



## **XIAN HISTORY375: Chinese History from the Neolithic to the Tang Dynasty**

*Instructor: Andrew Womack*

### **Course Introduction and Description**

Xi'an History 375 will introduce students to the early history of Chinese civilization. Beginning with the Neolithic Period, students will trace the development of Chinese civilization from its origins in pre-history up to the Golden Age of the Tang Dynasty. Since much of China's early history took place in and around Shaanxi Province, we will focus heavily on the history of Shaanxi and its capital of Xi'an. This will coincide with field trips to local historic and prehistoric sites, as well as museums.

We will also branch out to look at how civilization was developing across China and at the interactions between Shaanxi and other parts of East Asia. This will help tie the class in with the required "Silk Road: Yesterday and Today" course, while also expanding the view of these relations further to the east.

Additionally, we will examine how we know what we know, by looking at archaeological and historical research methods both in China and the West. By taking an interdisciplinary approach, which will include aspects of archaeology, history, and art history, students will be able to gain a thorough appreciation and understanding of early Chinese civilization.

### **Course Objectives**

After completion of the course students should:

- 1) Be familiar with the major Neolithic traditions of northern China, including their cultural practices, art styles, technology, and interactions.
- 2) Understand the broad transitions that took place between the Neolithic and Bronze Ages and between Chinese dynasties.
- 3) Understand the development of major religious and philosophical movements in early China such as ancestor worship, Daoism, Confucianism, etc.
- 4) Be aware of how archaeological and historical data have been gathered and used to not only help us understand early Chinese history, but also to serve modern ideologies as well.
- 5) Appreciate how over 7000 years of Chinese history has helped shape the cultural and social landscape of modern day China.

## **Course Requirements, Evaluation, and Grading Structure**

### 1. Preparation and Class Participation: 10%

Preparation means more than just being present for class, students are expected to complete required readings and actively take part in class discussions. Students are encouraged to bring a critical eye to readings, to the professor's lectures, and the comments of fellow classmates. All comments should be made in the spirit mutual respect and with the goal of achieving greater understanding.

### 2. Lead Class Discussion 10%

In addition to active participation in class, each student will be responsible for selecting two class sessions for which he/she will write a response paper of 2-3 pages and will then act as the discussion leader during class. The response paper must be sent by email to everyone in the class 24 hours before the session for which it has been prepared. These responses are not meant to be book reviews that summarize the readings, but instead are an opportunity for students to draw connections between themes in the readings, to provide critical feedback on ideas and arguments in the readings themselves or to simply present questions about the readings.

### 3. Mid-term Exam 20%

The Mid-term Exam will take place half way through the semester and will cover the contents of the first half of the course, approximately Neolithic to the Qin Dynasty. It will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. A review session will be held during the preceding class.

### 4. Final Exam 30%

The Final Exam will be given during the last class period. It will cover all course material, but will focus primarily on the second half of the course. It will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. A review session will be held during the preceding class period.

### 5. Essay 30%

Students will write an 8-10 page essay focusing on one aspect of early Chinese history. A selection of essay topics will be provided midway through the semester. These will encourage students to delve deeper into subjects that were introduced in course lectures. These will be research essays that will require significant use of outside sources. These will be provided by the Alliance Library in Xi'an or online through the students' home institution. Essays will be due near the end of the semester.

## **Deadlines, Class Etiquette and Academic Honesty**

All work must be handed in on time. Late work will not be accepted. If you are ill and are not able to hand in an assignment on time, you should notify me before the deadline so that we can make alternative arrangements.

All course work must be original. You should be careful to cite and reference any work that is not your own. Plagiarism will be strictly punished with a non-negotiable F for the assignment in question, and the possibility of stricter penalties including expulsion from the class and the program. Please refer to the Alliance program rules for more details. If you have any questions about acceptable forms of citation, please ask me.

This class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. You are expected to come prepared to each class and to engage in discussions.

## **Readings:**

A Course Reader will be provided at the beginning of the course. Additional readings and handouts will be provided throughout the semester as needed.

## **General Sources:**

Hansen, Valerie. *The Open Empire: A History of China To 1600*.

The closest thing we're going to have to a textbook; also see suggested readings section for further exploration.

Ebrey, Patricia B. ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (Especially pages 1-201)

This will provide solid, short, primary source readings for class.

Yang, Xiaoneng, ed. *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology: Celebrated Discoveries from the PRC*.

This is an excellent archaeologically focused source with amazing pictures.

Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, eds. *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*

It has everything you ever wanted to know about this period.

Poo, Mu-Chou. *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion*.

Chinese religions from the Neolithic to the Han Dynasty.

Vainker, Shelagh. *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain*.

