

## 100.243 China: Neolithic to Song

Prof. T. Meyer-Fong

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12-2 pm or by appointment

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This class offers a broad overview of changes in China from Neolithic times through the Song dynasty (roughly from 5000 BCE through the 13th century CE!). It features discussion of art, material culture, philosophical texts, religious ideas, and literary works as well as providing a broad overview of politics and society. Close readings of primary sources in discussion sections and extensive use of visual material in lectures will allow students to consider the relationship between what (sources) we have—and what we can know about the past.

The class participation grade will be based on the students' preparation for and contributions to class discussion. Students are expected to provide substantial content in weekly sections, which will be led by the teaching assistant. To that end, all students are required to complete the assigned readings **before** their scheduled sections. It is always a good idea to prepare written questions and comments about the reading for discussion in section. Obviously, students cannot contribute to class discussion if they are absent; consequently, repeated unexcused absences from discussion sections will be reflected in the class participation grade.

Materials for this class can be found in Blackboard. **Hand-outs including a map, pronunciation guide, and chronological table can also be found on the website. Of particular interest are the term lists to assist with note taking.** Every lecture has a corresponding term list on Blackboard. **These lists include major terms and names referenced during the lecture (often with Chinese characters).** Professor Meyer-Fong provides these term lists because she does not routinely write on the board during lectures. If you have questions about spelling (or if you would like her to repeat something)—please feel free to raise your hand and ask.

*\*\*University Policy on Ethics: The strength of this university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations that you witness to the instructor. You may consult the dean of students and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See*

<http://ethics.jhu.edu> for more information.

Professor Meyer-Fong is aware that many students experience anxiety, depression, and other emotional challenges. The Office of Student Life offers support services to students under stress. If you would like to speak to a professional counselor, please visit the campus Counseling Center. Information is available on the Counseling Center's website:

<https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/>

Please Note: Papers should be submitted on Blackboard via Turnitin. All papers must be submitted before class on the date they are due. Unexcused late papers will be penalized 3 points per day (A becomes A-). In the case of illness, emergency, or deadline conflicts, **please request an extension from the instructor as early as is feasible**. If you require accommodation, please communicate this as soon as possible.

Required books are all available at the JHU bookstore and on two-hour reserve.

Required Books:

**Valerie Hansen, *The Open Empire***. This textbook supports lectures with an overview of important historical events and trends. Weekly assignments in *Open Empire* are thus indicated in conjunction with the lectures rather than section. Information from the textbook may also be useful to students as they prepare their papers or to support a deeper understanding of the readings assigned for discussion sections.

**Robert Ford Campany, *A Garden of Marvels: Wonder Tales from Early Medieval China***.  
**Nicholas Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation***.

These two books will be discussed in section. Additionally, the first will be central to one of the assigned papers. The second will be addressed in the context of the take-home final exam.

**All other assigned readings are available via E-Reserves.**

**Grading:**

Primary Source Paper #1 (2-3 pp.): 10%

Primary Source Paper #2: (5-6 pp.) 20%

Group Presentation on Warring States Philosophers: 10%

Professional Development for Public History: 20%

Take home Final Exam (due on the official final exam date for class): 20%

Weekly Questions x 10: 10%

Class Participation: 10%

Please note: this course includes multiple graded assignments. No single assignment is weighted at more than 20% of the grade. A grading rubric and conversion between letter and number grades can be found in Blackboard.

## Lecture and Reading Schedule

### Week I: Starting Points

1.24 Ways of Knowing the Ancient Past

1.26 Postcards from Early China: Time, Space, and Language

1.28 Sections: Can *things* tell stories?

Reading: David Keightley, "Archaeology and Mentality: the Making of China," *Representations* 18, Spring 1987, 91-117.

Explore this Neolithic Tomb. Imagine that you are an archaeologist seeking to explain the materials uncovered at Dawenkou. Be prepared to raise questions and discuss.

<https://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/archae/2dwkmain.htm>

### Week II Debating Ancient History—the Limits of Knowledge

Reading: *Open Empire*, ch. 1

1.31 The (Chinese?) Neolithic: Before Written Language

Reference: Reference: Li Feng, *Early China: A Social and Cultural History*, 15-40.

2.2 The First Dynasties: Archaeology, History, and Myth

2.4 Discussion: The Debate Over Origins

Reading:

Andrew Lawler, "Founding Dynasty or Myth," *Science*, 8/21/09, vol. 325, p. 934.

Liu, Li, and Hong Xu (2007). Rethinking Erlitou: Legend, History and Chinese Archaeology. *Antiquity* 81: 886-901.

