

CAH2812: EARLY AND IMPERIAL CHINA

Effective Term

Semester B 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Early and Imperial China

Subject Code

CAH - Chinese and History

Course Number

2812

Academic Unit

Chinese and History (CAH)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

Other Languages

Other Languages for Medium of Instruction

English supplemented by Chinese*

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Additional Information

*Restricted to terms and explanation of terms that are not widely cited in English.

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course is designed to provide an overview of Chinese history from prehistory to the Ming dynasty. It attempts to capture, through lectures, readings, video clips, and discussions, the patterns of evolution of early China to late imperial China. The length and complexity of Chinese history renders it necessary to place emphasis primarily on the major themes and issues in terms of political events and social structure. Specifically, this course aims to a) introduce students to the major themes and issues in early Chinese to late imperial Chinese history with the underpinnings of up-to-date scholarly research; b) analyse significant political and social developments in the long span of Chinese history; and c) introduce students to the use and interpretation of primary historical sources (both documents and archaeological findings).

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Demonstrate fundamental knowledge of relevant Chinese history	30	x		
2	Examine the overall historical development from prehistory to the Ming dynasty of China	30	x		
3	Apply historical theories and research methods in historical study	20		x	
4	Develop college-level reading skills, oral presentation skills, and writing skills	20		x	

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lecture	In-class learning activities devoted to facts, ideas, themes, theories, and research findings. These are designed to a) illustrate the key events and themes in Chinese history; b) discuss fundamental knowledge of relevant Chinese documentary and archaeological sources; and c) examine the overall historical themes. Interactive in-class activities include five-minute commentaries and summaries.	1, 2, 3	
2	Reading	The reading and analysis of books and articles related to the course topics, including primary source texts (both in Chinese and in English translations) and secondary research works.	1, 3, 4	
3	Tutorial and Presentation	Group discussions and presentations are required for these. In the tutorials, the teacher(s) will assess the students' analytical skills and their understanding of the assigned readings. Students will be divided into small groups to present on assigned topics. Teachers will assess and grade the groups according to their performance and the resultant discussions. Through presentations and peer assessment, the students' analytical and communication skills will be enhanced.	2, 3, 4	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Class participation and performance: Emphasis is placed on the major themes, concepts, and knowledge about Chinese history. Students have to participate in the class discussions--they should proactively contribute to class by offering ideas and/or asking questions consistently both in lectures and tutorials and related activities via on-line platforms. They should listen attentively when others speak, both in groups and in class, and always be well prepared for class with a grasp of the required readings. They also have to be prepared to list the main points relevant to their learning at the end of the lectures. Through these activities, they are able to demonstrate fundamental knowledge of the periods of Chinese history under concern, as well as examine the overall historical development in premodern China.	1, 2	30	-	No

2	Group Presentation: Students should develop their own ideas and express them in a creative and fluent manner in a group setting. They will have to demonstrate a solid understanding of the relevant knowledge, and respond to questions fully and accurately. They should also communicate their ideas in an engaging and accessible manner to each other within the group, and also to all other classmates.	1, 3, 4	20	-	No
3	One written assignment: The written assignment helps students reflect on key concepts, theories, events, and knowledge of the history of early and imperial China.	1, 3, 4	15	An appropriate amount of use is ok, esp. in discussing ideas with Gen AI. That said, GenAI often provides false or fabricated information regarding historical facts, and students should not copy and paste verbatim the texts generated by AI in their submitted assignments.	Yes

4	Final Paper (around 2500 words): Students are required to write a final paper on a selected topic. They are required to generate their own arguments, use historical sources properly, and apply the appropriate historical methods in their analysis.	3, 4	35	An appropriate amount of use is ok, esp. in discussing ideas with Gen AI. That said, GenAI often provides false or fabricated information regarding historical facts, and students should not copy and paste verbatim the texts generated by AI in their submitted assignments.	Yes
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Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Class participation and performance

