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?

**Course Goals and Methods:** • Develop ways of thinking about the dynamics of historical change comparatively, with a focus on China’s imperial period. • Acquire and refine skills in historical analysis, focusing on the critical interpretation of sources and their use in developing and substantiating arguments. • Learn content and skills simultaneously through processes of active reading and listening, articulate oral and written expression, creative group brainstorming, and rigorous argument-building.

**Code of Conduct:**
All classroom behavior should be characterized by civility, attentiveness, and respect. This includes not using electronic devices during class time, even computers for note-taking. If you think you qualify for an exception, see the instructor.

All coursework should be performed with integrity. Plagiarism or cheating will result in hearings, a report to the dean’s office, and an F. In class we will discuss what plagiarism and cheating are and how to avoid them, but you should also make sure that you understand the issues. See <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>.
Requirements

Participation 15%
Includes attendance at all scheduled classes, participation in lectures and sections, group discussions, and presentations. Bring the assigned primary source readings to section, and be prepared to discuss them. Preparation includes thinking about the study questions. If you cannot attend class because of illness or for other pressing reasons, let your section instructor know, if possible in advance. If you miss a class, be sure to get copies of notes from a classmate and check Blackboard for the posting of lecture outlines and suggested readings. Students can miss one unexcused section without penalty.

Pop Quizzes (4) 10%
Short answer quizzes given at the end of lecture. Questions will concern understanding of lecture content; it will help to take good notes during lecture and to do the week’s readings in advance. We will discuss and experiment with note-taking strategies in class. Lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Short Writing Exercises† 10%
Plagiarism quiz plus two 1- to 2-paragraph exercises

Short Research/Critical Analysis Reports 2 pages each† 15%

Short Essay† 3-5 pages (due week 13) 10%

Final In-class Examination (short answers, May 9) 20%

Final Essay† (5-7 pages, due May 16) 20%

†Essays: See Blackboard for resources on writing and citing sources, and for information on grading. Write all essays using standard college essay formatting: one-inch margins, 12-point serifed font (like Times, not like Helvetica), double line spacing, and proper citations. Penalty-free extensions will be granted if requested by the evening before they are due. When requesting extensions, or if ill as soon as you are able, give your section instructor a reasonable extension deadline, usually of one or two days. Late penalties will be 1/3 grade (e.g., A- ➔ A-/B+)/day.

Communications:
Blackboard: Assignments, Recommended Additional Readings, and other information will be posted on Blackboard. If you were not automatically enrolled in the site through pre-registration, contact your section instructor to enroll you.
Email: You will receive course announcements by email through Blackboard and therefore through your Cornell email account. Be sure to check your Cornell email regularly.
1. Introduction: Asia and China in Space, Time, and Imagination

Jan 27

Today it is hard to imagine the Eurasian continent other than as divided between “Europe” and “Asia,” and to imagine “East Asia” other than as consisting of the nations of China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. In political division and in ethno-cultural imagination, however, Eurasia was not always divided in these ways. How did these divisions come about? What are the implications of the historicity of Chinese (and other) polities and identities?

PART I: EMPIRE-BUILDING

2. Unification and Centralization

Febr 1, 3

The Qin and Han regimes succeeded in unifying and centrally administering territories of far greater extent than any previous polity in the East Asian region. In what ways did geographic conditions, received traditions of governance, and specific patterns of inter-polity relations influence Qin and Han strategies? What were their major institutional innovations and legacies?

⇒ Do the 10-minute plagiarism exercise [http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm](http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm) and email the results to your section instructor. Make sure that you understand the practical cases in the tutorial. If the automatic send function does not work at the end, email your instructor the screen with your results.


3. Rulership and Succession

Febr 8, 10

What were the Qin and Han innovations to the roles of the ruler, and to the ideologies of rulership? What were the contradictions inherent in the new model of “emperor” (huangdi)? How did contemporary writings, such as the Huainanzi and those of Dong Zhongshu, frame the issues? What were the points of disagreement and common ground? In what ways did they tie their visions of rulership to greater cosmological and moral order(s)?

