Reading through Things:  
Early Modern Chinese Medicine, Technology, and Art

AS 100.331.01  
Fall 2019  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9-10:15AM  
Gilman Hall 413

Instructor:  
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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:30-12:00  
Gilman Hall 346

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the history of late imperial China from the perspective of material culture and, more specifically, medicine, technology, and the arts. What can we learn about history by studying things such as food, clothing, houses, furniture, travel manuals, medicinal herbs, gardens, inkstones, tea, lenses, clocks, painting and illustration, and animals, as well as the practices and ideas associated with them? We will examine the technological aspects of material culture, from the craft of making objects to the environments that supported their use. The course encourages an examination of how Chinese medical beliefs, technological thinking, and the arts were integrated into everyday life. We will begin by examining the smallest social unit, the family, and end by considering China’s technological and cultural exchanges with the rest of the world.

No prior knowledge of Chinese history is assumed, and no knowledge of Chinese is required. Besides scholarly articles, students will read primary sources, including novels, technological manuals, and paintings. I will bring some of the material objects that we are studying to class to provide students with a sensory experience of the objects we are discussing.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

• Gain a command of late imperial Chinese society and demonstrate that knowledge through discussions, exam, and written assignments.
• Compare and evaluate various methodological approaches to the study of material culture.
• Develop the written and verbal skills necessary to formulate original, source-based, clear, and persuasive arguments about historical topics.
• Produce an essay-length response to an original research question according to the conventions of historical scholarship.

ASSIGNMENTS:

20%  Attendance and participation
5%   Map quiz
15%  Primary source analysis paper (5-6 pp.)
15% Research paper proposal (5-6 pp.)
20% Draft of Research Paper (15-20 pp.)
25% Research paper (15-20 pp.)

Map Quiz (Due in class September 12, Thursday)

You will have a map quiz on the major cities, mountains, and rivers in China. A handout will be distributed on September 10th so that you can prepare for the exam.

Primary Source Analysis Paper (Due at Turnitin October 8, Tuesday)

An analysis of a primary sources that places in historical context and its significance. It will be on a document we have discussed in class. Class materials marked with an asterisk (*) are eligible for the primary source analysis assignments. Primary sources beyond course readings are also acceptable upon my prior permission.

Research Paper Proposal (Due in class October 22, Tuesday)

A brief initial statement of your intended research topic and the questions you will be exploring. It should include an introduction, literature review, discussion of sources, research plan, and bibliography.

Draft of Research Paper (Due in class December 3, Tuesday)

Research Paper (Due at Turnitin December 17, Tuesday)

A research paper on a topic of your choosing that analyses a primary source in historical context, and places it in dialogue with existing scholarly arguments. Cite our course readings, including the textbook, journal articles, and monographs. You are also welcome to cite my lecture.

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend each class session, and participate actively in class discussions and contribute to the success of the course. Since this course is based largely on discussion of rich and challenging texts, attendance at every session is essential. If you know that you will need to miss class for an excused absence (including serious illness, religious observance, athletic team event, or family emergency), you must notify me in advance. Please send communications via email so that I will be able to have a record of our conversation, and so that we can ensure that we are agreed on the details of our communication. Unexcused absences or frequent tardiness (more than twice) will result in a deduction from your participation grade.

Late Assignments
Any work turned in late without prior permission will have its grade deducted by one-third for each day that it is late (e.g. an A- becomes a B+). Technology-related issues are not considered a valid excuse for last-minute extensions on assignments.

**Technology in the Classroom**

Laptop computers, tablets, or other devices may be used in class for taking notes, viewing readings, and any other work related to lectures or class discussions. Audio and video recordings of lectures and discussions are prohibited without my prior permission. Students are expected to use computers and other devices responsibly and judiciously.

**Students with Disabilities**

Any students with disabilities or special needs should contact me immediately to arrange appropriate accommodations for the course in coordination with the Office of Student Disability Services. Please contact Dr. Brent Mosser in 385 Garland Hall, (410) 516-4720, or at studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu for more information.

**Academic Ethics**

Plagiarism or cheating on written work will not be tolerated. Ethical violations and plagiarism will be punished according to the University’s standard on academic ethics. Acts of plagiarism include:

- Submission of the same or substantially similar work of another person, such as an author or classmate;
- Improper documentation of quotations, words, ideas, or paraphrased passages taken from published or unpublished sources;
- Unauthorized submission of a paper as original work in one course when the paper has received credit in another course.

The library has excellent resources for help with citations: [http://guides.library.jhu.edu/citing](http://guides.library.jhu.edu/citing). Please see me if you need further guidance regarding citations or have related concerns.