Exactly what it says it is – A survey of this topic from prehistory to the present. Aside from selected readings from these main sources we may occasionally use short sections from other books covering specialized topics. Additionally, for each class there are a number of optional “recommended” readings, which are available in the office should you wish to delve deeper into the topic.

## Class & Reading Schedule

### **Session 1: January 19**

#### **Presenting Chinese History: Sources and Subjects**

1. Course Introduction
2. Sources of Chinese History
3. East Asian Geography
4. The Paleolithic Period
5. Introduction to the Early Neolithic

#### Reading:

Chang, Kwang-Chih and Xu Pingfang, eds. *The Formation of Chinese Civilization: An Archaeological Perspective*. (Pages 11-25 Early Humans in China; 27-41 The Beginning of Farming)

### **Session 2: January 26**

#### **The Neolithic Part I: Shaanxi Province**

1. Laoguantai Culture
2. Discovery of Yangshao Culture
3. Yangshao Banpo: A Type-site
4. Environment, Subsistence, and Social Organization
5. Art, Religion, and Technology

#### **Museum Visit/Banpo Village Visit**

#### Reading:

Yang, Xiaoneng, ed. *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology: Celebrated Discoveries from the PRC*. (Pages 51-77; Yangshao Banpo/Majiayao)

#### Additional Sources:

Vaniker, Shelagh' *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain*. (Chapter 1)

Chang, Kwang-Chih and Xu Pingfang, eds. *The Formation of Chinese Civilization: An Archaeological Perspective*. (Pages 43-83 The Yangshao Period)

### **Session 3: February 2**

#### **The Neolithic Part II: Transitions Throughout China**

1. Neolithic Traditions of Northern and Southern China
2. Life and Death In A Neolithic Village
3. Jade Working: Much more difficult than you might expect!
4. Moving Forward: The Longshan Culture
5. Transition to the Bronze Age: Outside Influences or Internal Innovation?

Reading:

Yang, Xiaoneng, ed. *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology: Celebrated Discoveries from the PRC*. (Pages 78-98 Hongshan; 99-105 Dawenkou & Shandong Longshan; 106-116 Taosi Longshan; 117-135 Liangzhu)

Additional Sources:

Nelson, Sarah M. *The Archaeology of Northeast China: Beyond the Great Wall*. (Part I)

Liu, Li. *The Chinese Neolithic: Trajectories to Early States*.

Chang, Kwang-Chih and Xu Pingfang, eds. *The Formation of Chinese Civilization: An Archaeological Perspective*. (Pages 85-124 The Formation of Civilization)

**Session 4: February 9**

**The Early Bronze Age**

1. The Rise of Kings and City-States
2. Early Chinese Religion: Shamans and Ancestors
3. Erlitou: The First Bronze Casters
4. The Xia Dynasty? Maybe not...Mixing Archaeological Evidence and Early Chinese Literature
5. Where did they come from? Sanxingdui and Dayangzhou
6. Pre-Zhou Culture in Shaanxi

Reading:

Yang, Xiaoneng, ed. *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology: Celebrated Discoveries from the PRC*. (Pages 139-149 Erlitou; 206-227 Sanxingdui)

Additional Sources:

Nelson, Sarah M. *The Archaeology of Northeast China: Beyond the Great Wall*. (Part II)

Thorpe, Robert L. *China in the Early Bronze Age: Shang Civilization*. (Ch. 1 & 2)

Bagley, Robert, ed. *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization*.

**Silk Road Study Excursion (February 15 – February 24)**

**Session 5 – In the Field: Early Nomadic Culture and Art**

**Session 6 – In the Field: Sources of Chinese History from Dunhuang**

Ebrey, Patricia B. ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (Ch. 3; Pts. 22 & 29)

**Session 7: March 2**

**The Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties**

1. The Shang Dynasty site of Anyang

2. Early Writing: Bronze, Bone, and Shell
3. Shang Politics and Religion
4. Origins of the Zhou: Nomads or Not?
5. Rise of the Zhou and Fall of the Shang
6. Eastern Zhou and the Spring and Autumn Period

### **Museum Visit**

#### Reading:

Hansen, Valerie. *The Open Empire: A History of China To 1600*. (Ch. 1)

Ebrey, Patricia B. ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (Ch. 1; Pts. 1 & 2)

#### Additional Sources:

Yang, Xiaoneng, ed. *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology: Celebrated Discoveries from the PRC*. (Pages 162-186 Tomb 5 at Anyang; Shang Oracle Bone Inscriptions from Anyang) (Pages 228-235 Zhou – Bronzes from Feng Hao, Shaanxi; 236-247 Bronzes from Hoard 1; 248-263 Royal Tombs of the Jin State)

Allan, Sarah. *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China*.

Chang, Kwang-Chih. *Shang Civilization*.

Tsien, Tsuen-Hsuei. *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginning of Chinese Books and Inscriptions*.

