

HISTORY SEMINAR SYLLABUS (2009-10)

Course description

This will be an intensive, modular seminar, given in the ancient capital of Xi'an. For two weeks, students will have lectures that cover the history of China from its earliest beginnings to the present. One-third of this seminar course consists of lectures, one-third consists of presentations by the students, and one-third consists of field trips to historical sites. Students will become familiar with the major dynasties of China, their character and contributions, and their major figures. Each student will also read and make a presentation on a book about one significant event or person in Chinese history, such as the Boxer Rebellion, the Mongol empire, the international voyages of the Ming dynasty, Matteo Ricci, etc. Relevant films and trips to historical sites will occur during these two weeks. Afterwards, you will have an additional one-week study tour of Beijing and Shanghai, where you will visit (and make presentations about) famous sites such as the Great Wall, the Summer Palace, the Forbidden City, the Shanghai Museum etc.

Course objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to

- recognize the extent to which Chinese history and culture is a consequence of its geography.
- list, in order, the major Chinese dynasties and their dates.
- describe notable and unique characteristics of each major dynasty.
- describe the most important persons and events in China's history.
- explain the cause-and-effect relationship of significant events and periods in Chinese history.
- explain how Chinese views in different areas are influenced by their historical perspective.
- be an "expert" on one significant aspect of Chinese history, and able to present this to others.
- relate what they have learned in the classroom with the historical sites they visit.

Course text

Ebrey, Patricia Buckley (1996). *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*.

Course schedule

Classes are held all day, every day, during this module. Usually, students will give their book presentations in the morning; followed by a lecture that expands on the assigned readings in

Ebrey for that day. In the afternoons, you will either travel to a site relevant to period in history under discussion for that day, or you will see a film (either Western or Chinese) on the topic. At the end of the two weeks of classes, you will have the course final exam—*before* continuing with the study tour in Beijing and Shanghai.

Assessment

Quizzes

You will be quizzed on all of the seven assigned readings in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (aka, “Ebrey”). Since each quiz is worth 5% of your grade, the total of all your quizzes equals 35% your course grade.

Final Exam

Unlike the quizzes, which focus on significant issues for the specific periods under discussion, the final exam focuses on the overall perspective of Chinese history, involving synthesis. You need to know the names, dates, capitals, and notable persons. You should also be able to describe unique, distinguishing characteristics of each dynasty. You should also be able to make comparisons between one dynasty and another, and their most significant emperors or personages. Similarly, you should be able to describe how one major event caused a resulting significant event. Finally, you should be able to describe, with reasonable detail, information provided in the book presentations by students.

Book Presentation

Each of you will have to make a presentation for the History course. The presentation should be based on ONE book from the CSP library. There are several parts to this project. Altogether, the different parts add up to 25% of your History grade.

Percentages of course components that comprise your grade

Class Participation	10%
Quizzes	35%
Final exam	30%
Book Presentation (total)	25%