

HIST 445/EAST 494

Late Imperial China

Fall 2024

Fridays, 11:35 AM - 2:25 PM

Location: 680 Sherbrooke, room 395

McGill University

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. David Porter

Office: 680 Sherbrook 251

Office Hours: Thursday 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

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OVERVIEW

This course explores the history of China from the founding of Ming dynasty through the height of the Qing, from about 1368 to 1800. We will take a thematic approach, looking at the governance, economy, society, culture, and connections to the outside world of “late imperial” China with the goal of understanding both how China worked prior to falling under the influence of European and American imperialism, and the dynamics of historical change in China during this period. You should be prepared to look for both similarities and differences between late imperial China and other places and times that you have studied. But we will also strive to avoid the trap of treating early modern China as a static, unchanging society. As it aims to cover a period of more than 400 years, this course is far from comprehensive, but you should come away with a strong grasp of a key period in China’s history and a good sense of how historians go about doing research on it.

READINGS

All readings will be available on MyCourses, either as links to an article or e-book (in most cases) or as a pdf.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This is a seminar, meeting once per week for three hours (with a 15-20 minute break in the middle), with most class time spent on discussion. Students are expected to have completed the assigned readings for each class session in advance in order to be well-prepared to talk about those readings during class. Note that, because it is a 400-level seminar, this course is reading intensive; expect readings to average 150 pages/week.

ASSESSMENT

Attendance and Class Participation (20%)

You will be expected to make thoughtful contributions to class discussions that show clear evidence of having done the required readings. Your contributions should be responsive to your classmates' comments and should always be respectful to everyone else in the room. Quality is more important than quantity – of course, if you don't say anything, you aren't participating – but two or three excellent comments will impress me far more than dominating the conversation with ideas that suggest that you haven't actually done the reading. On occasions when the class is broken up into smaller groups to work on a particular task, you should be clearly contributing to your group's work. Attendance is not graded explicitly, but since it is impossible to participate without being present, you will receive no credit for participation if you are absent without a valid excuse.

The purpose of grading participation is to encourage and reward active engagement with readings and to help you develop your ability to productively discuss both historical scholarship and primary sources. The activities we do in class will also help you develop some of the skills necessary for your written assignments, especially the final project.

Legal Case Paper (20%)

You will write a paper based on a case selected from Robert E. Hegel, *True Crimes in Eighteenth-Century China: Twenty Case Histories*, cases from which will play an important role in our discussion on September 20. The goal of this assignment is for you to develop your ability to analyze primary sources useful to the study of late imperial China, and, in particular, to connect the details of a specific legal case to broader questions in the history of Chinese law and society. Details for the assignment will be distributed that week, but the paper will be a **MAXIMUM of 1500 words** and will be due on **September 30 at 5 PM**.

Final Project (total 60% for 3 components)

- 1. Participation in peer review activities, including timely completion of proposal, drafts, etc (10%),** according to the schedule described later in this syllabus:
- 2. Final Project (40%) – due December 13 at 8PM** via MyCourses (MAXIMUM 4000 WORDS)
- 3. Presentation (10%) – In class on November 29**

You will do a final project, **due on December 13**. Your project will consist of a prospectus for a research paper on a topic of your choice related to the history of China (or other territory under Ming/Qing rule) between the late 14th century and the early 19th century. The goal of this project is for you to learn about how to conceptualize a major research project, how to engage in sophisticated discussion of important historiographical questions, and how to connect primary source-based research to questions of historiographical significance, as well as to develop some familiarity with the primary sources available for research on late imperial Chinese history. You will also learn how to share your findings with a broader audience (your classmates). Your prospectus should consist of three elements.

1. A historiographical survey of relevant scholarship (you only need to deal with work in English, but you are welcome to talk about scholarship in other languages that you

- read as well) on your topic (approximately 2500 words).
2. A description of a set of primary sources that would be sufficient to enable someone to produce a journal article-length piece of scholarship on your topic (approximately 750 words). These sources can be in any language and do not have to be sources that you are currently capable of accessing or reading. That is, you are welcome to (indeed, encouraged) to describe sources that are only available in an archive in China, Taiwan, Mongolia, etc. even if you are unable to read Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, etc.
 3. An analysis of a single primary source available in English (either originally or in translation) or in another language that you can read (approximately 500 words). You should not merely summarize the source, but use it to make an argument that would be relevant to include in your project.

