

China: History and Culture

Fall 2010

Dave Ramin, Instructor
Email: Whorlwynd@sbcglobal.net

Office Hours: TBA
Other times by appointment

Course Description

An understanding of the history and culture of China is crucial to comprehension of both world history and contemporary affairs. This course will examine the history and culture that have created present day China, from the Paleolithic to the profound economic, political, and social changes taking place today. Change and continuity will be a theme investigated throughout the course. We will consider long-standing controversial issues of social order, relations to nature, statecraft, resource allocation, and imperialism. We will end with a critical inquiry into China's emergence as the world's most populous economic superpower.

Course Topics

Introduction and the Earliest Dynasties: 2200 BCE – 207 BCE

Geography, from a nomadic to agricultural way of life, pottery, family and ancestors, oracles, aristocrats and Chinese written characters, feudal system, Warring States, Confucius, Mo Zi, Taoism, Legalism, Mencius

Qin and Han Dynasties, 3 Kingdoms and the Sui Dynasty: 221 BCE – 618 CE

Consolidation, standardization, social stratification, military expansion, state ideology of Confucianism: scholar-official bureaucratic rule, Warlords, nomads, Taoism and Buddhism, Confucian learning: civil service exams, granary system, public works (Grand Canal)

Tang Dynasty: 618 – 906

Bureaucratic rule, tribute, trade, Ch'an Buddhism, poetry (Li Po, Du Fu...)

Five Dynasties and Song Dynasty: 906 – 1279

North and south sundered, taxes, rebellion, Neo-Confucianism, painting and poetry

Yuan Dynasty and Ming Dynasty: 1260 – 1644

Genghis Khan and the Mongols, Khubilai Khan, caste system, foreigners (Marco Polo), revolt, naval expeditions, Europeans, popular drama, novels

Qing Dynasty: 1644 – 1912

Manchus, European domination, Diaspora, First Sino-Japanese War, Opium Wars, reformers and revolutionaries, western learning

Republic and Civil War: 1912 – 1947

Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-shek, Civil War and the Second Sino-Japanese War

Under Mao: 1947 – 1976

Planned economy, 5 year plans, collectivization, industrialization, population policy, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and the Red Guards, Tibet

Regimes Since Mao: 1976 – Present: Politics and International Relations

The Gang of Four, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, economic reform, Tiananmen Square, Tibet continued, India, Burma, Africa, Latin America, Australia, Taiwan, current governmental structure, military and challenges

Present Economics

Mixed economic system, global economic role, growth, investment and challenges

Present Culture

The urban shift, families, current art, literature, music, film, fashion and architecture

Student Report Presentations

Material and Assignments

You will need to keep a notebook or section of a notebook specifically used for just this course. It will be turned in at the end of the course. A three ring binder is best. The notebook will be for collecting and organizing the numerous handouts, note taking and both in class and homework writing. It is important you bring this to class each day.

Our primary text will be China in World History by Paul S. Ropp (Oxford University Press, 2010). We will read most of this short but dense book along with numerous handouts.

There will be exams, current events, a short research project and a large research project with a presentation of that research.

Classroom discussion is a central element in this course. To share your astute insights and ask important questions is of crucial value in the class. Patience and listening skills are vital.

This is the second time this course has been taught, and as such many changes may occur as we go. Projected explorations of China's culture also include poetry, graphic art, and drama. Involved in this may be movies, a field trip to the Asian Art Museum, music and slides.

Evaluation

Your final grade will come from:

30% Exams

30% Research projects and presentations

30% Writings, both in class and homework: current events, responses

10% In class participation and discussion

Practices

I hope you feel welcome in this class and help make others feel welcome too. It should be an intriguing study – we will be encountering some serious issues. I hope you have a positive, rewarding and even exciting time this semester in our class. If not, please let me know. Never hesitate to talk with me before or after class, during office hours or any other time we can arrange. My email is at the top of this syllabus for you to use.

Always remember: understanding something is not necessarily agreeing with it. With this in mind, our primary rule in class is: *Everyone, everything treated with RESPECT.*

Out of this comes the following common sense practices:

- No personal put downs or purposefully hurtful comments.
- You can sit next to who you want to unless you get distracted.
- Do not disrupt the class. Comments on topic are cool – conversations off to the side and random comments are not.
- No one should have to raise their voice to be heard.
- Take care of the room and of each other.

Another way of mutual respect is to come to class prepared.

- This means come to class with your notebook, a blue or black pen, your homework and homework log.
- It also means go to the bathroom, eat snacks and get a drink before or after class. Our time together is limited and leaving the class will be disruptive and will often mean missing something important.