



NEW COURSES IN TOPIC STUDIES OFFERED IN SEMESTER 1, 2015-2016

CHSH/HIST 4407 Topic Studies in Social History:
Eunuchs in Early and Medieval China (E)

Dr. Michael Hoeckelmann

Eunuchs were a salient feature at the courts of Imperial China throughout its history. They served as a conduit between the inner and outer courts but were also a marginalised group without a voice of its own. Their presence can be traced back as far as the Eastern Zhou (771–256 BC), some scholars even suggest to the Shang (ca. 1600–ca. 1045 BC). In this class, we will discuss theories about the anthropological origin of eunuchs in Early China and other civilisations, and trace their roles through Medieval or Middle-period China. Rather than focusing on the proverbial three eunuchs maladies 宦官之禍 of the Han, Tang, and Ming, we will look at new sources for the history of eunuchs and ask what gender and family roles eunuchs assumed. At the end, we will have a better understanding of the eunuch institution as the seam of Chinese society.

HIST 4215 Topic Studies in Western History:
Slavery and Freedom in America (E)

Dr David Schley

One of the enduring questions of American history is how professed ideals of liberty and self-governance could, for so long, coexist with a brutal system of slavery. From the American War of Independence (1775-1783) to the American Civil War (1861-1865), the role of slavery in the American republic was the focus of near constant political debate. This course will look at the social, economic, and political dimensions of American slavery. We will first consider how slavery functioned as a social system, and what life was like for enslaved persons. Their labor was critical to the growth of American capitalism, and we will consider next the place of slavery in a rapidly developing economy. The profitability of slave labor made its abolition particularly controversial, and we will consider finally how debates over the future of slavery shaped American ideas of democracy.

HIST/CHSH 4135 Topic Studies in Chinese History:
Material Cultures of China (E)

Dr Sammy Kin-sum Li

This course aims to provide a comprehensive historical overview of material cultures of China and discuss a variety of methodological issues. This course is both chronological and theme-oriented, using materials ranging from Neolithic to contemporary. Geographical coverage uses today's China as a point of departure, but its scope also extends to the rest of the world. Taking one form of material as the focus of each lecture, students will nurture a historical sense of the Chinese material cultures and learn how to examine these material records by relating the objects' appearance and design to production technology. Digital technology will prove very useful in technical study of objects. Students will also be introduced to methodologies of studying textual history, art history, and literature together, reconstructing ephemeral art by historical texts and still images, and examining contemporary forms of art like photos and movies. At the end of this course students will be able to rethink how concepts of "China" and "Chinese material culture and history" have been formed and established.