To ensure that you are on track to complete this project and to assist you in developing your abilities, you will be required to submit 4 different pieces of preliminary work for this project over the course of the second half of the term. Each of these pieces will be graded solely on completion, and will be shared with a few of your classmates as part of an in-class peer feedback exercise. The preliminary submission schedule is as follows (further details on each element will be provided in advance of the deadline):

1. **Proposed topic and preliminary biography – due October 11 at 11:30 AM** via MyCourses. You will also need to bring a copy to class for a peer review exercise. This proposal should consist of at least a one paragraph description of your topic, a bibliography of the scholarship you will discuss in part 1 of your project (minimum FIVE books or articles) accompanied by a rationale for your selection of each work; the identity of the sources you will discuss in part 2 of your project, with a brief explanation of why you chose it; and the identity of the source you will analyze in part 3 of your project, with a brief explanation of why you think it is relevant to your project.
2. **Partial draft (minimum 500 words) of part 1 of the project – due October 25 at 11:30 AM** via MyCourses. You will also need to bring a copy to class for a peer review exercise. This partial draft must discuss one major historiographical issue related to your topic as it appears in at least 2 (and ideally 3) of your scholarly/secondary sources.
3. **Full draft of part 2 of the project – due November 8 at 11:30 AM** via MyCourses. You will also need to bring a copy to class for a peer review exercise.
4. **Full draft of part 3 of the project – due November 22 at 11:30 AM** via MyCourses. You will also need to bring a copy to class for a peer review exercise.

You will **present your project to the class during our final course meeting on November 29**. Presentation lengths will be specified once enrolment numbers are finalized, but the basic idea will be to briefly present the findings of your project, and then answer a couple of questions from your classmates. Your grade will be based 50% on the quality of your presentation, 25% on your answers to questions asked of you and 25% on asking thoughtful questions to your classmates.

COURSE POLICIES

Absences and Late Work

You are expected to attend all class meetings and to submit all work on time. Missed class will result both in failing to learn the material covered (which can affect your success in other assignments) and in a failure to participate in discussion, directly lowering your participation grade. I recognize that there will be situations that make it impossible (or unwise) for you to attend class or to submit a paper on time, including illnesses (if you're sick, please rest and recover; don't come to class). I treat my students as responsible adults; if you are genuinely unable to come to class or submit a paper on time, I simply ask that you inform me IN ADVANCE (no extensions are offered if they are requested after an assignment's due date) and let me know the reason. **Please tell me the length of extension that you believe you require; no indefinite extensions will be granted** (though note that the actual length of extension you receive will depend on the nature of your excuse and is at my discretion). I reserve the right to request documentation of your excuse. Keep in mind that the nature of the preliminary submissions for the final project means that turning these in late will prevent you from receiving important feedback from your classmates. Because these assignments are graded only on the basis of completion, it is highly preferable to turn in partial work or work that you are not happy with on time rather than completed/better work late and I will strongly discourage non-emergency extension requests on these assignments.

Unexcused late assignments will be marked down by 5% for each day late, though in no case will a paper that would otherwise receive a passing grade receive a failing grade (which is to say, you won't drop below a D), as long as it is submitted by the end of the semester. Note that I have a grading deadline – **in no case will assignments be accepted for credit after December 20**. Students with serious extenuating circumstances may contact me about arranging a grade of K (incomplete), but these will only be granted in very rare situations, and requests must be made as far in advance as possible.

Office Hours

I will hold regular office hours on Thursdays from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM in my office in 680 Sherbrooke, Room 251. You may either make an appointment in advance (via the link on MyCourses) or simply drop by – though students with appointments will be prioritized. I will also be available for appointments outside my regular office hour times if they are incompatible with your schedule (but please do not stop by without an appointment outside of office hours). I encourage you to come by early in the semester to chat so that I can get to know you a bit better, as well as to visit whenever you have questions about the course material or assignments or simply wish to talk about Chinese history or your academic goals.

