



**Boston University**  
**Fall 2018**

**HI 363: Introduction to Early Chinese History**  
**(up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century)**

**Professor Eugenio Menegon**

**Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:15**

**Location: CAS 116**

**Professor's Office:** Department of History, 226 Bay State Road, room #409.

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**Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00-3:30 PM;**

**Thursday, 1:00 – 2:00 PM**

**and by appointment**

**A Blackboard site for this course is available at:**

<https://learn.bu.edu>

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

*What held China united across the centuries after 221 BCE? What are the roles of religion, kinship and the barbarian-vs.-civilized opposition in keeping the Sinitic world coherent? What are the alternative narratives of Chinese history when we look at China from the vantage point of so called “barbarians” or “alien dynasties” (Khitans, Jurchens, Tanguts, Tibetans, Mongols, Manchus etc.)?*

These are some of the questions we will address in this course. We will examine the main political, social, economic, religious and cultural developments from the **formative period** in Chinese history, through the **unification of China** in 221 BCE and the subsequent **imperial periods**, down to the establishment of the Qing dynasty following the Manchu conquest of China in **1644**.

The course focuses on the origins and evolution of a distinctive **Chinese political system**; the centralized **bureaucratic system**; the evolution of **Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism**, and other religions, and their role in Chinese history; the interaction between mainstream Chinese culture and **foreign and minority cultures**; and **economic growth and cultural achievements**.

## GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

The course will be conducted through **lectures, films, and discussions**. Requirements for the course include all reading assignments and participation in class discussion and activities.

### Grading Rubric

- **Attendance: 3%**
- **Individual and group participation + engagement with readings in class: 7%**
- **Quizzes, online responses, maps, writing workshops: 15%**
- **Midterm exam: 25%**
- **Short paper (4-5 pages): 25%**
- **Final examination: 25%**

Exams will consist of essays, short answers/identifications, and maps. **No make-up, early or late exams (or extensions on assignments) will be given, except in case of emergencies, and then ONLY with adequate documentation and the instructor's agreement.**

Throughout the course students will work on group projects, and will be called upon to answer specific questions relating to the weekly readings, including the extra reading requirements, and to make map identifications and or/short quizzes. The paper, based on the novel *Monkey*, will analyze one topic from a list prepared by the instructor.

**Attendance** in all classes (including film screenings) is expected and **will be recorded**. **Schedules, topics, and readings may be revised at times, in which case announcements will be made in class as appropriate.**

### Course Learning Objectives:

In this class, we will:

- Approach key themes, pivotal events, remarkable personalities, and important social groups at several turning points of Chinese premodern history to 1644 C.E.
- Identify major Chinese regional societies and imperial dynasties across time, and make historical comparisons between them, in regard to political cultures, trade and economics, social structures, religious beliefs, and gender roles.
- Gain an appreciation of influential cultural works produced in a variety of historical phases of Chinese history and through them come to a clearer understanding of the fundamental values held by past inhabitants of the Sinitic world—including, how they understood the natural world, what it meant to be human, and their relationship with the divine.
- Consider in our lectures and discussions issues of gender, class, ethnicity, religion, geographical location, and group interests.
- Uncover the powerful role that the environment always had in human history, shaping the fate of hunting-gathering societies, agricultural societies, and maritime societies in Chinese history.
- Use concepts like family, kingship, warfare, law, empire, ritual, and nature as frameworks for understanding major shifts in Chinese history until 1644 C.E.
- Analyze specific historical moments or personalities through written assignments, using primary sources, films, and, time permitting, museum visits.
- Formulate arguments built on sound logic and historical evidence in written assignments across the semester.
- Be both creative and analytical, using historical imagination to enrich understanding of the past through role play, group activities in and out of class, fieldtrips and other creative assignments.

In meeting these learning objectives, we will engage 2 Hub areas (1) Historical consciousness (2) Intercultural Understanding and Global Citizenship, as well as the Critical Thinking Toolkit. As a reminder, their learning outcomes are:

**Toolkit:**

**Critical Thinking Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will be able to identify key elements of critical thinking, such as habits of distinguishing deductive from inductive modes of inference, recognizing common logical fallacies and cognitive biases, translating ordinary language into formal argument, distinguishing empirical claims about matters of fact from normative or evaluative judgments, and recognizing the ways in which emotional responses can affect reasoning processes.
2. Drawing on skills developed in class, students will be able to evaluate the validity of arguments, including their own.

**Hub Areas:**

**Historical Consciousness Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will create historical narratives, evaluate interpretations based on historical evidence, and construct historical arguments.
2. Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret primary source material (textual, visual, or aural) using a range of interpretive skills and situating the material in its historical and cultural context.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of religious traditions, intellectual paradigms, forms of political organization, or socio-economic forces, and how these have changed over time.