Robert L. Thorp (1991), "Erlitou and the Search for the Xia," *Early China* 16, 1-38.

Sima Qian, *Grand Scribe's Records*—(Basic Annals, section on Xia).

### Week III The Ritual State—Reading Bones from the Shang

Reading: *Open Empire*, ch. 2

2.7 Oracle Bones and the Discovery of History

2.9 **Guest Lecture, Daniela Wolin, PhD**

2.11 Deciphering Oracle Bones: Ritual and Writing

Reading:

Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, "Late Shang Divination Records," 3-5.

Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape*, 1-16, 55-79, 121-129.

Explore the tomb of Fu Hao on this website.

<https://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/archae/2fuhmain.htm>

Recommended:

Chapter 8: THE SHANG DYNASTY: THE EMERGENCE OF THE STATE IN CHINA. In Shelach-Lavi, G., 2015. *The Archaeology of Early China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week IV: The Patrimonial State: Zhou China

Reading: *Open Empire*, ch. 2

2.14 The Western Zhou: Inherited Legitimacy

2.16 The Eastern Zhou: War, Ideology and the Value of Expertise

2.18 Sections: Western Zhou Bronzes: Technique, Ritual, History, and Power

Readings: Lothar Ledderose, "Casting Bronze the Complicated Way," *Ten Thousand Things*, pp. 25-50.

"Shang and Zhou Ritual Bronze Inscriptions,"  
Gilbert L. Mattos, trans. *Hawai'i Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, pp. 13-17.

Excerpts from the *Classic of Poetry* 詩經, (with related material from the monumental Han Dynasty work of history by Sima Qian. Stephen Owen, *Anthology*, pp. 10-16.

**Primary Source Paper #1**

STUDENTS WILL BE DIVIDED INTO TEAMS FOR PRESENTATIONS

Week V Politics and Philosophy—Ideas in Context: Warring States Period

2.21 Confucius: A Man of His Moment and a Sage for the Ages

2.23 The Power of Ideas and Ideas about Power—the 100 Schools

2.25 Sections: Warring States Philosophers in Historical Context—The readings for today are excerpts by the great thinkers Confucius (Kongzi), Mozi, Mencius (Mengzi), Zhuangzi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi. Students should be divided into groups representing each thinker and read the writings of that thinker most carefully. They should prepare a brief group (5 minute) presentation making a case to a potential employer (the ruler of a state) as to the benefits of their political philosophy for government of that state and for their times. Note: Presentations will be graded.

Reading: Chapter Dossiers from Ivanhoe and Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*.

Team Kongzi: Chapter 1

Team Mozi: Chapter 2

Team Mengzi: Chapter 3  
Team Zhuangzi: Chapter 5  
Team Xunzi: Chapter 6  
Team Han Feizi: Chapter 7

#### Week VI Inventing Empire—The Centralized State

Reading: *Open Empire*, ch. 3

- 2.28 Qin Shihuang: In Life and Death
- 3.2 The Political Life of an Empire: From Qin to Han
- 3.4 Sections: The Making of Qin: In Text and Object

Reading: Lothar von Falkenhausen (with Gideon Shelach),  
“Introduction: Archaeological Perspectives on the Qin  
'Unification' of China,” in *Birth of an Empire: The State of  
Qin Revisited*, 37-51.

Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, “Penal Servitude  
in Qin Law,” 51-53.

Sima Qian, *Records of the Historian*, Burton Watson, trans.  
“Basic Annals of Qin Shihuang (Ch'in Shih Huang).”

The Past in the Present: For an early 21<sup>st</sup> century  
*imagining* of the productive tension between cultural and  
military power in the Warring States Period—see the  
following excerpt from the movie *Hero* (Zhang Yimou,  
2002).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9WCCh09sIA>

#### Week VII: The Limits of Empire: Views from the Margins—and the Heartland

- 3.7 Han Frontiers: War, Trade, Diplomacy, and the Making of History
- 3.9 Daily Life and After Life in Han China
- 3.11 Sections: Frontiers, Historical Writing, and the Making of Han China

Reading:

*The Record of the Grand Historian*, introduction to Sima Qian, Stephen  
Owen, *Anthology*, p. 135, and “Letter in Reply to Ren An,” pp. 136-142.

“The Xiongnu: Raiders from the Steppe,” (excerpt from *Records of the  
Grand Historian* and *Discourses on Iron and Salt*, in Hawai'i Reader in  
Traditional Chinese Culture, pp. 169-173.

Nicola DiCosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies*, Chapter 6, “From Peace  
to War: China's Shift from Peace to Military Engagement,” 206-254.