Academic Integrity

“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 McGill's [guide to academic honesty](#) for more information.)

« 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 [guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill](#).) »

Language of Submission

“In accord with McGill University’s [Charter of Student Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.”

« 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. »

STUDENT FEEDBACK

I encourage you to complete a Mercury evaluation for this course upon its conclusion. Your experiences and observations will help me make this class, and all classes I teach, better for future students.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are a student with a disability that requires accommodation, please register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (<https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>) and inform me of the accommodations you require during the first week of class (or the first week after the disability arises). Anything you tell me will be kept confidential.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Course Introduction and Establishing Imperial Rule

August 30

Reading:

1. “Proclamations of the Hongwu Emperor,” in *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., edited Patricia Buckley Ebrey, pp. 205-208.
2. “The Manchu Conquest,” ch. 2 of *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, 3rd ed., eds. Janet Chen, Pei-Kai Cheng, and Michael Lestz, pp. 19-32.
3. “From Orphan to Princess: The Story of Liu Sanxiu,” ch. 6 of *Voices from the Ming-Qing Cataclysm*, ed. and trans. Lynn A. Struve, pp. 93-113.

Week 2 – The Exam System and the Chinese Elite

September 6

Reading:

1. Benjamin A. Elman, “The Civil Examination System in Late Imperial China, 1400-1900.” *Frontiers of History in China* 8.1 (2013), pp. 32-50.
2. Benjamin A. Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China* (Harvard, 2013), ch. 3, “Circulation of Ming-Qing Elites” and ch. 4, “Classical Literacy in Late Imperial China,” pp. 95-146.

3. Lawrence Zhang, *Power for a Price: The Purchase of Official Appointments in Qing China* (Harvard Asia Center, 2022), “Introduction,” ch. 5 “Family Strategy,” and “Appendix 2: Regulations for Sale in 1673,” pp. 1-30, 154-194, 271-273.
4. “Fan Jin Passes the juren Examination,” excerpt from Wu Jingzi, *The Scholars*, document 5.1 in *The Search for Modern China; A Documentary Collection* 3rd ed., eds. Janet Chen, Pei-Kai Cheng, and Michael Lestz, pp. 54-62.

Week 3 – Serving the State

September 13

Reading:

1. William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century China* (Stanford, 2001), ch. 2, “Politics” and ch. 10, “Governance,” pp. 45-85, 326-362.
2. Bradley Reed, *Talons and Teeth: County Clerks and Runners in the Qing Dynasty* (Stanford, 2000), ch. 2, “Clerks,” ch. 7, “The Legitimacy of the Indispensable,” and Appendices C, D, and F, pp. 31-75, 246-266, 273-279, 281-283.
3. “Lan Dingyuan’s Casebook,” in *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., edited Patricia Buckley Ebrey, pp. 292-296.

Week 4 – Law and Legal Culture

September 20

Reading:

1. Bradley Reed, “Bureaucracy and Judicial Truth in Qing Dynasty Homicide Cases,” *Late Imperial China* 39.1 (June 2018), pp. 67-105.
2. Thomas Buoye, “Filial Felons: Leniency and Legal Reasoning in Qing China,” in *Writing and Law in Late Imperial China*, eds. Robert E. Hegel and Katherine Carlitz (University of Washington, 2007), ch. 5, pp. 109-124.
3. Melissa Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture: Litigation Masters in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 1998), Introduction and ch. 5, “The Disputation of the Body Snatchers: Judicial Depravity and Legal Culture,” pp. 1-17, 195-227.
4. Robert E. Hegel, ed., *True Crimes in Eighteenth-Century China: Twenty Case Histories* (University of Washington, 2009), “Introduction,” case 4, “Li Cang: Blackmail and Arsenic,” and case 6, “Du Huailiang: Adultery that Brought Disaster,” pp. 3-27, 59-64, 79-90.

Week 5 – Women and Gender

September 27

Reading:

1. Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford, 1994), “Introduction: Gender and the Politics of Chinese History” and ch. 3, “Margins of Domesticity: Enlarging the Women’s Sphere,” pp. 1-26 and 115-142.

