History 341 Syllabus
PRE-MODERN CHINESE HISTORY
(Fall, 2014)

Professor: Richard J. Smith
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Office Hours: TuTh 8:30-9:15 a.m., 11:00-11:30 a.m., 1:30-2:15 p.m. and 4:00-4:45 p.m.
and by appointment
Time of course: TuTh 9:25-10:40 a.m.
Location of course: Humanities 328

Course Description:

This class is intended as a broad introduction to certain major themes, issues, personalities and events of “pre-modern China.” Since the course covers an enormous sweep of time—from the neolithic era to the eighteenth century—it cannot claim anything close to comprehensiveness. It is highly selective, with choices determined primarily by Chinese notions of historical significance, past and present.

Course Requirements:

Grades will be based on (1) two in-class exams (Tuesday October 2, and November 4, worth 20% each), (2) one short paper (c. 8-10 pp. typewritten; worth 20%; details to follow), due November 20; and (3) a two-hour final exam (worth 40%)

The format of the exams will be: You will be given six questions to prepare for ahead of time, one of which will be chosen randomly by a throw of a single die in class. You have my pledge on this. The paper will be based solely on your assigned texts (see below).

Late papers and missed exams will be penalized 1/3 of a grade per day (e.g. A- to B+), including weekends, in fairness to the rest of the class. Students taking this course fail must earn passing grades on ALL assignments in order to pass the course. Class attendance and participation will be considered in borderline cases, and students who do not have an e-mail account will be severely disadvantaged in terms of access to certain course materials. For a statement on University policy toward physical disability, and a note on “goals and standards, see the end of this syllabus.

Required Texts (all paperbacks):

—Harold Tanner, China: A History: From Neolithic Cultures through the Great Qing Empire, (10,000 BCE - 1799 CE), Volume 1 (2009)

There will also be a number of assigned readings from: (1) the “Resources” section of our “Owlspace;” (2) “A Visual Sourcebook for Chinese Civilization” (http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv [no password needed]); and (3) “Asia for Educators” (http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ [no password needed]).

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO DO THE ASSIGNED READINGS LISTED FOR EACH LECTURE OR DISCUSSION PERIOD BEFORE THAT CLASS, IN ORDER TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THE SESSION.

NB: For some excellent topically and chronologically organized bibliographical suggestions, and a great deal of other valuable material, consult Benjamin Elman’s “Classical Historiography for Chinese History” website: http://www.princeton.edu/~classbib/right.htm#TOC

### CLASS SESSIONS

#### I. INTRODUCTION

*General required reading for this section: (1) Tanner, pp. 3-14; (2) Wills, pp. xi-xviii; (3) Ebrey, pp. xi-xiv, xix; (4) Owlspace/Resources/Language: “Pronunciation guide;” (5) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/1 Overviews: “The Past in China’s Present.”*

Also, be sure to look at the instructive images under “Geography” in “A Visual Sourcebook for Chinese Civilization” (http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv [no password needed]); read the relevant text(s) but don’t pay attention to the questions, which tend to be either too simplistic or too ambiguous—Professor Ebrey obviously was not the one who thought them up.

*Recommended reading: Owlspace/Resources/Language: “Chinese lang. discussion”*

**Tuesday, August 26: Patterns of the Chinese Past**

*Recommended reading: (1) Owlspace/Resources/Historiography: “History as value excerpts;” (2) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/1 Overviews: “Themes in Chinese hist”*

*Themes to think about: What is history,” and what is the point of looking at the past? What is “Chinese history?” What are some of the different ways we might look at “China’s” history (consider in particular the analytical terms we use [“feudalism,” “empire,” “barbarians,” “sincization,” etc.], cross-cultural comparisons, politics and ideology, nationalism, “transnationalism”/“globalization,” questions of class, gender and ethnicity, and issues such as theory and practice and continuity and*
Thursday, August 28: The Lay of the Land


Themes to think about: What was/is “China?” In what ways did China’s geographical location, natural resources and other material conditions influence its politics, economy, social life, self-perception and its perception of “others?”

II. THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

General required reading for this section: (1) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/1. Neolithic, Shang and Zhou: “Early Chinese History (Lee);” (2) ibid., “Clues to China’s Origins.” You should also take a look at the images under “Tombs” in A Visual Sourcebook for Chinese Civilization (http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv [no password needed]); read the relevant text(s) but again, don’t pay attention to the questions

Tuesday, September 2: The Origins of Chinese Civilization: The Shang Dynasty and Its Antecedents

Required reading: (1) Tanner, pp. 14-28 and 33-48; (2) Ebrey, pp. 1-5; (3) Wills, 3-10 (Yu); (4) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/1. Neolithic, Shang and Zhou: “Origins of Chinese Writing”

Recommended reading: “Evidence for the culture hero Yu”

Themes to think about: How did Chinese civilization arise and evolve? What do we mean by the words “Chinese” and “civilization?” What is the relationship between myth and history?