Criterion

Students actively participate in discussions, debates, and other class activities in tutorials and lectures. They should demonstrate an ability to interpret illustrate, and criticise both insightfully and innovatively.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Strong evidence of:

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, and ability to engage in class discussion and comment on other people' s points.
- Sufficient pre-class preparation and familiarity with views from peers and other materials.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Some evidence of:

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, and ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other people' s points.
- Sufficient pre-class preparation and familiarity with views from peers and other materials.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited evidence of:

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, and ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other people' s points.
- Sufficient pre-class preparation and familiarity with views from peers and other materials.

Marginal (D)

Marginally satisfies the basic requirements of class participation and discussion.

Failure (F)

Failing to meet the minimum requirements of class participation and discussion.

Assessment Task

Group Presentation

Criterion

This assessment will grade on the content and fluency of the presentation as well as its organisation and coherence. The group delivering the presentation must have thoroughly researched their topic and worked as a team on the collection, reading, selection, integration, and analysis of the relevant scholarly resources, either self-selected or assigned by the teacher(s). They should lead classmates into the discussion, to explain with rich content and excellent grasp of the materials with in-depth and extensive knowledge of the subject matter. They should also demonstrate rigorous organisation, coherent structure, balanced composition, and an ability to criticise and analyse with cogent arguments and insightful comments.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Strong evidence of:

- Rich content, excellent grasp of the materials with in-depth or extensive knowledge of the subject matter;
- Rigorous organisation, coherent structure, and balanced composition;
- Critical analysis, convincing statement, and creative comments;
- Superior presentation skills: good pronunciation, fluent expression, and appropriate diction, as well as good time-management

Good (B+, B, B-)

Some evidence of:

- Rich content, excellent grasp of the materials with in-depth or extensive knowledge of the subject matter;
- Rigorous organisation, coherent structure, and balanced composition;
- Critical analysis, convincing statement, and creative comments;
- Superior presentation skills: good pronunciation, fluent expression, and appropriate diction, as well as good time-management

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited evidence of:

- Rich content, excellent grasp of the materials with in-depth or extensive knowledge of the subject matter;
- Rigorous organisation, coherent structure, and balanced composition;
- Critical analysis, convincing statement, and creative comments;
- Superior presentation skills: good pronunciation, fluent expression, and appropriate diction, as well as good time-management

Marginal (D)

- Loose organisation, but acceptable content offered in the presentation.
- Adequate understanding of the readings and an indication of a grasp of the general ideas, but with limited or irrelevant use of scholarly references;
- Simplistic and unilateral comments, without clear explanation or analysis;
- Acceptable pronunciation and expression; a few mistakes in diction, but no influence on general delivery of the presentation.
- Room for improvement in planning and time-management.

Failure (F)

- Limited familiarity with the facts in the readings and their relations; unsystematic ideas which cannot express the subject matter or relevant themes;
- Loose organisation, without distinguishing the primary and secondary references;
- Devoid of personal comment and/or unreasonable opinion;
- Overly soft voice, indistinct pronunciation, and improper diction, or seriously problematic time-management.

Assessment Task

Written Assignment

Criterion

This assessment will grade on content, organization and fluency. Students should demonstrate the ability to utilize primary and secondary sources properly, deliver argument and analyse critically, apply research methods skilfully, as well as conclude in a convincing and creative manner.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Strong evidence of :

- Rich content, ability to integrate various resources into primary and secondary levels based on demand ;
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition;
- Creative, and insightful ideas
- Able to interpret the opinions originally;
- Sufficient and organized references which can be utilized in accordance with the topic.
- Exact and fluent expression, good sense of context, able to use various research methods and writing skills to make the paper convincing with proper diction.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Some evidence of :

- Rich content, ability to integrate various resources into primary and secondary levels based on demand ;
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition;
- Creative and insightful ideas
- Able to interpret the opinions originally;
- Sufficient and organized references which can be utilized in accordance with the topic.
- Exact and fluent expression, good sense of context, able to use various writing skills to make the paper convincing with proper diction.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited evidence of :

- Rich content, ability to integrate various resources into primary and secondary levels based on demand ;
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition;
- Creative and insightful ideas
- Able to interpret the opinions originally;
- Sufficient and organized references which can be utilized in accordance with the topic.
- Exact and fluent expression, good sense of context, able to use various writing skills to make the paper convincing with proper diction.

