

NEW COURSES IN TOPIC STUDIES OFFERED IN SEMESTER 2, 2015-2016

HIST/CHSH 4135/3730 Topic Studies in Chinese History: Historical Geography of China (E)

Dr. Lei Chin-han

An understanding of history cannot be detached from its spatial settings. In view of this, the primary purpose of this course is to equip students with the essential knowledge regarding the geographical settings, both natural and human, during historical periods in China.

Topics to be covered include: 1) Political geography of the Chinese dynasties; 2) Transportation geography and military geography; 3) Changing fluvial topography: The Yellow River, Huai River, Yangtze River, Tai Lake and Dongting Lake; 4) Climate change since the Neolithic period as revealed in Chinese sources; 5) Economic geography: The development of agriculture and nomadism; and 6) Urban geography.

The understanding of these topics will enable us to examine major historical issues, ranging from political and military events to more structural ones such as socio-economical and cultural changes, through a geographical lens. I will also delve into human agency of geographical changes and the relations between human and geography during China's historical era.

HIST/CHSH 4327 Topic Studies in Comparative History: Ancient China Meets the West (E)

Dr. Lei Chin-han

Although the longevity of Chinese history has long been appreciated, it was not until fairly recent that scholars become aware of the challenges that ancient Chinese civilization poses to the theoretical framework based on western historical experience. Taking the stance of cultural relativism, this course attempts to illustrate the uniqueness of ancient Chinese civilization while highlighting its intellectual impacts on modern scholarship. I will start with a brief introduction to the history of ancient China as well as its sources and methodology, then moving on to confront it with western social and historical concepts.

Topics to be discussed include: 1) Methodology: Wang Guowei's Dual Attestation Method 二重證據法 vs. Leopold von Ranke's historical empiricism; 2) The origin of civilization: The Longshan 龍山 period vs. the chiefdom model; 3) Chronology: Ancient Chinese chronology vs. the chronology of ancient Mesopotamia; 4) Writing system: Ideography vs. the alphabetic and syllabic approaches; 5) Territoriality: The Western Zhou *feng jian* 封建 vs. feudalism and feudal society; 6) Geography: The Zhou Road vs. the Roman roads; 7) Philosophy: Confucianism and the Axial Age; 8) Bureaucracy: Chinese emperors vs. Oriental Despotism; 9) Empire: The Qin and Han Empires vs. the Roman Empire.

It is expected that through these discussions, students will not only be familiar with cutting-edge scholarship on ancient China, but will also be able to approach it from a wider perspective.

HIST 4406/2760 Topic Studies in Cultural History: Asia on America's Screen (E)

Dr. Stacilee Ford

For over a century, American cinema has imagined Asia on screen. This course explores diverse representations of Asia/Asian America's people, places, and cultures, foregrounding the cross-cultural encounter between East and West at the movies. "Texts" include films from a range of historical eras and various genres including Hollywood blockbusters, musicals, film noir, romantic comedy, historical fiction and biography, transnational co-productions, and independent and documentary films. From D.W. Griffith's 1919 classic, *BROKEN BLOSSOMS*, to Cold War films such as *LOVE IS A MANY-SPLENDORED THING*, and *THE KING AND I*, to more contemporary films such as *THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST* and *THE KARATE KID*, students will analyze films as an archive of imperfect but influential cultural history.