

HIST 433 History of Late Imperial China



Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬, 1599–1652 *Great Ford on the Yellow River*

This class deals with the Late Imperial period in China, about 1300-1800. We will be looking at one of the most vibrant and interesting periods of social change in all of world history. This is an age of rapid commercial and population growth, as well as a period of wrenching social change. It was also one of the most literate societies of the pre-modern world, so many of the sources we will look at were created by the people of the period as they tried to understand what was going on around them. You do not need to any particular background in history or China for this class. There is a research component to the class.

Books

Feng Menglong. *Sanyan Stories: Favorites from a Ming Dynasty Collection*. Translated by Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).

This is a Ming collection of short stories that we will use as our entry into popular culture and as the (possible) core for your research project. There is a much larger 3-volume collection as well. These stories have everything, fighting, revenge, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, miracles, etc.

Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990)

This is partially a political history that deals with a campaign launched by the Qianlong emperor, but also one of the best ways for us to get into the social history of the High Qing.

There is no textbook for this class, but if you want a general survey, I recommend
F.W. Mote *Imperial China 900-1800*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003)
And/or
Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*,
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013)
William T. Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge: Harvard
University Press, 2012)

Structure of the class

This class is expected to be a hybrid class, meaning that some days you physically come to class and other days you have to stay home and watch us on Zoom. Or it may become a fully on-line class at some point, if the University decides that conditions warrant it. **Regardless, you are always free to not physically come to class at any point if you feel it is not safe or if you have any reason to think you are ill. It will always be possible to do all the assignments and learn all the things you want to learn without physically coming to class.**

The structure of the class is built around four things. Each week there will be a certain amount of

-Lecture Which means me talking, either in recorded mini-lectures or in class (which will also be recorded).

-Discussion Which will take place in class, but also on Perusall.

-Reading This is the core of the class. There is only so much you can learn from me or from your classmates, but there is an almost unlimited amount you can learn from the sources people at the time have left us and the many things scholars have written about them. **Each week** we will have a selection of readings, and each of you will read some of them. Some weeks we will all read a common reading and each of you will select one optional reading, some weeks everyone will just select the readings they want to do.

-Writing This is the most important part of the class, partially because this is mostly what your grade will be based on, but also because this is where you think in public about what you have learned. There will be writing every week, including Perusall discussions, longer things on individual readings and your final research project.

Topics and Readings

Weeks 1 and 2 8/24 Introduction to the course. Cultural history and why it matters, especially in China (is China a country or a culture?) We will open our discussion by looking at Zhu Yuanzheng, peasant, monk, warlord and first Emperor of the Ming Dynasty. He was trying to very specifically “restore” the old Chinese way of doing things, and we will discuss what that could possibly mean.

-"[From chaos toward a new Chinese order](#)" from F.W. Mote *Imperial China 900-1800*. Harvard University Press, 2003. -This is a secondary source, a chapter from a survey text that deals with

the final collapse of the Yuan and start of the Ming. We will read this both as an introduction to the period and as an introduction to Perusall.

-Joanna Waley-Cohen, "[The New Qing History](#)," *Radical History Review* 88, no. 1 (January 8, 2004): 193–206. We will read this as a sample of a historiographical essay, and as a good introduction to some of the issues in the second half of the class.

-"[Political Economies in Europe and China](#)" from Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience*. Cornell University Press, 1997. If you are interested in comparing Chinese and European models of the state this is a good reading. This is an optional reading.

Week 3 9/9 The *shi* You can't get away from the "gentry" in this class. They ran the state, they dominated the society and the economy, and they generated almost all the sources. We will all read and discuss Yu Boya, and you will each read one of the other readings.

-"[Yu Boya smashes his zither](#)" from *Sanyan Stories* - This story deals with success, friendship and music. This is a primary source.

-"[Gentry Leadership in Local Society](#)" from Faure, David. *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China*. Stanford University Press, 2007. This looks at the role of the local elite in maintaining order in a time of social collapse, and gives a good explanation of how important the gentry were to local society.

--"[Ming Imperial Power, Cultural Politics, and Examinations](#)" from Elman, Benjamin A. *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*. Harvard University Press, 2013. The exams were not the only thing the *shi* did, but they were central to elite power and culture.

