

CORE-UA 512 Cultures & Contexts: China

Spring 2018

Lectures: Tuesdays & Thursdays Time & location TBD

Professor: Laurence Coderre

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Office: 19 University Place, Room 519

Office Hours: TBD

Recitations: Time & location TBD

Instructors: TBD

Course Description: This course provides an introduction to the textual foundations of Chinese culture, with an emphasis on the role of literature and philosophy in informing what it has meant for something or someone to be “Chinese” over time and what it means today. Put another way: this class examines the “Chinese” textual canon and its formation and reformation over time. Which texts are culturally important? Why are some more important than others? Who decides? How do writers and thinkers understand their place vis-à-vis all the other writers and thinkers who have come before them and will yet come after them? How do we understand ourselves within that process?

In order to address these questions, we will cover many of China’s “greatest hits,” i.e. canonical works. From Confucius to Zhuangzi to Han Feizi, we will examine the early textual roots of Chinese philosophy. The *Classic of Poetry* and Tang masters Du Fu and Li Bai will give us a taste of the poetic tradition. Vernacular stories from Feng Menglong and Pu Songling will give us a sense of late-imperial prose, while Lu Xun and Yu Hua will help anchor our look at literary “modernity” in the twentieth century. As we consider these texts, we will reflect on how and why they have mattered—and continue to matter—culturally in China and around the world as emblems of Chinese identity.

As a Cultures and Contexts course, this class and the questions it raises are intended to help prepare you for life in a complex, globalized world. Through critical engagements with primary cultural materials, it is meant to expose you to some of the myriad ways that humans have come to understand themselves and the world around them. As a part of the College Core Curriculum, it is designed to extend your education beyond the focused studies of your major, preparing you for your future life as a thoughtful individual and active member of society.

Course Requirements: This is intended to be a reading- and writing-intensive undergraduate course. Students are expected to attend and participate in all class meetings—including all lectures and recitations—and to submit all assignments in a timely manner; late work will negatively impact your participation grade. Students will be asked to complete 3 short papers, a midterm exam, a final project/paper, and a final exam. Overall grades will be calculated as follows:

Midterm exam	15%
Final exam	25%

Written assignments	25%	(6%+8%+11%)
Final project/paper	15%	
Attendance & participation	20%	

Attendance Policy: It is imperative that you come to all class meetings (lectures and recitations) and, further, that you arrive to meetings on time. All unexcused absences will negatively impact your attendance & participation grade. Excused absences must be approved in advance.

Written Assignments: All written work should be submitted as a .docx or .rtf file through the “Assignments” section of the course website (available on NYU Classes via <https://newclasses.nyu.edu>). All papers must be the appropriate length (as indicated on the schedule below), double-spaced, and in 12-point font. Specific expectations for each assignment will be provided as the semester progresses.

Course Materials: There are 3 required texts for this class. They are:

Wasserstrom, Jeffrey. *Eight Juxtapositions: China Through Imperfect Analogies from Mark Twain to Manchukuo*. London: Penguin UK, 2016.

Ebery, Patricia Buckley. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol. 1. Edited by Wm. Theodore De Bary and Irene Bloom. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Hard copies of all 3 books have also been placed on reserve, should you be unable to purchase them. All other readings can be accessed through the “Resources” section of the course website (again, available on NYU Classes). The single film for the class has been placed on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media, located in Bobst Library. On-site facilities are available for viewing.

Academic Misconduct: Any and all work submitted in this class should be yours and yours alone, unless otherwise instructed. Instances of misconduct, including plagiarism—passing someone else’s words and/or ideas as your own—will be dealt with in accordance with NYU policy. You may familiarize yourself with this policy at <https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-cas/cas/academic-integrity.html>. See also the attached “Statement on Academic Integrity.”

Electronics Policy: Laptops or tablets may be used to access readings and/or to take notes only. I strongly suggest turning off WiFi capabilities while in class, lest you be distracted by email, Facebook, etc. Cellphones should be silenced during class, and texting is not permitted under any circumstances.

Email & Office Hours: My email address is coderre@nyu.edu. Feel free to email me at any time, but please allow up to 24 hours for a response. Email is particularly convenient for logistical questions. (See the accompanying handout on “netiquette” for my detailed

expectations concerning this mode of correspondence.) More in-depth, topical questions are best addressed in my office hours, which are TBD in Room 519, 19 University Place.

Accommodations: If you have been approved for disability-related accommodations by the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, please let me know as soon as possible, so that your needs may promptly be met.

Class Schedule

*Readings with an * can be accessed through the NYU Classes website > Resources.*

All reading/viewing is REQUIRED and must be completed PRIOR TO the class for which it is assigned.

I. Debunking “5000 Years of History”

Week 1

1/23 Introduction

1/25 Donald E. Pease, “Exceptionalism,” *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, <http://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/exceptionalism/> [Approx. 2300 words]

*William A. Callahan, “Sino-speak: Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History” [22 pages]

Wasserstrom, *Eight Juxtapositions*, “Introduction,” “Tibet and Manchukuo” [Approx. 12 pages]

Week 2

1/30 *John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3-83.

