

Writing China

Fall Term

Wednesdays 9.15-12.15

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Course Requirements and Form of Assessment

1. Attendance and participation in class 15%
2. Mid-term paper 30%
3. Term Paper 55%

Course Description:

This course will examine the myriad ways that China and the idea of China has been written about by outsiders over the centuries.

The first half of the course (roughly) will look at historical perceptions of China, beginning with the Japanese monk Ennin, who left a diary of his trip through Tang dynasty China in the ninth century. This section of the course will use as its core Jonathan Spence's *The Chan's Great Continent*, though other relevant texts (such as Ennin's *Diary*, for example) will also be included in reading and discussion.

For the second half of the semester, we'll be examining modern approaches to China including blogs, recent fiction, current journalism (comparing for example stories written on the same subject by differing papers and magazines), fiction written in English by expatriate Chinese authors (Ha Jin, Li Yiyun) and also, for perspective, Chinese netizens and their writings about China and the west in the last few years.

This course is as much about writing as reading, with mid-term papers, which will be some form of writing about China by students, be it fiction, reportage, poetry, a screenplay etc, subject to the same analysis and discussion by the class as the other texts we'll be seeking to deconstruct. While the mid-term paper can be a fragment, the final paper is expected to be a complete article, essay, story etc, either building on the mid-term effort or completely new.

Course Outcome: To give students a historical perspective on how perceptions of China have changed over the centuries and what impact that shift has had on the country's role in the world, as well as China's own understanding of that role. We'll also aim to sharpen students' own ability to frame their perceptions of China through their writing.

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend each class unless they have a valid reason for being absent. Grades will be reduced for anyone with two unexcused absences.

Core texts:

Jonathan Spence's *The Great Wall and The Empty Mountain* the core text for the course.

Did Marco Polo Go to China, Frances Wood

The Good Earth, Pearl S. Buck

Andre Malraux, *Man's Fate*

Rivertown, Peter Hessler

Academic Honesty Statement

This course adheres to Loyola University Chicago/Beijing Center policies on Academic Honesty.

The student is advised to review the policies on the website:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Week One: Introduction

A sketch of the aims of the course, overview of changing perceptions of China and how they have shaped and also been shaped by China's perceptions of itself and its place in the world. Also a brief look at the idea of historiography and literary analysis, Orientalism, the problem of authenticity etc. Discussion of pre-Marco Polo texts.

Reading:

Spence, Introduction

Ennin's Diary, Edwin O. Reischauer: excerpt

William of Rubruck: Excerpt

Week Two: Marco Polo

Spence, 1-18

Did Marco Polo Go to China, Frances Wood

City of Light, excerpt

Week Three: Priests, Diplomats, Sailors

Spence, 19-61

The Journals of Matteo Ricci, excerpt

George Anson, *A Voyage round the World*, excerpt

Lord Macartney, Journal, excerpt

Week Four: Fiction, Philosophy, Chinoiserie

Spence, 62-100

In Xanadu, Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Robinson Crusoe, Daniel Defoe: excerpt

Ma Li, A Chinese Fairy Tale, Horace Walpole: excerpt

Week Five: The View from American: Missionaries, Merchants, Mark Twain and Pearl Buck

Spence 101-144, 165-185

The Good Earth, Pearl S. Buck

Four Hundred Million Customers, Karl Crowe: excerpt

Week Six: Radicals and Revolutions

Spence, 187-206

Andre Malraux, Man's Fate

Red Star Over China, Edgar Snow: excerpt

Red China Blues, Jan Wong: excerpt

Excerpt from Chung Kuo, a documentary shot in 1972 by Michelangelo Antonioni

Week Seven: The Great Re-Opening, Politicians, Peace Corps Volunteers and Journalists

Spence, 206-226

A variety of excerpts from works by Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Seymour Hersh and others

Chinese Lessons, John Pomfret: excerpt

Wild Grass, Ian Johnson: excerpt

Rivertown, Peter Hessler

Week Eight

Student Works

Week Nine

Student Works

Week Ten: Modern Journalism

Readings: current articles

Week Eleven: English-language Blogs on China

Readings: current Blogs

Week Twelve: Modern Fiction

Spence, 226 passim

Franz Kafka, *The Great Wall of China*

Lyrics from *Chinese Democracy*, Guns n Roses

When We Were Orphans, Kazuo Ishiguro: excerpt

The Slaughter Pavilion, Catherine Sampson

Week Thirteen: Back at You; Chinese Writing about the West or from the West

Reading:

Various blogs and other internet material in translation

A Thousand Years of Good Prayers, Li Yiyun: Excerpt

A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers, Guo Xiaolu: Excerpt

A Free Life, Ha Jin: excerpt