

Early China: History and Archaeology

Fall 2010

Syllabus

Course unique numbers: 30770 (ANS) & 39457 (HIS)

Class meetings: MWF, 3-4 pm in [WEL](#) 2.256

Course website at https://webspace.utexas.edu/~dms2244/courses/ans372_earlychina/

For the updated version of this syllabus, consult the course website.

Instructor

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Course description

This course will examine the ancient roots of Chinese civilization, from the fluid mix of regional cultures in the Neolithic period (beginning ca. 8000 B.C.E.) through the establishment of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.). In addition to covering major political developments, we will pay close attention to religious, intellectual, and social trends, as well as to changes in the material culture of ancient China. Throughout the course we will focus particularly on recent archaeological discoveries and their impact on the historiography of ancient China. Nearly eighty years of modern archaeology in China has produced a wide array of data that have revolutionized our understanding of ancient history. As new texts and artifacts continue to be unearthed, historians struggle to reconcile this new knowledge about the past with a received historical tradition that goes back 2000 years. This tension between received historical knowledge and modern archaeology puts archaeology at the heart of fierce historiographic debates. This course will explore these issues by examining early Chinese history in light of major archaeological discoveries of texts and materials, discussing both the content of the discoveries and their impact on the historiography of ancient China.

Course goals

There are three learning goals for this course. The first is to acquire a broad understanding of the historical development of Chinese civilization from its origins in the Neolithic period through the second century C.E. This course adopts a "hands on" approach by asking students to consider primary historical evidence of both a textual and visual nature. Therefore, a second goal of this course is to develop one's ability to interpret texts and images as historical evidence by considering such material within its particular cultural context. The third goal of the course is to understand the impact of modern archaeology on the study of Chinese history and the historiographic issues involved in combining archaeological evidence with traditional sources of history. The ultimate goal of the course is to acquire a richer understanding of both Chinese culture and the practice of studying the history of ancient civilizations.