Marginal (D)

- Adequate content, ability to integrate resources generally based on demand, limited or irrelevant use of resources;
- Loose organization;
- Able to express relevant points to the subject matter;
- References are insufficient, ability to provide some reasonable personal comments, but no clear demonstration;
- Sentence fluency and diction are acceptable.

Failure (F)

- Vague and devoid of content, weak ability to integrate limited resources ;
- Loose organization, without distinct primary and secondary levels;
- Unsystematic ideas which cannot express the subject matter or relevant themes;
- Summary of references, no personal idea and/or unreasonable comment;
- Seriously insufficient/no reference;
- Although the expression is not clear, part of the idea can be identified; over-use of existing quotations and relevant research.

Assessment Task

Final Paper

Criterion

This assessment will grade based on the content, organization, and fluency of the written paper. Students should demonstrate the ability to utilise primary and secondary sources properly, to deliver sound arguments and analyse critically, apply appropriate research methods skilfully, as well as arrive at a convincing and insightful conclusion.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Strong evidence of:

- Rich content, ability to integrate various scholarly resources into primary and secondary levels;
- Rigorous organisation, coherent structure, and systematic composition;
- Creative and insightful ideas;
- Demonstration of the ability to interpret the opinions;
- Utilising adequate and well-organised references that are relevant to the topic;
- Accurate and fluent expression in written form, a good sense of the historical context, and the ability to use various research methods and writing skills to make the paper convincing with proper diction.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Some evidence of:

- Rich content, ability to integrate various scholarly resources into primary and secondary levels;
- Rigorous organisation, coherent structure, and systematic composition;
- Creative and insightful ideas;
- Demonstration of the ability to interpret the opinions;
- Utilising adequate and well-organised references that are relevant to the topic;
- Accurate and fluent expression in written form, a good sense of the historical context, and the ability to use various research methods and writing skills to make the paper convincing with proper diction.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited evidence of:

- Rich content, ability to integrate various scholarly resources into primary and secondary levels;
- Rigorous organisation, coherent structure, and systematic composition;
- Creative and insightful ideas;
- Demonstration of the ability to interpret the opinions;
- Utilising adequate and well-organised references that are relevant to the topic;
- Accurate and fluent expression in written form, a good sense of the historical context, and the ability to use various research methods and writing skills to make the paper convincing with proper diction.

Marginal (D)

- Marginally adequate content, and ability to integrate some scholarly resources, but only showing very limited or irrelevant use of resources;
- Loose organization;
- Ability to express some relevant points to the subject matter;
- References are insufficient
- Demonstration of the ability to provide some personal comments, but no clear demonstration of fact-based analysis;
- Sentence fluency and diction is marginally acceptable but far from perfect.

Failure (F)