**Intercultural Understanding and Global Citizenship Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis, an understanding of global diversity as expressed in at least two different languages, cultures, religions, political systems, or societies.
2. Students will demonstrate detailed understanding of at least two cultural contexts through foreign language or culture study at BU.

**MIDTERM: THURSDAY NOVEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>**

**PAPER DUE: THURSDAY NOVEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup>**

**FINAL: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>, 12:30 – 2:30 PM**

Plagiarism in any form is never acceptable. You are advised to review the college's definitions of and policies regarding plagiarism and cheating which are available online and in print. See: <http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>

I will use a special anti-plagiarism service supplied by BU when appropriate.

Cell phones must be turned off during classes.

**In class, please use computers and other portable devices ONLY to do class-related work when necessary. Any other use is strongly discouraged, and will impact your participation grade.**

**TEXTBOOKS:**

The following required books are available for purchase in the Barnes and Nobles University Bookstore.

1. Ebrey, Patricia B., *Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, Cambridge University Press, 1996 (= **History**).
2. Ebrey, Patricia B., *Chinese Civilization : A Sourcebook*, Simon and Schuster, 1993 (= **Sourcebook**)
3. Wu Chen-en (translated by Arthur Waley). *Monkey*. Grove Press and other editions.
4. Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Bedford-St. Martin's, any edition (= **Guide**)

Weekly interpretive **required readings** will be posted on the class web-site (Blackboard), and are indicated in the syllabus under the heading "**Web Readings.**" Moreover, I will often refer to images, maps and texts in the following web-site: *A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization* (prepared by Patricia B. Ebrey and others; link in the course webpage): <http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/index.htm>

You are invited to familiarize yourself with this and other sites listed under "External Links," and use them to access materials.

**SYLLABUS OF READINGS**

NOTE: Reading assignments are listed under the topics of class meetings to which they pertain; they must be completed for the relevant classes. **THE INSTRUCTOR'S LECTURES WILL BUILD ON YOUR PRIOR CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE WEEKLY READINGS, AND IF YOU WANT TO AVOID FEELING LOST IN CLASS, DO YOUR READINGS REGULARLY.**

- **Week I (September 4, 6): Class Introduction and Prehistoric Period**

1. Class Introduction. 2. China: Geography and Ecology. 3. Prehistoric Period in Archaeology. 4. Prehistoric Period in Mythology.

Film: "China: Heritage of the Wild Dragon" [PART 1]

**Readings:** History, pp. 10-20

- **Week II (September 11; NO CLASS ON THURSDAY): Beginnings of Chinese Civilization**

1. The Threshold of Civilization: The Xia Dynasty. 2. The Birth of the Shang Dynasty. 3. Political and Social Structures of the Shang Dynasty. 4. The Shang Mysterious Religion and Concept of Heaven;

Film: "China: Heritage of the Wild Dragon" [PART 2]

**Readings:** History, pp. 21-30; Sourcebook, # 1; Web Readings # 1: Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape* (“Community: The Land and Its Inhabitants”)

• **Week III (September 18, 20): The Western Zhou Era; The ‘Spring and Autumn’ and the ‘Warring States’ Periods**

1. The Zhou “Revolution” and the Mandate of Heaven. 2. Zhou “Feudalism.” 3. Towards Secularization: The Evolution of Zhou Culture. 4. Political, Social and Economic Changes from the Western Zhou to ‘Warring States’ Periods.

**Readings:** History, pp. 38-42 & 55-58; Sourcebook, # 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10; Web Readings # 2: Ledderose, “Casting Bronze the Complicated Way.”

• **Week IV (September 25, 28): The Hundred Schools of Chinese Thought**

1. Confucius. 2. The followers of Confucius: Mencius, and Confucianism. 2. Shang Yang, Han Feizi, and Legalism. 3. Laozi, Zhuangzi and Daoism.

**Readings:** History, pp. 42-55; Sourcebook, # 6, 7, 8; Web Readings # 3: Graham, “Introduction” in *Disputers of the Tao*; Penny, “Immortality and Transcendence” (Daoism)

**Group Activity:** “One Hundred School of Thought” Battle

• **Week V (OCTOBER 2, 4): The Qin Unification and the Establishment of the Han Dynasty**

1. The Rise of the Qin State and its Legalist Ideology. 2. The First Emperor and his Conquest of China. 3. The Unification and Centralization of an Empire. 4. The Downfall of the Qin Dynasty.