Week 4 9/14 China in print and research topics. We will look at the technological and social transformation of China using printing as our example. Print is important because it provides both us and people at the time with a way of looking at Chinese society. We will also work on [research topics](#).

-[Introduction](#) from Feng Menglong and Shuhui Yang. *Stories Old and New : A Ming Dynasty Collection*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000. -Gives a nice background of the entertainment world these stories appeared in.

-Meyer-Fong, Tobie. "[The Printed World: Books, Publishing Culture, and Society in Late Imperial China](#)." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 3 (August 1, 2007): 787–817. -This is a more historiographical piece on publishing.

-"[Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing](#)" Lucille Chia. In Brokaw, Cynthia J., and Kai-Wing Chow. *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*. University of California Press, 2005. -An introduction to the Ming urban world and to publishing.

-Fan Wang, "The Distant Sound of Book Boats: The Itinerant Book Trade in Jiangnan from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries," *Late Imperial China* 39, no. 2 (2018): 17–58

First paper topic due- This is a one sentence statement of what your paper will be about.

Week 5 9/21 *Sanyan* This is our main primary source for the class, and most likely the center of your research paper.

Read all of the stories in the *Sanyan Stories* collection that you bought AND at least one other story from the 3-volume edition. 2 of the volumes are available through ebrary on the library website.

Week 6 9/28 Family As we noted in *Sanyan*, family was the key organizing principle in Chinese society. We will look at what family meant in China, both as a way of organizing society and as a central principle for understanding the cosmos.

[-Success Stories: Lineage and Elite Status in Hanyang County, Hubei, c. 1368-1949](#) By William Rowe, from Esherick, Joseph, Mary Backus Rankin, eds. *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance*. University of California Press, 1990.

-Brook, Timothy. "[Funerary Ritual and The Building of Lineages in Late Imperial China.](#)" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 49, no. 2 (December 1, 1989): 465–99. doi:10.2307/2719260. If you can't get enough Tim Brook. Also good on the importance of ritual in China.

-Davis, Adrian. "[Fraternity and Fratricide in Late Imperial China.](#)" *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 5 (December 1, 2000): 1630–40. doi:10.2307/2652034. -brothers killing brothers.

"[The Failure of 'Confucian' Family Values](#)" from Robert E. Hegel *True Crimes in Eighteenth-Century China: Twenty Case Histories*. University of Washington Press, 2011. -This is on ebrary. Both of these last two are about legal proceedings. Historians love it when things go to court, since that created lots of sources

Week 7 10/5 Women Maintaining the proper relationship between men and women was one of the most important goals of Confucian society. Gender is also one of the most interesting ways that modern historians look at past societies.

Everyone should read [-Selections](#) from Jonathan Spence *The Death of Woman Wang*. Penguin Books, 1998. This is a classic study of the lives of rural women, based in part on Pu Songling.

-[Selections](#) from Mann, Susan, and Yu-Yin Cheng. *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*. University of California Press, 2001. -Two ghost stories and two biographies.

"[Writing](#)" from Mann, Susan. *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century*. Stanford University Press, 1997. -How women understood and wrote about their situation. A good look at subjectivity.

-"[Transformation of Marriage and Property Law in the Yuan.](#)" from Birge, Bettine. *Women, Property, and Confucian Reaction in Sung and Yuan China (960–1368)*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. -There is quite a bit of stuff on property and marriage, which is not surprising, given how important economics were to family and gender. This is also a good reading on Confucian concern with controlling women as the key to a good society.

Week 8 10/12 The god of silver The Ming and Qing were periods of great commercial expansion, We will look at both the new opportunities this created and the social dislocation that came out of it.

-"[The Late Imperial World: Commerce, Education and Society](#)" from Lufrano, Richard John. *Honorable Merchants: Commerce and Self-Cultivation in Late Imperial China*. University of Hawaii Press, 1997. Merchant culture and education.

-Marmé, Michael. "[Survival through Transformation: How China's Suzhou-Centred World Economy Weathered the General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century.](#)" *Social History* 32, no. 2 (May 1, 2007): 144–65. -Looks at both Suzhou, China's most important commercial city, and the global context of the Chinese economy.