Key concepts: emperor (huangdi), non-active (wuwei), potency/virtue/power (de)


Note the tension in this account between the heredity and merit principles of ruler legitimacy and succession, as embodied in “mandates” from and communication with two sources of divine authority. The Zhou dynasty justified its conquest of the Shang by the last Shang ruler having been so tyrannical and lacking in virtue that Heaven shifted its Mandate to the Zhou. All later regimes laid claim to conquest of the previous dynasty and to continued right to rule on the basis holding the Mandate of Heaven. Loss of Mandate could be signaled by anomalies in weather such as those described in “Metal Bound Box.”


Liu An was the first and last King of Huainan, one of the fiefdoms granted to members of the imperial Liu family early in the Han. The Huainanzi as we have it today is an edited and abridged version of works which Liu An commissioned from scholars and adepts whom he had gathered at his court. In 122 B.C.E. Liu was accused of sedition. His entire family executed, his property confiscated, and his realm abolished, he committed suicide.¹


4. Governance

In the primary source readings for this week we see arguments about how government institutions and administration should operate. How did Han writers frame the issues? What were the points of disagreement and of common ground?

Key concepts: bureaucracy, office, law, punishment, rites/ritual, transformation through teaching/education/instruction).


TJ Hinrichs, “Transformation through Teaching.”


This translation is from a collection of local officials’ legal case records that was compiled in 1261 in Fujian. Such collections, usually of exemplary decisions on difficult cases, circulated

since at least the tenth century as a resource for officials. Note that the transliterations are in Wade Giles rather than pinyin.

5. Politics of Writing & Culture  

In what ways did Han rulers and officials use writing and culture as an instrument of power, and how did they see its efficacy? In what ways did different types of writing produce different approaches to the nature of empire? How did Sima Qian view his own historical writing in relation to his own life as a political actor? How did Dong Zhongshu theorize the efficacy of writing?

⇒ Short Writing Exercise due Febr 22


6. Inner-Outer & Politics of Difference  

What were the major models by which the Han courts and Han writers framed and dealt with difference among the diverse populations within and around the Han territories? What were the various models by which the Han and later regimes structured relations between their own and other polities? What influenced strategic choices among alternative models of difference and of inter-polity relations?


❖ TJ Hinrichs, “Excerpts on Barbarians”

7. An Inner Asian Perspective  

What is the point of periodization, and why do historians contest it? What perspectives do standard periodization frameworks for Chinese history put at the center. For example, what do terms such as “dynastic,” “ancient,” “imperial,” “medieval,” and “early modern” periods suggest?

In what ways were Inner Asian peoples integral to imperial Chinese history? Di Cosmo critiques previous theories of Inner Asian political dynamics: what were earlier theories, and on what bases does Di Cosmo critique them? Do you find Di Cosmo’s framework compelling? Why or why not?
⇒ Short Writing Exercise due March 7

Note: Monday, March 7, we will have a session on library research with Virginia Cole. Bring your laptops!

Chart: “Standard Periodization for Chinese History”


PART II: NON-STATE SOCIAL FORMATIONS

8. Early Religious Movements and “Daoism” March 14, 16

What were the social dynamics by which trans-local magico-religious movements, traditions, and organizations emerged in the Warring States and Han periods? On what basis did such disparate figures, groups, and their writings came to be lumped together retrospectively as “Teachings of the Dao,” in contradistinction to “Teachings of Buddha” and “Teachings of Classicists/Traditionalists/Confucians.” What produced this kind of generic categorizing, and why would it persist through time, so that even scholars today tend to speak of “Daoism” as though it were a singular entity? In what ways did “Teachings” continue to interact with local cults and traditions over time?