2. Francesca Bray, *Technology, Gender, and History in Imperial China: Great Transformations Reconsidered* (Routledge, 2013), ch. 3, “Women’s Work and Women’s Place: Textiles and Gender,” pp. 93-120.
3. Susan Mann, “Widows in the Kinship, Class, and Community Structures of Qing Dynasty China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46.1 (February, 1987), pp. 37-56.
4. Weijing Lu, *True to Her Word: The Faithful Maiden Cult in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 2008), ch. 5, “Dying for an Ideal,” pp. 129-166
5. “Widows Loyal Unto Death,” in *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., edited Patricia Buckley Ebrey, pp. 253-255.

LEGAL CASE PAPER DUE – Monday, September 30 at 5 PM

Week 6 –The Chinese Family in Theory and Practice

October 4

Reading:

1. Weijing Lu, *Arranged Companions: Marriage and Intimacy in Qing China* (University of Washington, 2021), ch.1, “Competing Meanings of Marriage,” and ch. 4, “Managing Familial and Marital Relationships,” pp. 23-47, 107-132.
2. Matthew H. Sommer, *Polyandry and Wife-Selling in Qing Dynasty China: Survival Strategies and Judicial Interventions* (University of California, 2015), ch. 1 “Getting a Husband to Support a Husband” and ch. 4, “Anatomy of a Wife Sale,” pp. 23-54, 117-148
3. Gilbert Chen, “Castration and Connection: Kinship Organization among Ming Eunuchs,” *Ming Studies* 74 (2016), pp. 27-47.
4. “Concubines,” in *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., edited Patricia Buckley Ebrey, pp. 245-252.

Week 7 – Gender and Sexuality

October 11 –

1. Michael Szonyi, “The Cult of Hu Tianbao and the Eighteenth-Century Discourse of Homosexuality,” *Late Imperial China* 19.1 (June 1998), pp. 1-25.
2. Matthew H. Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 2000), pp. 114-165.
3. Matthew H. Sommer, *The Fox Spirit, the Stone Maiden, and Other Transgender Histories from Late Imperial China* (Columbia, 2024), ch.2, “The Paradigm of the Cross-Dressing Predator,” pp. 50-80.
4. H. Laura Wu, “Through the Prism of Male Writing: Representation of Lesbian Love in Ming-Qing Literature,” *Nan Nü* 4.1 (Mar. 2002), pp. 1-34
5. Pu Songling, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, trans. John Minford, ch. 63 “Cut Sleeve,” pp. 266-276.

Proposed Paper Topic and Preliminary Bibliography due October 11 at 11:30 AM

FALL READING BREAK, October 14-18

Week 8 – The Chinese Economy and the Great Divergence

October 25 –

Reading:

1. Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, 2000), Introduction (you can skip the section “A Note on Geographic Coverage”), ch. 1, “Europe before Asia? Population, Capital Accumulation, and Technology in Explanations of European Development,” and ch. 2, “Market Economies in Europe and Asia,” pp. 3-25, 31-107.
2. Philip C.C. Huang, “Development or Involution in Eighteenth-Century Britain and China? A Review of Kenneth Pomeranz’s *The Great Divergence*.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 61.2 (May 2002), pp. 501-538.
3. Kenneth Pomeranz, “Beyond the East-West Binary: Resituating Development Paths in the Eighteenth-Century World.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61.2 (May 2002). You need only read the opening (pp. 539-542) and the sections titled “What is Development?” and “Involution” (pp. 550-564). But if you are interested in how Pomeranz responds to any other specific critique made by Huang, see if you can find it elsewhere in this article.
4. “Commercial Activities,” in *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., edited Patricia Buckley Ebrey, pp. 213-220.

Partial Draft of Part 1 of the Final Project due October 25 at 11:30 AM

Week 9 – Inner Asian Empire and the Mongols

November 1 –

Reading:

1. David M. Robinson, “The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols” in David M. Robinson, ed. *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368-1644)* (Harvard Asia Center, 2008), ch. 8, pp. 365-421.
2. Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (University of California, 1999), ch. 6, “The Universal Prospect,” pp. 281-336.
3. Yue Du, “Legal Justice in Eighteenth-Century Mongolia: Gender, Ethnicity, and Politics in the Manchu-Mongol Marriage Alliance,” *Late Imperial China* 37.2 (Dec. 2016), pp. 1-40.
4. Sagang Sechen, *The Precious Summary: A History of the Mongols from Chinggis Khan to the Qing Dynasty*, trans. Johan Elverskog (Columbia, 2023), ch. 12 “History of the Ming and Qing Dynasties,” pp. 176-184.