Film: “The Immortal Emperor: Shi Huangdi”

**Readings:** History, pp. 60-63; Sourcebook, # 11; Web Readings # 4: Ledderose, “A Magic Army for the Emperor”

• **Week VI (NO CLASS ON TUESDAY = Monday schedule; October 11): The Han Dynasties**

1. Liu Bang and the Foundation of the Western Han Dynasty. 2. Han Wudi and the Building and Expanding of an Empire. 3. The Fall of the Western Han and the Founding of the Eastern Han 4. The Rise of Local Magnates and the Decline of the Central Government. 5. Han Ideology - Dong Zhongshu. 6. Confucianism in the Han Periods.

**Readings:** History, pp. 63-85 (Han); Sourcebook, # 14, 16, 17, 20; Web Readings # 5: Wills, “Sima Qian.”

- **Week VII (October 16; NO CLASS ON THURSDAY): The Origins and Main Tenets of Buddhism**

Lecture & Film discussion in class: “The Life of the Buddha”

[See list of readings & links on Blackboard.]

**TUESDAY: Individual Response and Group Activity on Buddhism**

- **Week VIII (October 23, 25): Political Disunion and the Assimilation of Buddhism in China**

1. The Three Kingdoms Period. 2. The Northern and Southern Dynasties. 4. Buddhism in China.

**Readings:** History, pp. 86-107 (Age of Division); Sourcebook, # 23, 24; Web Readings # 6: Lewis, “Daoism and Buddhism” in *China between Empires*

- **Week IX (October 30 and November 1): Reunification: the Sui and Tang Dynasties**

1. Reunification of the Sui Dynasty. 2. The Early Tang Dynasty. 3. Economy and Society -The Equal Fields System. 4. The State vs. the Established Buddhism. 5. The Golden Age of Poetry.

**Readings:** History, pp. 108-135 (Tang); Sourcebook, # 25, 26, 28; Web Readings # 7: Wills, “Empress Wu” & Rothschild, “The Vain Quest for Wu Zhao”

**THURSDAY NOVEMBER 1st: MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

- **Week X (November 6, 8): The Song Dynasty: Social and Economic Revolutions**

1. Reinforcement of the Centralized System - Wang Anshi and His Reforms. 2. The Economic and Technological Revolutions and Song Culture. 3. Cultural Reforms: The Examination System and the Rise of the “Scholar Official” Ideal. 4. Frontier Powers: Liao, Western Xia, and Jin Empires.

**Readings:** History, pp. 136-163 (Song); Sourcebook, # 32, 35, 41; Web Readings # 9: Kuhn “Private Lives in the Public Sphere.”

**Group Activity on Song Society and Economy**

**THURSDAY NOVEMBER 8: PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

• **Week XI (November 13, 15): The Southern Song Dynasty and the Rise of the “Barbarians” (Alien Dynasties)**

1. The Jurchen Invasion. 2. The Concept of “Barbarians” in Chinese History. 3. Southern Song Politics and Culture. 4. Zhu Xi and “Neo-Confucianism.” 5. Women and Women’s Education.

**Readings:** History, NONE; Sourcebook, # 38, 39, 40; Web Readings # 10: Gardner, *The Four Books. The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition* & Ebrey, “Women, Marriage and the Family in Chinese History.”

**Group Activity: Women in the Song & Footbinding**

• **Week XII (November 20): The Mongol Invasion and the Yuan Dynasty**

1. Chinggis Khan and the Rise of the Mongols. 2. The Founding of the Yuan Dynasty and the Conquest of the Song. 3. China under the Yuan. 4. The Legacy of the Mongol Rule.

**Readings:** History, pp. 164-189 (Yuan); Sourcebook, # 44; Web Readings # 11: Lane, “The Legacy [of the Mongols]: China and Iran”

Film selections: “Mongol”

**FALL RECESS: November 21-25**

• **Week XIII (November 27, 29): Ming China**

1. Zhu Yuanzhang and the Founding of the Ming Dynasty. 2. Absolutist Tendencies and Early Ming Political Culture. Maritime Adventure and the Closure of the Coast: Ming Isolationism? 2. Economic Progression and Stagnation. 3. Ming Culture; Ming Thought. 4. The Political Crises of the Late Ming. 5. Intellectual Upheavals: Wang Yangming.

Film (selections): “1421: The Year China Discovered America?”

**Readings:** History, pp. 190-220 (Ming); Sourcebook, # 47, 49, 50; Web Readings # 12 Sarah Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming China*; Web Readings # 13: Dreyer, “The Legacy of Zheng He”

• **Week XIV (December 4, 6): The Ming-Qing Transition**

1. Popular Culture in Ming-Qing China. 2. Frontier Emergencies: The Manchu Conquest of China.

**Readings:** History, pp. 221-233 (Qing); Sourcebook, # 57, 59; Web Readings # 14: Teiser, “The Problem of Popular Religion”

- **Week XV (December 11): Wrap-up Session – In-Class Review**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2018, 12:30 – 2:30 PM - FINAL EXAMINATION**