Thursday, September 4: The Origins of Chinese Civilization: The Western Zhou Dynasty

Required reading: (1) Tanner, pp. 48-56; (2) Ebrey, pp. 6-7 and 42-45; (3) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/1. Neolithic, Shang and Zhou: “Creation of culture (Warring States)

Themes to think about: In what ways does the Western Zhou dynasty represent a continuation of Shang-style “civilization-building?” Where do you see discontinuities? What, in particular, was the “Mandate of Heaven” (Tianming) and what was its historical significance as a political principle?
Tuesday, September 9: The “Hundred Schools” of Chinese Philosophy: Six Main Contenders (A)

Required reading: (1) Tanner, pp. 59-81; (2) Ebrey, pp. 6-37, 42-45 and 77-79; (3) Owlspace/Resources/Philosophical texts: (A) “1. Basic text of the Yijing;” (B) “2. Early Confucianism;” (C) “3. Early Daoism;” and (D) “4. Mohism and Legalism.”

Recommended reading: (1) Wills, pp. 11-32 (on Confucius)

Themes to think about: What were the basic features of “Confucianism,” “Daoism,” “Mohism” and “Legalism?” What are the most significant similarities and differences between them?

Thursday, September 11: The “Hundred Schools” of Chinese Philosophy: Six Main Contenders (B)

Required reading: (1) Wills, pp. 11-32 (on Confucius); (2) review the following materials on our Owlspace under “Resources” in the section titled “Philosophical texts”: (A) “2. Early Confucianism;” (B) “3. Early Daoism”

Themes to think about: Work on the brief (ungraded) assignment due at the beginning of class on September 17

Tuesday, September 16: A Closer Look at Confucianism and Daoism

Required reading: Review all the readings assigned for September 12 and be prepared to discuss them in class

Themes to think about: The assignment below

A brief (ungraded) assignment, due at the beginning of class (your performance on this assignment can either help or hurt you in “borderline cases”):

Bring to class a one- to two-page, typed, single-spaced paper with: (A) your name on it; (B) the most interesting quotation you have found in your assigned readings for September 12; and (C) an explanation of why you find it interesting (perhaps because it is particularly insightful, puzzling, familiar, strange, etc.). There is no “right” or “wrong” response.

III. THE FORMATION OF THE CHINESE EMPIRE

General required reading for this section: (1) Wills, pp. 33-50 (on the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty); (2) Wills, pp. 51-71 (on the Grand Historian of the Han dynasty, Sima Qian); (3) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/2. Qin and Han: “Sima Qian’s Shiji (Watson);”
Recommended reading: **Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/2. Qin and Han: “Dong Zhongshu, yinyang, gender”**

**Thursday, September 18: The Qin Revolution**

*Required reading*: (1) Tanner, pp. 83-106; (2) Wills, pp. 33-50 (on the First Emperor); (3) on our Owlspace under “Resources” in the section titled “Essays, outlines and websites”: “Perspectives on the Qin”

**Themes to think about**: How does the Qin dynasty figure in the historiography of “praise” and “blame?” In what ways was the Qin period “revolutionary” (think in particular about Chinese political, economic, social, intellectual and cultural life)? What was the long-term legacy of the Qin?

**Tuesday, September 23: The Han Revolution**

*Required reading*: (1) Tanner, pp. 109-130; (2) Wills, 72-99 (biographies of Wang Mang and Ban Zhao); (3) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/2. Qin and Han: “5. Imperial Confucianism;” (4) ibid., “Ban Zhao (Admonitions)”

*Recommended reading*: review Wills, pp. 51-71 (on Sima Qian)

**Themes to think about**: What is Ban Zhao’s historical significance (think carefully about this)? In what ways was the Han period “revolutionary” (again, consider in particular Chinese political, economic, social, intellectual and cultural life)?

**Thursday, September 25: Han Foreign Relations**

*Required reading*: Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/2. Qin and Han: “Xiongnu and ancient Korea”

**Themes to think about**: What were the primary mechanisms by which the Han dynasty’s rulers dealt with “foreign” peoples? What does your assigned reading reveal about the permeability of borders in ancient times?