Week 10 –

South(west)ern Empire

November 8 –

Reading:

1. John E. Herman, “The Cant of Conquest: Tusi Offices and China’s Political Incorporation of the Southwest Frontier,” in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity,*

and Frontier in Early Modern China, eds. Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton (University of California, 2006), ch. 5, pp. 135-168.

2. Erik Mueggler, "Lady Qu's Inscriptions: Literacy and Sovereignty in a Native Domain, Southwest China." *Journal of Asian Studies* 80.1 (Feb. 2021), pp. 27-48.
3. C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Harvard, 2006), ch. 2, "New Frontier Militarism," and ch. 3, "Ambiguity of the Barbarian," pp. 43-96.
4. Emma Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures, 1683-1895* (Harvard Asia Center, 2004), ch. 6, "Picturing Savagery: Visual Representations of Racial Difference," pp. 149-172.
5. In *Taiwan's Imagined Geography*, there are 15 color plates between pages 186 and 187. Please look at and think about these images in relation to the readings. You can see them by downloading the chapter entitled "The Island of Women: The Discourse of Gender" but you are not required to read the chapter, just to view the images.

Partial Draft of Part 2 of the Final Project due November 8 at 11:30 AM

Week 11 – Korea

November 15 –

Reading:

1. Sixiang Wang, *Boundless Winds of Empire: Rhetoric and Ritual in Early Chosŏn Diplomacy with Ming China* (Columbia, 2023), Introduction, ch. 4 "In Empire's Name," ch. 6 "Representing Korea," and ch. 9 "The Envoy's Virtue," pp. 1-21, 108-128, 152-171, and 227-247.
2. Yuanchong Wang, *Remaking the Chinese Empire: Manchu-Korean Relations, 1611-1911* (Cornell, 2018), ch. 1 "Conquering Chosŏn: The Rise of the Manchu Regime as the Middle Kingdom," and ch. 2 "Barbarianizing Chosŏn: The Chosŏn Model and the Chinese Empire, 1644-1761," pp. 21-85.
3. "Monument commemorating the Benevolence of the Emperor of the Ta-ch'ing Dynasty" (Samjŏndo Monument), in William Woodville Rockhill, *China's Intercourse with Korea from the XVth Century to 1895* (Luzac & Co., 1905), pp. 40-44.

Week 12 – The Outside World

November 22 –

Reading:

1. Geoff Wade, "The Zheng He Voyages: A Reassessment," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 78.1 (2005), pp. 37-58.
2. Tansen Sen, "The Impact of Zheng He's Expeditions on Indian Ocean Interactions," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79.3 (October, 2016), pp. 609-636.
3. Matthew H. Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China* (Stanford, 2013), ch. 4, "Discovering the 'Pileng': British India seen from Tibet, 1790-1800," pp. 127-160.
4. Henrietta Harrison, "The Qianlong Emperor's Letter to George III and the Early-Twentieth-Century Origins of Ideas about Traditional China's Foreign Relations," *The*

American Historical Review 122.3 (June, 2017), pp. 680-701.

5. Melissa Macauley, *Distant Shores: Colonial Encounters on China's Maritime Frontiers* (Princeton, 2021), ch. 2, "Back in the World: The Emergence of Maritime Chaozhou, 1767-1840," pp. 45-74.
6. "Qianlong's Rejection of Macartney's Demands: Two Edicts," in *The Search for Modern China; A Documentary Collection* 3rd ed., eds. Janet Chen, Pei-Kai Cheng, and Michael Lestz, pp. 87-93.

Partial Draft of Part 3 of the Final Project due November 22 at 11:30 AM

Week 13 – FINAL PROJECTS

November 29 –

No Reading: **IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PROJECTS**

FINAL PROJECT DUE – December 13, 8PM