-Dillon, Michael. "[Transport and Marketing in the Development of the Jingdezhen Porcelain Industry during the Ming and Qing Dynasties.](#)" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35, no. 3 (January 1, 1992): 278–90. doi:10.2307/3632734. -If you wanted to be (or are) a Business or Economics major you might like this.

Week 9 10/19 Cultures of violence We will look at the ways organized and unorganized violence were part of daily life for everyone from *yamen* runners to bandits to secret societies. What sort of violence is acceptable in a society and when it is used is something that varies a lot in different societies.

"[From banditry to rebellion and back again](#)" from Robinson, David M. *Bandits, Eunuchs, and the Son of Heaven: Rebellion and the Economy of Violence in Mid-Ming China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001. -Looks at what a bandit is.

"[Extermination](#)" from Rowe, William T. *Crimson Rain: Seven Centuries of Violence in a Chinese County*. Stanford University Press, 2007.

-The early years of the Qing were pretty grim.

-[Selections](#) from *Complete Book of Happiness and Benevolence*-This is a manual for district magistrates. This section deals with *yamen* runners and corruption.

-"[The White Lotus Rebellion in the Han River Highlands](#)" Wang, Wensheng. *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates*. Harvard University Press, 2014. -Not only a good study of a rebellion, a nice summary of how scholars understand these things.

Second paper topic due. This is a one paragraph statement of what your paper will show. You should also include a working bibliography

Week 10 10/26 Borderlands Especially after 1644 the imperial government was trying to control lots of areas outside the 18 provinces of China Proper. We will look the process of accommodation and violence that occurred.

-“Qing Ethnic Policy and Chinese Merchants” from James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864*, (Stanford University Press, 2016).

-“The Mushroom Crisis” from Jonathan Schlesinger, *A World Trimmed with Fur: Wild Things, Pristine Places, and the Natural Fringes of Qing Rule* (Stanford University Press, 2019)

-“Bringing Guizhou into the Empire” from Hostetler, Laura *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005

Week 11 11/2 Manchus and Han To some extent the Chinese defined themselves in relation to those outside. This became especially important after 1644 when the Manchus became rulers of China. One way that this has become controversial is in the debate over New Qing History. This whole section of the class deals with definitions of Chinese-ness, the boundaries of China, and what they mean.

-"[The Iron Rice Bowl of Banner Privilege](#)" from Elliott, Mark C. *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*. Stanford University Press, 2001. -A description of the Banner system and what it meant to be Manchu.

-Choose a chapter from Ruth W. Dunnell et al., *New Qing Imperial History*, (London: Routledge, 2011)

Week 12 11/9 Pirate week Commercial and demographic expansion led Chinese to leave China, and we will look at China's relation to the maritime world of Southeast Asia. Although not all of these people were pirates, they did all fit into the category of people the government found hard to keep track of and keep under control.

-"[Reconsidering Overseas Trade: The Chinese Intellectual Response to the Emerging Global Economy](#)" From Zhao, Gang. *The Qing Opening to the Ocean: Chinese Maritime Policies, 1684-1757*. University of Hawaii Press, 2013. -This is not only good on official attitudes towards trade, it is also a good look at how policy was made.

-"[Feeding China](#)" from Yangwen, Zheng. *China on the Sea: How the Maritime World Shaped Modern China*. BRILL, 2011. -The practical role of overseas trade

-Andrade, Tonio. "[The Company's Chinese Pirates: How the Dutch East India Company Tried to Lead a Coalition of Pirates to War against China, 1621-1662.](#)" *Journal of World History* 15, no. 4 (2004): 415–44. doi:10.1353/jwh.2005.0124. -Pirates in international context

-MacKay, Joseph. "[Pirate Nations: Maritime Pirates as Escape Societies in Late Imperial China.](#)" *Social Science History* 37, no. 4 (2013): 551–73. -Pirates in anthropological context

Week 13 11/16 Cultures of poverty and dynastic decline By 1800 something was going wrong with China. There had always been poor people, but now things seemed to be getting worse.

-"[Riots into Rebellion, 1776-1795](#)" from Hung, Ho-fung. *Protest with Chinese Characteristics : Demonstration, Riots, and Petitions in the Mid-Qing Dynasty*. Columbia University Press, 2011.