9. Evangelism and Competition March 21, 23

In what ways did Daoist and Buddhist practices come into conflict with each other, and with other (family, community, state) forms of social relations? What strategies did Buddhists and Daoists use to displace local cults and “shamans,” and to compete for converts and patronage?

⇒ Short Research/Critical Analysis Report due March 21


TJ Hinrichs, “Shamans and Adepts: Overview of Basic Issues with Primary Source Translations”

*** SPRING BREAK ***

10. Examinations & the Rise of the Literati-Gentry

April 4, 6

What were the major innovations to the civil service examination system and its role in official recruitment between the Tang and Qing periods? What were the ramifications of changes to the examination system for status structures and for social mobility?

Key concepts: *shi* (pronounced “sure”), *shidafu* (pron. “sure-dah-foo”), meritocracy


These two selections are translations of pieces recorded by Hong Mai (1123-1202) in his *Record of the Listener (Yijianzhi)*, a vast collection of anecdotes from his own personal history (as in the first case) and told to him by friends and correspondents (as in the second case). The *Record*, which became extremely popular, was something of a life work for Hong; he published it in a series of installments between 1161 and 1198. Most of the anecdotes have to do with encounters with occult forces and beings, or with mundane but in some way strange or unusual events.


See note under Week 4.

Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization”:


Follow the links on each page. Follow the “Move on to” links at the bottom of each page to explore Northern Song, Southern Song, and Yuan landscape painting.

Optional: “Court Painting” (Why would the painting styles valued at court differ from those of scholar officials? What was new in garden planning in the Song period?)


(Optional: Explore the following section on “Garden Design.”)

**11. Family and Social Reproduction**

What historical processes led to the emergence of new forms of family organization in Song-Ming China? How did those new social structures affect strategies of social reproduction and family values? What is the “uterine family,” and how does it relate to family structures, values, and social reproduction?

⇒ Short Research/Critical Analysis Report due April 11


☐ **CC**: “Rules for the Fan Lineage’s Charitable Estate,” “Ancestral Rites,” “Family Instructions,” 155-163, 238-244.


☐ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “A Visual Sourcebook of Chinese Civilization”:
  “Homes,” [http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/home/3homintr.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/home/3homintr.htm)
  Explore “House Architecture” and “Interiors.”


**12. Gender & Sexuality**

In what ways did gender roles and constructions of gender and sexuality change in the late imperial period? How did Song-Qing writers frame the bases of gender difference and sexual preference?


☐ Li Yu, “A Male Mencius’s Mother Raises Her Son Properly By Moving House Three Times,” *Silent Operas*, Patrick Hanan, trans., (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990), 99-134.
13. Commercialization & Commodification

What new social groups and practices did commercialization produce? What were the implications of commercialization for those groups’ daily lives?

⇒ Short Essay due April 25


📖 “Selections from the New Book of Swindles (Dupian xinshu) by Zhang Yingyu,” Bruce Rusk, trans., unpublished manuscript.


14. Urbanization

In lecture we will discuss how patterns of urban planning and development changed between the Tang and the Song, and will outline distinctive patterns of urban-rural market integration that emerged during periods of commercial prosperity. As you read and examine the Qingming Scroll, consider


🔗 Michael Szonyi, et. al., “Digital East Asian Studies @ Harvard University” — “The Qingming Scroll: Online Module”
  <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k7403&tabgroupid=icb.tabgroup95937>
  <http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~icgzmod/qingming_student.html>

15. Review, Final Exam, Final Essay

The capstone work for this course consists of an in-class (45 minute) final exam and a final essay (5-7 pages). We will distribute final exam questions during Week 13 to give you time to go over them. We recommend that you review your course notes before Monday’s class so that you can bring questions to the review session.

Monday, May 9: semester recap and review
Wednesday, May 11: in-class examination
Thursday, May 12 Sections: Discuss final essay topics

Final Essay due May 16