I will report any work I consider to be the product of plagiarism and/or cheating to the JHU Academic Ethics Board. Johns Hopkins University takes academic integrity very seriously, and does not tolerate plagiarism or cheating in any form. It is additionally the responsibility of students to report either to me or to the Ethics Board any suspected academic dishonesty. For more information, see the “Academic Ethics” statement as part of the University’s Student Life Policies: [http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/undergradstudents/student-life-policies/](http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/undergradstudents/student-life-policies/)

**READINGS:**

Textbook: (Available to purchase at Barnes and Nobles)

All the other readings are available on Blackboard or online. The readings are selected from the following monographs and edited volumes. In case you want to read more as reference for written assignments, these books are available as E-books or on a 2-hour/overnight reserve at the Eisenhower Library.

**Monographs and Edited Volumes:**

**Primary Sources:**

**SCHEDULE:**

**Week 1: Introduction**

*Tuesday, September 3: Introduction*
PART ONE: HOUSEHOLD

Thursday, September 5: House

Required readings:

3. Yin Yu Tang is a Qing dynasty merchant’s house relocated from China and re-erected at Peabody Essex Museum (Massachusetts). A 3D model of the Yin Yu Tang and explanations of its construction and social function are available on this website: http://www.pem.org/sites/yinyutang/

Week 2: Food and(as) Medicine

Tuesday, September 10: Crab


*At the end of the class, I will circulate the handout for the map quiz on Thursday.*

Thursday, September 12: Making Medicine

**Map quiz today at the beginning of class**


Week 3: Clothes and Shoes

Tuesday, September 17: Making Fabrics

2. Rowe, ch.3 “High Qing,” *China’s Last Empire*, pp. 63-81 (before “High Qing Culture”); “Population Growth and Movement” and “Land and Labor, Debasement and Servitude” in chapter 4, 91-99.

Supplementary:
*Readings pictures – three different editions of *Tilling and Weaving Illustrations* in different media over several hundred years:

Thursday, September 19: Clothes and Shoes


Week 4: Things for Travelers

Tuesday, September 24: Manuals for Travelers


Thursday, September 26: Remembering Travel—as Material Experience


Supplementary:
2. *“The Kangxi Emperor’s Southern Inspection Tour (1689),”* images available at The Metropolitan Museum of Art online collection: [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1979.5/](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1979.5/)  
(This is the painting that Maxwell Hearn discusses.)

**PART TWO: SOCIETY**

**Week 5: The Imperial Court**

**Tuesday, October 1: Making things for the Emperor**


**Thursday, October 3: Collecting Things for the Emperor**

2. Wu, “Furnishing the Court,” in *Luxurious Networks*, 63-90.

**Week 6: Markets**

*Primary Source Analysis Paper Due 9 am via Turnitin on Tuesday, October 8*

**Tuesday, October 8: Luxury Objects and Taste Making**

1. Craig Clunas, “Things in Motion: Ming Luxury Objects as Commodities,” and “Anxiety about Things: Consumption and Class in Ming China,” in *Superfluous Things*, 116-165.

**Thursday, October 10: Marketable Medicine**


**Supplementary:**

1. Rowe, “Governance,” *China’s Last Empire*, 31-62.
Week 7: Not Quite Literati?

Tuesday, October 15: Garden


Thursday, October 17: Inkstones


Week 8: Beyond Literati Taste: Popular Culture

*Research Project Proposal due in class on Tuesday, October 22*

Tuesday, October 22: Drama


Thursday, October 24: New Year Prints

2. *Examples of Chinese New Year Prints:*

PART THREE: CHINA IN THE WORLD

Week 9: Border-Crossing (Part One)

Tuesday, October 29: Furniture

**Thursday, October 31: Export Paintings**


**Week 10: Border-Crossing (Part Two)**

**Tuesday, November 5: Tea**


**Thursday, November 7: Rhubarb**


**Week 11: The World in China’s Pocket (Part One)**

**Tuesday, November 12: Clocks and Timekeeping**


**Thursday, November 14: Lenses**

2. Rowe, “High Qing Culture,” 81-88.

**Week 12: The World in China’s Pocket (Part Two)**

**Tuesday, November 19:** Animals


**Thursday, November 21:** Western Medicine in the Qing


**Thanksgiving holiday (no class):** November 26 and 28

**PART FOUR: LIBRARY TOUR AND WRAP-UP DISCUSSION**

**Week 13: Library Tour and Wrap-up Discussion**

**Tuesday, December 3:** Special Collection Tour

*Draft of Research Paper Due in Class *


**Thursday, December 5:** Wrap-up Discussion


*Research Paper due at Turnitin December 17 (Tuesday)*