**Tuesday, September 30: Review for First Midterm**

*Required reading*: Review previously assigned readings and midterm review Sheet

**Thursday, October 2: First Midterm Exam**

**IV. DIVISION, REUNIFICATION AND CULTURAL FLOWERING**
General required reading for this section: (1) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/1 Overviews: “Buddhism in China (Whalen Lai); (2) ibid., “Chinese religion (Teiser).doc.”

Recommended reading: Look at the images under “Buddhism,” “Calligraphy,” “Painting” and “Military Technology” in A Visual Sourcebook for Chinese Civilization (http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv [no password needed]) and read the relevant text(s) but—you guessed it—don’t pay any attention to the questions. Also, be sure to look at the illustrations between pp. 104-105 in Tanner as you proceed through this section.

Tuesday, October 7: Transitions and Transformations in the Six Dynasties Period

Required reading: (1) Tanner, pp. 135-164; (2) Ebrey, pp. 87-102, 109-111; (3) Wills, pp. 100-113 (on Zhuge Liang)

Recommended reading: Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/3. Six Dynasties: “Buddhist Persecution” (read the first few pages about the problems of introducing Buddhism to China)

Themes to think about: What was the nature of the Six Dynasties period? How did “China” become divided at this time and what were the political, social, economic and cultural consequences of this division? Why did the fragmentation of China last so long?

Thursday, October 9: Abstruse Learning, Buddhism and Religious Daoism

Required reading: (1) Review Tanner, esp. pp. 152-164; (2) Owlspace/Resources/Outlines and glossaries: “Buddhist terms (glossary);” (3) Owlspace/Resources/Primary documents (misc.): “Chinese Religion excerpts” [Religious Daoism and Buddhism]; (4) ibid., “Western Paradise and Ten Courts”

Recommended reading: Wills, pp. 114-126 (on Hui Neng)

Themes to think about: What are the basic features of “Chinese” Buddhism and Religious Daoism? How are these two belief systems related to one another and to other schools of Chinese thought? How are they different? How did Buddhism change China and how did China change Buddhism?

Friday, October 10 to Wednesday, October 15: MIDTERM RECESS

Thursday, October 16: The Sui-Tang Era

Required reading: (1) Tanner, pp. 167-198; (2) Wills, pp. 127-148 (on the Empress Wu); (3) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/4. Sui and Tang:
Themes to think about: In what ways might the Sui-Tang period be compared to the Qin-Han period (think carefully about this)? What are the limits of this comparison?

Tuesday, October 21: Tang Culture


Themes to think about: What were the most important cultural accomplishments of the Tang dynasty? What role did non-Chinese cultures play in this quintessentially “Chinese” dynasty?

Thursday, October 23: The Tang as a Model for East Asia

Recommended reading: (1) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/4. Sui and Tang: “Tang tributary system”

Themes to think about: Why was the Tang dynasty such a magnet for other cultures? What were the basic features of the “tributary system” in the Tang dynasty? What political, social, economic and cultural assumptions did this system reflect? In what specific ways did Chinese culture influence the political, economic, social and cultural life of “foreigners” (especially Koreans, Japanese and Vietnamese)?

Tuesday, October 28: The Song Dynasty and the Rise of Neo-Confucianism


Themes to think about: How do you account for the rise of “neo-Confucianism?” What were its basic features, and to what extent did this “new” brand of Confucianism represent a break with earlier versions of Confucianism? To what extent do you detect continuities?

Thursday, October 30: Review for Second Midterm

Tuesday, November 4: Second Midterm Exam

Thursday, November 6: Song Culture: Science, Technology and the Arts

Required reading: (1) Review Tanner, pp. 220-238; (2) Wills, pp. 149-167 (on Su
Dongpo); (3) Ebrey, pp. 137-141, 151-154, 172-185; (4)
Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/5. Song, Liao, Jin etc: “China’s early industrial revolution” and ibid., “Limits to Song revolution RJS.doc”

Recommended reading: Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/5. Song, Liao, Jin etc: “Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song”

Themes to think about: Why is the Song period viewed as a time of scientific, technological and artistic “revolution?” What were the achievements and what were the limits to these “revolutions?”

Tuesday, November 11: Non-Chinese Regimes on the Chinese Periphery

Required reading: Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/5. Song, Liao, Jin etc: “Alien Regimes and Mental States review”

Recommended reading: Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/5. Song, Liao, Jin etc: “New Assessment of Jurchen Emperors”

Themes to think about: (A) What was the Song dynasty’s relationship to “non-Chinese” regimes during the period from 960-1279? In what ways did these regimes influence political, social and intellectual life in the Song dynasty? What was their long-term legacy?

