Course description: This course is an exploration of some of the complex cultures that flourished during the Ming dynasty in China (1368-1644), a period of great social, political, and economic change and development that culminated in the Great East Asian War involving Japan, Korea, and China, the arrival of Westerners (both pirates and missionaries, the Jesuits), and ultimately in the conquest by the Manchus, who founded the last dynasty, the Qing (1644-1911). It was a period of immense dynamism and cultural innovation: the economy boomed in the latter part of the dynasty; commercial cities grew huge and urban life thrived; porcelain and other products were produced in industrial facilities and exported to Western Asia and Europe; literati painting flourished; and the first great Chinese novels were written. At the same time, the Ming has been seen as militarily weak, although this characterization is now being challenged. We will be looking at the vitality of all levels of society; at the Ming’s discovery of their world, both externally and internally; and at their responses to their engagements with outside military and cultural forces, and peoples in a global context.

Course format: The class will be a reading and discussion seminar with no lectures. Reading assignments, listed below as either required or recommended, will be apportioned to different students each session, according to their own interests, to present in class and to lead the ensuing discussion. In advance of each session, the student(s) reporting and leading the discussion will choose the focus of the topic, will inform the rest of the class which items they intend to concentrate on and will request the rest of the class to read one or more of the items listed as “required” or “recommended” or a portion of the same (e.g., one or two chapters in a book). All students will be expected to read and think about at least ONE of the required/recommended readings per class, depending on the recommendations of the instructor and the student(s) responsible for the presentations. Students should discuss their presentations with the instructor in person prior to the class and/or email the instructor with their plans or discussion outline at least 2-3 days in advance, certainly no later than the Friday prior to the Tuesday class.

It is NOT intended that all items listed for each session will be read by the entire class; however, the leader(s) of the discussion should cover many, if not all of the readings for their particular topic, in order to be able to decide which issues they intend to consider in depth and to
build their background knowledge for the final research paper. A discussion leader may choose to focus on one of the recommended readings, rather than any of the items listed as “required.” It is strongly recommended, but not required, that students base their final research paper on one of the subjects on which they have reported in class. The presentations will give an excellent basis for the final research paper.

**Evaluation:**
Grades for the course will be based on
1. A short (5-6 page) take-home mid-term essay (a choice of essay topics will be handed out in advance) (15%);
2. Two presentations of discussion/reading material (10% each; total: 20%);
3. Class participation (10%);
4. An annotated bibliography for final research paper (15%);
5. Oral presentation of research topic (10%);
6. Final research paper (at least 15 pages, exclusive of bibliography) (30%).

For late submission of the mid-term take-home essay and final research paper without prior approval from the instructor, 1% will be taken off per day late.
The Annotated Bibliography will be due one week before presentation of research at the end of November. Final papers are due, according to the Faculty’s regulations, on the last day of classes, but will be due one week after the last class. Instructions for the preparation of the Annotated bibliography will be distributed separately.

**Learning outcomes:**
Students will learn about the many facets of Ming society, how to make convincing oral presentations, lead discussions, report on their research projects, and to prepare and write a research essay that is logically constructed, makes use of appropriate secondary (and, if possible and/or appropriate, primary) sources to bolster the argument, is free of grammatical and typographical errors, and expresses clearly the intent and meaning of the author.

**Policies on Academic Integrity:**

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.” (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and Evaluation.)

« Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue). »

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information). (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)
« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/). »

Class Schedule:

Week 1
Sept. 7 Introduction to the course and documentary film on the Ming dynasty “Secrets of the Forbidden City”

Week 2
Sept. 14 Political, Economic and Social Transformations in the Ming


**Recommended reading:**
- Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties.* (e-book)
- Sarah Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming Dynasty China.*
- Craig Clunas, *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China.*

Week 3
Sept. 21 Legal Culture

**Required reading:**

**Recommended reading:**
- Timothy Brook, Jérôme Bourgon, and Gregory Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts,* Chapter 4 “Lingchi in the Ming Dynasty,” pp. 97-121.

Week 4
Sept. 28 **Religious Culture**

**Required reading:**

**Recommended reading:**
- Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China*.

**Week 5**

Oct. 5 **Cultures of Violence**

**Required reading:**

**Recommended reading:**
- David Robinson, *Bandits, Eunuchs, and the Son of Heaven: Rebellion and the Economy of Violence in Mid-Ming China*.
- David M. Robinson, *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court*.
- Kenneth M. Swope, *A Dragon’s Head and a Serpent’s Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592–1598*.

**Tuesday October 12 Study Break**
Week 6
(Friday) Oct. 15 Women’s Culture, Courtesan Culture, and Cultures of Pleasure and Excess

Required reading:
Paul Ropp, “Ambiguous Images of Courtesan Culture in Late Imperial China,” in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, pp. 17-45.

Recommended reading:
Daria Berg, *Women and the Literary World in Early Modern China, 1580-1700*.

Distribution of Mid-term take-home examination

Week 7
Oct. 19 Cultures of Knowledge and Cultures of Text
Submission of Mid-term Essays

Required reading:

Recommended reading:
Jin Jiang, “Heresy and Persecution in Late Ming Society: Reinterpreting the Case of Li Zhi,” *Late Imperial China* 22.1 (2001): 1-34

Week 8
Oct. 26 Scientific, Technological, and Material Cultures
Required reading:
Craig Clunas, *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*
Carla Nappi, *The Monkey and the Inkpot: Natural History and Its Transformations in Early Modern China.* (e-book)

Recommended reading:
Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*

Week 9
Nov. 02 Medical Cultures
Required reading:
Marta Hanson, *Speaking of Epidemics in Chinese Medicine: Disease and the Geographic Imagination in Late Imperial China*, Part 2 “New Ming Medical Boundaries,” pp. 47-103.

Recommended reading:
Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin: Gender in China’s Medical History: 960-1665*, Chapters 4-8, “Rethinking Fuke in the Ming Dynasty,” “To Benefit Yin: Fuke and Late Ming Medical Culture,” “Nourishing Life’: Ming Bodies of Generation and Longevity,” “A Doctor’s Practice: Narratives of the Clinical Encounter in Late Ming Yangzhou,” and “In and Out of the Family: Ming Women as Healing Experts.”

Week 10
Nov. 09 The Late Ming World and the Arrival of the Westerners
Required reading:
Catherine Jami, Peter Engelfriet, and Gregory Blue, eds., *Statecraft and Intellectual Renewal in Late Ming China: The Cross-cultural Synthesis of Xu Guangqi (1562-1633)* (selections).
**Recommended reading:**
Qiong Zhang, *Making the New World Their Own: Chinese Encounters with Jesuit Science in the Age of Discovery*. (e-book)
Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*.
Rivi Handler-Spitz, *Symptoms of an Unruly Age: Li Zhi and Cultures of Early Modernity*.

**Week 11**
**Nov. 15 The Ming as a Eurasian Empire**

**Required reading:**

**Recommended reading:**
David M. Robinson, *In the Shadow of the Mongol Empire: Ming China and Eurasia* (2019)

**Week 12**
**Nov. 23 Student research reports**

**Week 13**
**Nov. 30 Student research reports**

**Dec. 7 Due Date for Final Papers**