This course explores the history of imperial China between the 3rd century B.C.E. and the 16th century C.E. with a focus on the following questions: How did imperial Chinese states go about politically unifying diverse peoples over vast spaces? How did imperial Chinese approaches to governance and to relations with the outer world compare with strategies employed by other historical empires? How did those approaches change over time? How did major socio-cultural formations—including literary canons; religious and familial lineages; marketing networks; and popular book and theatrical cultures—grow and take root, and what were the broader ramifications of those developments? How did such basic configurations of human difference as Chinese (civilized)-barbarian identity, high-low status, and male-female gender operate and change over time?