## Week VIII The Creative Power of Disunity

Reading: *Open Empire*: ch. 4

- 3.14 Three Kingdoms, Six Dynasties: Politics and Personalities
- 3.16 Guest Lecture: Refashioning Medical Knowledge in Medieval China—S.J. Zanolini
- 3.18 Discussion—A Taste for the Strange—Six Dynasties Wonder Tales  
Robert Ford Campany, *A Garden of Marvels: Tales of Wonder from Early Medieval China*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015.  
Based on your reading of the introduction—and a selection of stories from *A Garden of Marvels*—be prepared to respond to the following question: What do these tales of the weird tell us about notions of orthodoxy, normality, and/or expectations for social behavior? For example, what do the stories you have chosen to read tell us about expectations related to gender, family relationships, death, the afterlife, gods and spirits, commerce, religion—or some other category of social behavior of your own choosing? Choose one category—identify several stories—and be prepared to share specific examples in class.

Reference: “The Ballad of Mulan” in Owen, *Anthology*, pp. 241-243.

## 3.21-3.25 SPRING BREAK

## Week IX Reintegration and Rulership

Reading: *Open Empire*, ch 5

- 3.28 Along the Grand Canal—Sui-Tang Reintegration
- 3.30 Everyday Life in the Tang Capital
- 4.1 Discussion: Urban Structure and Social Structure—in Tang Literature

Reading:

Images of a city from the Tang: Du Mu’s Yangzhou poems:  
Owen, pp. 630-632.

Edward Schafer, “The Glory of T’ang,” in *Golden Peaches of Samarkand*, pp. 7-37.

Optional Reading:

Heng Chye Kiang, *Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats*, pp.1-66.

## Primary Source #2 Paper Due

## Week X: Religion in Transition

Reading: Revisit *Open Empire*, ch. 4 for review!

- 4.4 Buddhism in Medieval China
- 4.6 Religious Daoism

4.8 Discussion: Exploring Medieval Chinese Buddhism through Primary Texts (Six Dynasties to late Tang)

Reading:

Buddhism and Indigenous Chinese Culture—Richard Mather, *Hawaii Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, 270-277.

“The Tale of Master Yuan of Mount Lu,” Victor Mair and Tansen Sen, in *Hawai’i Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, 304-339.

Han Yu, “A Memorial on the Relic of the Buddha, Victor Xiong, *Hawaii Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, pp. 355-358.

“Political and Economic Problems Concerning Buddhism,” Xinru Liu, *Hawaii Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*

J.E.E. Pettit's "Food and Medicine in the Chinese Vinayas" in *Buddhism and Medicine: An Anthology of Premodern Sources*, ed. Pierce Salguero (2017), pp. 130-136.

Ann Heirman and Mathieu Torck's "Toilet Care in Buddhist Monasteries" *Buddhism and Medicine: An Anthology of Premodern Sources*, pp. 137-144.

Week XI Continuity and Change from Tang to Song

4.11 The Fall of the Tang—History and Romance

4.13 From Tang to Song: Political, Economic, and Demographic Change

4.15 Discussion: Tang Society in Literature

Reading:

“The Poetry of the Rebellion,” in Owen, *Anthology*, pp. 420-425.

“Interlude: Xuanzong and the Prized Consort,” Owen, pp. 441-453, 455-458.

Bo Ju-yi, "On Laziness," Owen, pp.498-499

"Eating Bamboo Shoots," Owen, pp. 499-500

"Salt Merchant's Wife, Owen pp. 501-502.

(Start Reading Tackett—it’s a whole book and you will want to dedicate some time to it!)

Week XII China Transformed (or the Beginning of China “As We Know It?”)

*Open Empire*, ch 6

4.18 The Shape of Empire: Song Politics and Diplomacy

4.20 Song Law and Society

4.22 Sections: Conflict and Diplomacy in the East Asian World Order?

Reading: Nicholas Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, All!

Week XIII Toward a Social History of Song China

*Open Empire*, ch 7-8

4.25 Daily Life in Song China: Markets and Material Culture

4.27 Possessing the Past: The Afterlife of Early China

4.29 Section: Commerce and Society in the Song—and review session

Reading:

“Recollections of the Northern Song Capital,” Stephen H. West, trans., *Hawai’i Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, 405-422.

Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization, A Sourcebook*, “The Attractions of the Capital,” (Hangzhou) 178-185.

Li Qing-zhao, “Epilogue to the *Records on Metal and Stone*,” Owen pp. 591-596.

**Professional Development Assignment DUE**