- Vague and devoid of content, and very weak ability to integrate the limited scholarly resources;
 - Loose organization, without distinct primary and secondary categorisation of the sources;
 - Unsystematic ideas, and/or ideas that are irrelevant to the subject matter or themes;
 - Some form of summary of references, but no sign of personal analysis and/or unreasonable comments;
 - Seriously insufficient/no references;
 - Although the expression is not clear, part of the student's ideas could be identified; over- use or misuse of existing quotations and relevant research.
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Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Archaeology, prehistory, material culture, cultural relics, artefacts, myths, bamboo-slip manuscripts, Axial Age, Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern dynasties, Tang, Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, Song, Liao, Jin, Western Xia, Yuan, Ming, Early China, Early medieval China, Medieval China, Middle period, Tang-Song transition, Late imperial China, political and bureaucratic system, aristocratic clans, civil service examination, economic system, state and society, intellectual thought, foreign relations, conquest dynasties, religions and popular beliefs.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Patricia Buckley Ebrey. <i>The Cambridge Illustrated History of China</i> , 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
2	Hsu Cho-yun. <i>China: A New Cultural History</i> , translated by Timothy D. Baker, Jr. and Michael S. Duke. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
3	Michael Szonyi (ed.). <i>A Companion to Chinese History</i> . Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2017.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Timothy Brook. <i>The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties</i> . Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.
2	John W. Dardess. <i>Ming China, 1368–1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire</i> . Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.
3	Paul R. Goldin (ed.). <i>Routledge Handbook of Early Chinese History</i> . Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018.
4	Valerie Hansen. <i>The Open Empire: A History of China to 1800</i> . New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015.
5	Dieter Kuhn. <i>The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China</i> . Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
6	Mark Edward Lewis. <i>China between Empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties</i> , Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
7	Mark Edward Lewis, <i>China's Cosmopolitan Empires: The Tang Dynasty</i> . Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.
8	Mark Edward Lewis. <i>The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han</i> . Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
9	Li Feng, <i>Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crisis and Fall of the Western Zhou, 1045–771 BC</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
10	Li Feng. <i>Early China: A Social and Cultural History</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
11	Michael Loewe (ed.). <i>Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide</i> . Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China, 1993.
12	Michael Loewe and Edward Shaughnessy (eds). <i>The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
13	Frederick W. Mote. <i>Imperial China 900-1800</i> . Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003.
14	Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe (eds.). <i>China's Early Empires: A Re-appraisal</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
15	Yuri Pines. <i>Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era</i> . Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.
16	Yuri Pines. <i>Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722–453 B.C.E.</i> Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.

17	Yuri Pines. <i>The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.
18	Jonathan Porter. <i>Imperial China, 1350-1900</i> . Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
19	Wendy Swartz, Robert Ford Campany, Yang Lu, and Jessey J. C. Choo (eds.). <i>Early Medieval China: A Sourcebook</i> . New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
20	Gideon Shelach-Lavi. <i>The Archaeology of Early China: From Prehistory to the Han Dynasty</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
21	Roel Sterckx. <i>Chinese Thought: From Confucius to Cook Ding</i> . London: Penguin Random House, 2019.
22	Michael Szonyi (ed.). <i>A Companion to Chinese History</i> . Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley Blackwell, 2017.
23	Nicolas Tackett. <i>The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
24	Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, (eds). <i>The Cambridge History of China</i> , vols. 1-8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978-.
25	Richard von Glahn. <i>The Economic History of China: From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
26	Frederic Wakeman Jr. <i>The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China</i> . Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.
27	Endymion Wilkinson. <i>Chinese History: A New Manual</i> , 5th ed. Cambridge, MA: Endymion Wilkinson (c/o Harvard University Asia Center), 2018.
28	Victor Cunrui Xiong and Kenneth J. Hammond (eds). <i>Routledge Handbook of Imperial Chinese History</i> Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018.
29	Digital Reference Tools (URLs could go out of date): Academia Sinica Scripta Sinica: http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm Asia for Educators: http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ China Biographical Database Project: http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cbdb China Historical GIS: http://chgis.fas.harvard.edu/ ChinaKnowledge.de: http://chinaknowledge.de/ Chinese Text Project: https://ctext.org/ Chinese-Western Calendar Converter: https://sinocal.sinica.edu.tw/ Classical Historiography for Chinese History: https://libguides.princeton.edu/chinese-historiography Digital Resources in International Chinese Studies: https://ccs.ncl.edu.tw/dr Kanseki Repository: http://www.kanripo.org/ Thesaurus Linguae Sericae: https://hxwd.org/