i> , “Winter: The First Century (1368-1450),” 1-85. 2. <i>Stories from a Ming Collection</i> , “The Journey of the Corpse,” 119-149.	
WEEK 4	Spring: The Middle Century (1450-1550)	
Jan. 27	M	Ming State, Markets, & Commerce (86-111)
Jan. 29	W	Ming Merchants, Culture, and Connoisseurship (112-152)
Jan. 31	F	Discussion 2: Historical & Fictional sources for Ming History Part I
	Second response due in class Friday, Jan. 31 (Unless doing #3 response)	
Readings:	1. Brook, <i>Confusions</i> , “Spring: The Middle Century (1450-1550),” 86-152. 2. <i>Stories from a Ming Collection</i> , “The Pearl-Sewn Shirt,” 39-96.	
Response #2:	In what ways do Feng Menglong’s <i>Stories from a Ming Collection</i> represent the Ming society, commerce, and people Brook discussed in <i>Confusions of Pleasure</i> ? Use the two stories assigned so far and relate them to specific passages, arguments, and points in Brook’s <i>Confusions of Pleasure</i> . What do you think of fiction as a historical source?	
WEEK 5	Summer: The Last Century (1550-1644)	
Feb. 3	M	The God of Copper Cash, Travel, & Letters (153-189)
Feb. 5	W	Consumption, Production, Trade, & Fashion (190-237)
Feb. 7	F	Discussion 3: Historical & Fictional sources for Ming History Part II
	Third response due in class Friday, Feb. 7 (Unless did #2 response)	
Readings:	1. Brook, “Summer: The Last Century (1550-1644)” 153-237. 2. <i>Stories from a Ming Collection</i> , “The Lady Who Was a Beggar,” 15-36 and “The Canary Murders,” 151-172, etc.	
Response #3:	In what ways do Feng Menglong’s <i>Stories from a Ming Collection</i> represent the Ming society, commerce, and people Brook discussed in <i>Confusions of Pleasure</i> ? Use at least two of the four assigned stories and relate them to specific passages, arguments, and points in Brook’s <i>Confusions of Pleasure</i> . If you are choosing to submit five responses, use two different stories. Weigh the pros and cons of fiction as a source for history.	

WEEK 6	Fall: the Lord of Silver (1642-1644)	
Feb. 10 M	The Weak Wanli Emperor (1573-1620)?	(Huang, reader, 1-41)
Feb. 12 W	Or the late-Ming Economy?	(Brook, 238-262; Spence, 7-25)
Feb. 14 F	Open book mid-term exam on the Ming dynasty based on <i>Origins of the Modern World, Confusions of Pleasure, and Stories from a Ming Collection</i>.	
Readings:	1. Huang, <i>The Year of No Significance</i> , “The Wan-li Emperor,” 1-41. (reader) 2. Brook, “Fall: The Lord of Silver (1642-1644),” 238-262 3. Spence, <i>Modern China</i> , ch. 1, The Late Ming, 7-25 (reader)	
WEEK 7	The Manchu Conquest & Consolidation	
Feb. 19 W	The Manchu Conquest	(Spence, ch. 2, 26-48, 3 accounts)
Feb. 21 F	Kangxi’s Consolidation	(Spence, ch. 3, 49-73)
Readings:	1. Spence, <i>In Search of Modern China</i> , chs. 2 & 3, 26-73. 2. 3 accounts from the <i>Ming-Qing Cataclysm</i> , 6-27, 55-72, 93-113 (reader)	
WEEK 8	Peasant Culture & Local Bureaucracy, 1668-1672	
Feb. 24 M	Observing Chinese Peasant Culture	(chs. 1-3, 1-76)
Feb. 26 W	Engendering Rural Life in 17 th -century China	(chs. 4-6, 77-139)
Feb. 28 F	Discussion 4: History from the Bottom Up: Local Magistrates & Peasants Fourth response to readings due in class Friday, Feb. 28	
Readings:	All of Spence, <i>The Death of Woman Wang</i> , including Epilogue.	
Response #4:	Evaluate the challenges to misconceptions, major arguments, primary sources used, most important contributions, and remaining limitations of <i>The Death of Woman Wang</i> . What do you think of Spence’s use of Pu Song-ling’s fiction and his own foray into fiction writing? (Review Guidelines under Goals of Assignments)	
WEEK 9	Emperor Kangxi and the Seventeenth Century	
Mar. 3 M	Emperor in Motion: Kangxi’s Early Years	(chs. 1-2, 7-59, App A, 157-166)
Mar. 5 W	Emperor in Thought: Kangxi’s Later Years	(chs. 3-6, 65-151, App B, 169-175)
Mar. 7 F	Discussion 5: History from the Top Down: Comparison of Wanli and Kangxi Fifth response to readings due in class Friday, Mar. 7	
Readings:	All of Spence, <i>Emperor of China</i> , including Appendix A and B.	
Response #5:	Evaluate the challenges to misconceptions, major arguments, primary sources, most important contributions, and remaining limitations of the <i>Emperor of China</i> . What do you think of Spence’s “Self-Portrait” of the Kangxi Emperor? (Review Guidelines under Goals of Assignments)	
WEEK 10	China on the Eve of the “Rise of the West”	
Mar 10 M	Chinese Society during the Eighteenth Century	(Spence, chs. 4-5, 74-116)
Mar 12 W	China Interacts with the Rest of the World	(Spence, ch. 6, 117-136)
Mar 14 F	Comparisons of China & Europe circa 1800	(Review Marks readings)
Readings:	1. Spence, <i>In Search of Modern China</i> , chs. 4, “Yongzheng’s Authority,” “Chinese Society and the Reign of Qianlong,” and “China and the Eighteenth-Century World,” 74-136. 2. Review relevant sections of Marks, <i>Origins of the Modern World</i> , chs. 1-5.	
WEEK 11	FINALS WEEK	
Mar. 17-21	Open Book Final Exam (Day and time to be announced in class) Guidelines for the Final Exam will be handed out during Week 10.	