V. THE GROWTH OF DESPOTIC RULE


Thursday, November 13: The “Universal Empire” of the Mongols

Required reading: (1) Tanner, pp. 239-273; (2) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/6. Yuan, Ming and Qing: “Yuan government;” (3) Ebrey, pp. 192-194, 199-201

Recommended reading: Wills, pp. 181-200 (on Qiu Chuji)

(B) In what ways was the Yuan dynasty a “barbarian” dynasty? In what ways was it a “Chinese” dynasty? How should we characterize this period of “foreign” rule, and what were its historical consequences? Did it, for example, contribute to Chinese “despotism,” and if so, how?

Tuesday, November 18: The Fall of the Yuan and the Rise of the Ming
*Required reading:* (1) Tanner, pp. 281-306; (2) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/6. Yuan, Ming and Qing: “Ming society and culture” [review article]; (3) Ebrey, pp. 203-207, 216-218, 238-244, 256-266; (4) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/6. Yuan, Ming and Qing: “Zheng He voyages (Wade)”

*Recommended reading:* Wills, pp. 201-215 (on Wang Yangming)

**Themes to think about:** Were Ming politics a reaction to Yuan culture or an extension of it? In comparing the Yuan to the Ming, where do you see continuities and changes?

**Thursday, November 20: Ming “High” Culture**

**NOTE:** The short paper is due in class on this day

*Required reading:* (1) Tanner, pp. 310-335; (2) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/6. Yuan, Ming and Qing: “Old and new visions of Ming culture;” (3) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/6. Yuan, Ming and Qing: “Xu Guangqi memorial”

*Recommended reading:* (1) Take a look at the spectacular images of Ming dynasty art on following website: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ming/hd_ming.htm; (2) “Homes” and “Gardens” in A Visual Sourcebook for Chinese Civilization (http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv [no password needed]); read the relevant text(s) but—once again—don’t pay any attention to the questions.

**Themes to think about:** Was Ming culture a reaction to Yuan culture or an extension of it? In comparing the Yuan to the Ming, where do you see continuities and changes? Where do the Jesuit missionaries fit into the late Ming political, social and cultural scene? [Hint: Check out Xu Guangqi’s memorial]

**Tuesday, November 25: Ming “Popular” Culture**

*Required reading:* Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/6. Yuan, Ming and Qing: “Ming Dynasty Compendia and Encyclopedias”

*Recommended reading:* Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/6. Yuan, Ming and Qing: “Taxonomies of Chinese encyclopedias”

**Themes to think about:** What are some of the most significant continuities in Chinese history over the past two thousand years or so? What are some of the most striking “ruptures?”
Thursday, November 27: THANKSGIVING RECESS

Tuesday, December 2: The Fall of the Ming and the Rise of the Qing

*Required reading*: (1) Tanner, pp. 340-360; (2) Ebrey, pp. 271-279; (3) Wills, pp. 231-258 (on the Qianlong emperor) (4) Owlspace/Resources/Essays by period/6. Yuan, Ming and Qing: “Sinicization debate”

**Themes to think about**: What were the principal mechanisms of Qing political control? How does the Qing compare with previous conquest regimes from the standpoint of “sinicization?”

Thursday, December 4: Retrospect [preparation for the final exam]

*Required reading*: Review previously assigned readings and midterm review sheet

**Statement on Disabilities**: Students with a documented disability and in need of academic or other adjustments should speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities should also contact the office of Disabled Student Services (phone: 737-5841; e-mail: adarice@rice.edu) in the Allen Center.

**Goals and Standards**: The University now requires us to include in our course syllabi a statement about “overall course objectives and expected learning outcomes.” So here goes: My objective in this class, and every other course I teach, is to encourage students to think carefully and critically about “other” people, places and times, not only as a means of understanding the experiences of “others” on their own terms but also as a way of encouraging reflection about “our own” cultural biases and preconceptions. I also expect that students will gain an appreciation of the need to take into account variables such as ethnicity, class and gender in any sort of historical analysis. Finally, my goal is to heighten awareness of the complex relationship between “theory” and “practice” in the political, social and economic life of every society, past and present.

We are also required to offer statements about “grade policies,” “absence policies,” and “expectations regarding course work and the Honor Code.” So how about this? Examination grades will be based on a standard established by the class as a whole (a “best collective answer,” determined by an initial reading of all the exams); papers will be graded according to the prevailing standards of the historical profession regarding evidence and argument (see History Department website on this: http://history.rice.edu/). I expect that all assignments will be completed on time and in accordance with the stipulations of the Honor Code. Any sort of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. I do not take roll, but 40 years’ experience tells me that students who come to
class regularly do much better than those who don’t.