2/1 Guillory, cont’d

– 2-page paper due

II. Writing in/for the World

Week 3

2/6 **Classic of Changes (Yijing)*, “Appended Discourses,” excerpt; The Myth of “Pao Hsi” (also from the “Appended Discourses”); Wang Bi (226-249 CE), “Elucidation of the Images,” excerpt; Liu Xie (465-522 CE), “Its Source in the Way” from *Wenxin diaolong* [5 pages]

*John Blofeld, “The Symbolic Basis of the *Book of Change*” [12 pages]

Eberly, *Cambridge Illustrated History*, Chap. 1, 10-37

2/8 *Hero* 英雄 (dir. Zhang Yimou, 2002), on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center in Bobst Library (DVD 4155); also available to rent and/or buy through Amazon, YouTube, and Google Play

Week 4

2/13 Harold Bloom, *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 3-77. Available on e-reserve.

2/15 *Sima Qian (ca. 145-ca. 86 BCE), "Autobiography," "Letter to Ren An" [19 pages]
— 4-page paper due

III. Canonical Foundations

Week 5

2/20 **Classic of Poetry (Shijing)*, excerpts [33 pages]

Ebery, *Cambridge Illustrated History*, Chap. 2, 38-59

2/22 *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, "Confucius and the Analects," 41-63

*Herbert Fingarette, "Human Community as Holy Rite" [18 pages]

Week 6

2/27 *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, "The Evolution of the Confucian Tradition in Antiquity," 112-189

3/1 *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, "The Way of Laozi and Zhuangzi," 77-111

Week 7

3/6 *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, "The Book of Lord Shang," "The Han Feizi," "Li Si: Legalist Theories in Practice," 193-212

Ebery, *Cambridge Illustrated History*, Chap. 3, 60-84

3/8 **Midterm exam**

— No recitation

~ Spring Break ~

IV. Policing the Canon

Week 8

3/20 *Assorted poems by Li Bai (701-762 CE) and Du Fu (712-770 CE) [33 pages]

Ebery, *Cambridge Illustrated History*, Chap. 5, 108-135

3/22 *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, “Han Yu and the Confucian ‘Way,’” 568-586
Ebery, *Cambridge Illustrated History*, Chap. 4, 86-107

Week 9

3/27 *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, “The Synthesis of Song Neo-Confucianism in Zhu Xi,” 697-713

Ebery, *Cambridge Illustrated History*, Chap. 6, 136-163

3/29 *Wang Shifu (ca. 1250-ca. 1337), excerpts from *Romance of the Western Chamber* [Approx. 50 pages of play script]

Ebery, *Cambridge Illustrated History*, Chap. 7, 164-189

Week 10

4/3 *Feng Menglong (1574-1646), “Du Tenth Sinks the Jewel Box in Anger” [21 pages]

Ebery, *Cambridge Illustrated History*, Chap. 8, 190-219

4/5 *Pu Songling (1640-1715), excerpts from *Liao-Zhai’s Record of Wonders* [18 pages]

Ebery, *Cambridge Illustrated History*, Chap. 9, 220-261

— 6-page paper due

V. Stirrings of (Literary) Revolution

Week 11

4/10 *Liang Qichao (1873-1929), “On the Relationship between Fiction and the Government of the People” [8 pages]

*Liu E (1857-1909), excerpt from *The Travels of Lao Can* [12 pages]

*Jing Tsu, *Failure, Nationalism, and Chinese Identity, 1895-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1-31.

4/12 *Hu Shi (1891-1962), “Some Modest Proposals for the Reform of Literature” [17 pages]

*Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (London: Routledge, 2005), 128-169.

— Final project/paper proposal
due in recitation

Week 12

4/17 *”Advocates of Script Reform” [7 pages]

*Edward Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese: Style and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Prose* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 31-61.

4/19 *Lu Xun (1881-1936), "Preface to *A Call to Arms*," "Diary of a Madman" [17 pages]

*Yu Hua (1960-), "Lu Xun" [18 pages]

Wasserstrom, *Eight Juxtapositions*, "Yu Hua and Mark Twain" [Approx. 12 pages]

VI. Tear It Down, Build It Back Up

Week 13

4/24 *Mao Zedong (1893-1976), "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Art and Literature" [26 pages]

Wasserstrom, *Eight Juxtapositions*, "Orwell and Huxley," "China and Russia" [Approx. 20 pages]

4/26 *Yu Hua (1960-), "1986" [49 pages]

Week 14

5/1 Excerpts from *River Elegy* (1988), viewable with subtitles at:
https://archive.org/details/ddtv_40_china_presenting_river_elegy

David Moser, "Thoughts on *River Elegy*, June 1988-June 2011,"
<http://www.thechinabeat.org/?p=3607> [Approx. 2900 words]

Wasserstrom, *Eight Juxtapositions*, "A Wall and A Massacre" [Approx. 4 pages]

5/3 Christine Gross-Loh, "Why Are Hundreds of Harvard Students Studying Ancient Chinese Philosophy?" *The Atlantic*,
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/10/why-are-hundreds-of-harvard-students-studying-ancient-chinese-philosophy/280356/> [Approx. 2000 words]

Wasserstrom, *Eight Juxtapositions*, "Chicken or Beef," "The Flat and the Bumpy," "The People's Pope and Big Daddy Xi" [Approx. 17 pages]

- Final project/paper due in class (8 pages or equivalent)
- Semester review in recitation

Final Exam: Date TBD