Chang, Kwang-Chih and Xu Pingfang, eds. *The Formation of Chinese Civilization: An Archaeological Perspective*. (Pages 141-202 Society During the Three Dynasties)

Thorpe, Robert L. *China in the Early Bronze Age: Shang Civilization*. (Ch. 3 - 5)

### **Session 8: March 9**

#### **Midterm Exam**

### **Session 9: March 16**

#### **Division and Unification: Warring States and the Qin Dynasty**

1. The Division of China
2. Confucius Say: Politics and Religion
3. Origins of the Qin: Nomads or Not?
4. Qin Shihuangdi and the Unification of China
5. The Wrong Successor: Fall of the Qin

### **Museum Visit/Terracotta Warrior Visit**

Reading:

Hansen, Valerie. *The Open Empire: A History of China To 1600*. (Ch. 2)

Ebrey, Patricia B. ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (Ch. 1; Pts. 6-8)

Yang, Xiaoneng, ed. *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology: Celebrated Discoveries from the PRC*. (Pages 363-387 The Terra-Cotta Army)

Additional Sources:

Chang, Kwang-Chih and Xu Pingfang, eds. *The Formation of Chinese Civilization: An Archaeological Perspective*. (Pages 203-247 Eastern Zhou; 249-274 Qin; 274-281 Han Transition)

Wood, Frances. *China's First Emperor and His Terracotta Warriors*.

**Session 10: March 23**

**Western Han**

1. Why we say Hanyu (汉语).
2. Re-reunification of China
3. Burial Practices: Images of the Ordinary
4. Literature and Thought During the Western Han
5. Contacts with the West (and south, and everywhere)

Reading:

Hansen, Valerie. *The Open Empire: A History of China To 1600*. (Ch. 3)

Ebrey, Patricia B. ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (Ch. 2; Pts. 16 & 17)

Additional Sources:

Twitchett, Denis and Michael Loewe, eds. *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 1: The Ch'in and Han Empires: 221BC-220AD*.

**Session 11: March 30**

**Eastern Han**

1. Daoism, Confucianism, and Regional Beliefs
2. Government and Law
3. Foreign Relations: The World of the Han
4. Art and Architecture
5. Life Beyond the Imperial City

Reading:

Ebrey, Patricia B. ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (Ch. 2; Pts. 19 & 20)

Vaniker, Shelagh' *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain*. (Chapter 2)

Additional Sources:

Poo, Mu-chou. *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion*.

Twitchett, Denis and Michael Loewe, eds. *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 1: The Ch'in and Han Empires: 221BC-220AD*.

**Xinjiang Silk Road Study Excursion (April 2-10)**

**Session 12: April 8 – In the Field: The first inhabitants of Xinjiang**

**Session 13: April 13**

**Six Dynasties**

1. Collapse of the Han
2. A Good Theme for a Novel: Three Kingdoms
3. Interlude: Eastern and Western Jin
4. Divisions in Thought and Practice: Northern and Southern Dynasties
5. Buddhism and Daoism North and South
6. The New Qin: Sui

Reading:

Ebrey, Patricia B. ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (Ch. 3; Pts. 23 & 24)

Hansen, Valerie. *The Open Empire: A History of China To 1600*. (Ch. 4)

Additional Sources:

Twitchett, Denis and Michael Loewe, eds. *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 1: The Ch'in and Han Empires: 221BC-220AD*.

**Session 14: April 20**

**The Tang Dynasty**

1. Founding of the Tang Dynasty
2. Emperors and Politicians
3. The Capital at Chang'an: What's Left for Us Today?
4. Daily Life and Popular Thought
5. Artistic and Architectural Influences

**Visit to Major Tang Remains in Xi'an**

Reading:

Hansen, Valerie. *The Open Empire: A History of China To 1600*. (Ch. 5)

Ebrey, Patricia B. ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (Ch. 3; Pts. 25, 26, & 28)

Additional Sources:

Twitchett, Denis. *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 3: Sui and T'ang China 589-906AD: Part I* (Especially Ch. 3)

Vaniker, Shelagh' *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain*. (Chapter 3)

**Session 15: April 27**

**Later Tang**

1. Foreign Relations: Outside Influence on Tang Society
2. Views of Life Through Art and Literature
3. Buddhism in Tang China: Empress Wu
4. The End of Religious Freedom
5. Palace Intrigues and the Fall of the Tang

**Final Exam Review**

Reading:

Hansen, Valerie. *The Open Empire: A History of China To 1600*. (Ch. 6)

Ebrey, Patricia B. ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (Ch. 3; Pts. 29-31)

Additional Sources:

Twitchett, Denis. *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 3: Sui and T'ang China 589-906AD: Part I* (Especially Ch. 5)

**Session 16: May 4**

**Final Exam**

1. Final Exam
2. Course Evaluation