-"[Fisheries and the peasant economy](#)" from Zhang, Jiayan. *Coping with Calamity: Environmental Change and Peasant Response in Rural China, 1736-1949*. University of Hawaii Press, 2015. - How those at the bottom got by. Ownership and exploitation of resources

-"[Internal Frontiers and Intensified Land Use in China](#)" from Richards, John F. *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World* by. University of California Press, 2003. -A summary of the process of internal migration caused by land pressure.

Averill, Stephen C. "[The Shed People and the Opening of the Yangzi Highlands.](#)" *Modern China* 9, no. 1 (January 1, 1983): 84–126. Much more specific than Richards, and a good comparison for it.

Draft of paper due

Thanksgiving break

Week 14 11/30 The Qianlong Emperor was the most cosmopolitan monarch of the Eighteenth century, and we will use him to examine China and its culture at the end of our period, sort of coming in full circle from Zhu Yuanzheng at the beginning. If you want, you can look at the

website

[Recording the Grandeur of the Qing](#)

or

-Rowe, William T. "[Introduction: The Significance of the Qianlong-Jiaqing Transition in Qing History.](#)" *Late Imperial China* 32, no. 2 (2011): 74–88. doi:10.1353/late.2011.0011. -This is another one of those historiographical readings.

But our main reading will be Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768*

Presentations on finals day. You will each do a short oral presentation on your research project

-Quiz grade 20%

All the short writing and other assignments you will do in class are part of your quiz grade. Basically, any assignment that I give you points for which is not one of the things below is part of your quiz grade. At the end of the semester I will add up your points and set the highest amount anyone got as 100%.

-Perusal discussions -21%

-Short papers 15%

-Each of you will select a story from the *Sanyan* collection that is -not- in our short reader and do a presentation on it. This presentation will be recorded via Zoom, and each of you will write critiques of two other student's presentations. You will also write this up as a primary source analysis. You will also record a short presentation on it for the class

-Each of you will also write an analysis of two of our other (secondary) readings.

These three written analysis papers make up 15% of your grade, but you can do more than three and keep the high grades.

-Research project 30%

Each of you will be doing a research project for this class. There are two or three options for this. Either of the two option one choices would make a good paper to present at the Pittsburgh Asia Consortium Undergraduate Research Conference in the Spring. The final research paper is 30% of your grade, all the small assignments that lead up to it are part of your quiz grade.

1 A -Standard research paper

This is a 12-15+ page paper, probably mostly based on secondary sources, that answers some question that you find interesting or important. This could be anything about any aspect of Late Imperial China (considered very broadly) that interests you and that we can find sources on.

1 B -Sanyan paper

This is also a standard 12-15+ page research paper, but in this case you will be using Feng Menglong as one of your major sources for a paper on some

aspect of Ming society. The stories in the larger collection are a great source on Ming attitudes towards all sorts of things, from family to religion to commerce.

2 Historiographical essay

This also a 12-15+ page paper, but rather than coming up with a specific research topic, you will select a set of books/articles that deal with a particular topic and write an essay summing up the state of the field and/or how our understanding of this topic had developed.

Final exam 15% This will be a take-home exam, turned in on the final day.

Grading Scale

90%+ =A

80-89.999% =B

70-79.999% =C

60-69.999% =D

60% or less =F

Attendance policy-- You are expected to come to class every day, but the point is not just to come to class, but to come having done your reading and being ready to talk about it. That said there is no penalty for not coming to class besides the fact that you will not learn anything. If you are not in class it is your responsibility to get the notes and find out what we did and be ready for any upcoming assignments.

-All work is due in class on the date announced. Late work may be turned in without penalty with a medical or other excuse. Unexcused late work will be marked down one grade a day (A- becomes a B+, etc.)

Academic dishonesty-- All students are required to abide by the University's policies on Academic Integrity, as found in the catalog.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to meet this commitment and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a University-approved research project.

Faculty members are obligated to report sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred to the Department of Human Services (1-800-932-0313) and University Police (724-357-2141).

Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at: <http://www.iup.edu/social-equity/policies/title-ix/>

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