

EAC 150L
China Through Western Eyes
Fall 2011 (Class #9180)

“Jung said that, confronted with a totally alien culture, the European intellectual may take one of two courses. He may reject his own tradition and attempt to assimilate with the alien culture. Or he may reject the alien culture and close himself up in the traditions of the West, to which he is accustomed by birth and breeding Jung said that attempting to find a middle road among these complexities is one of the major tasks facing the contemporary Western intellectual.”

Search for a New Humanity: A Dialogue Between Josef Derbolav and Daisaku Ikeda, ed. and tr. by Richard L. Gage
(New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1992), p. 8.

COURSE INTRODUCTION AND SYLLABUS

Meeting Time/Place: TUES and TH, 10:15-11:35 A.M., HUM 128
Instructor: Prof. Jim Hargett; Office: HU 254C, 442-4233
E-mail: James.Hargett@gmail.com
Office Hours: TUES and TH, 9:15-10:00 A.M. (or by appointment)
Recommended text: Colin, Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (revised edition). Relevant sections from this book are available on the university library’s Electronic Reserves system (or “ERES”), so you **do NOT have to buy a copy**. The ERES password for this class is “CHINA”.

Course Description and Introduction: The main concern of this course is the Western “discovery” and occasional “rediscovery” of China from the late thirteenth century to the present. The basic premise of the class is this: Westerners—defined here as Americans and Europeans—have always “seen” China through a uniquely Western perspective. In other words, our own cultural background to a large extent “programs” how we see China and all things Chinese. Our goal in this class is to isolate, discuss, and define the most persistent images of China in the West and how these images have developed and changed over time. The sources we use will vary. For instance, we will consider written records left by some famous Western visitors to China, including Marco Polo and the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci, as well as the film version (1939) of Pearl Buck’s novel *The Good Earth*. We will also look at some films/videos that feature various stereotypes of China and its people. This approach—that is, looking **comparatively** at Western images of China as they have developed over the last seven centuries—will allow you to observe and better understand the origins and implications of Western stereotypes of non-Western cultures, especially China.

The course is organized as follows: Students will first complete a reading assignment, such as a chapter in Mackerras’ *Western Images of China*, or observe a video presentation, such as the CBS documentary *Misunderstanding China*. Class meetings will be devoted to (1) presentation of background information related to the reading assignment or film; and (2) active, open discussion of specific topics and questions related to the readings.

By examining “China Through Western Eyes” you will have an opportunity to explore the actual sources of understanding (or misunderstanding) between two very different cultures. Our

discussions and written assignments will attempt to reveal *how* and *why* these perceptions (or misperceptions) affect understanding between China and the West. It is hoped that, after completing this course, students will look at themselves in relation to non-Western cultures with a keener, critical eye—one that will look beyond stereotypes and distortions for truth and understanding.

Prerequisites: None. This is a survey course open to anyone.

GenEd: This class satisfies the **Humanities/Global and Cross Cultural Perspectives** requirement of GenEd.

Grading: Your final grade will be determined by (1) your attendance, your preparation, and your contributions to class discussions (33.3%); (2) your grade on the mid-term exam (33.3%); and (3) your grade on the final exam (33.3%).

Attendance and Makeups: Students are expected to attend all classes. Makeup exams will be given only if the absence was due to a *documented* medical or personal emergency, which is confirmed in writing (to me) by the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. Do *not* call or email me *after* an exam and tell me you were too sick to take the test!

Academic Integrity: The discovery of any cheating on an exam will result in (1) immediate expulsion from the course with a failing grade; and (2) a report to appropriate SUNY officials. Appeals may be made through appropriate channels.

How to do well in this course: (1) carefully read and prepare the reading assignments *before* class; (2) attend class regularly and take detailed notes; (3) actively participate in classroom discussions (this means raise your hand and participate!); and (4) always bring to class a copy of your notes on the assigned readings (most of our class discussions will concern readings in *Western Images of China*, though we will at times read and discuss articles concerning China in the *New York Times*).

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS (EAC 150L)

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| TUES 30 Aug: | Introductory. |
| THUR 1 Sept: | Film: <i>China: Dynasties of Power</i> (available on-line at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLVzrrH3iqE) |
| TUES 6 Sept: | Lecture and discussion: “The Big Picture—3000 Years of Chinese History.” |
| THUR 8 Sept: | <i>Before class read: Western Images of China, “Introduction,”</i> 1-8. |
| TUES 13 Sept: | Video: <i>Misunderstanding China</i> . Produced by CBS News; narrated by Charles Kuralt. ca. 1972. |
| THUR 15 Sept: | Class discussion of Kuralt’s documentary. |
| TUES 20 Sept: | Read: <i>Western Images of China</i> , 11-23 (“Early Western Images of China,” and “Introduction” to Valerie Hansen’s <i>The Beijing Qing Ming Scroll and Its Significance for the Study of Chinese History</i> (available on ERES). Video presentation: “City of Cathay.” |
| THUR 22 Sept: | Lecture and discussion of the Song dynasty (960-1279) and the “Qing Ming Scroll.” |

- TUES 27 Sept: Read Chapter 5 (“From Peking to Amoy”) in *The Travels of Marco Polo* (available on ERES). Lecture and discussion on the Yuan dynasty and Marco Polo’s account of his visit to China; also read: *Western Images of China*, 24-38 (“Jesuit Missionaries and the Philosophers”). Lecture and discussion of Jesuit activities in China, focusing on the missionary Matteo Ricci.
- THUR 29 Sept: No class.
- TUES 4 Oct: Read: *Western Images of China*, 39-58 (“Nineteenth-Century Imperialism and China”). Lecture and discussion of major nineteenth-century personalities and events that shaped Western ideas/images about China.
- THUR 6 Oct: Read: *Western Images of China*, 59-79 (“First Half of the Twentieth Century”).
- TUES 11 Oct: Movie: *The Good Earth*, Part 1.
- THUR 13 Oct: *The Good Earth* (conclusion).
- TUES 18 Oct: Discussion of *The Good Earth*.
- THUR: 20 Oct: **Midterm examination.**
- TUES 25 Oct: Documentary: Arthur Dong’s *Hollywood Chinese*
- THUR 27 Oct: Discussion of *Hollywood Chinese*
- TUES 1 Nov: Movie: *Iron and Silk*, Part 1.
- THUR 3 Nov: Movie: *Iron and Silk* (conclusion)
- TUES 8 Nov: Discussion of *Iron and Silk*. **Think Paper #3 is due today.**
- THUR 10 Nov: Lecture and discussion: “Cultural Revolution, Ping-pong Diplomacy, Deng Xiaoping, Capitalism in China.” Read: *Western Images of China*, 83-96 (“Contemporary Images of China, 1949-1966); and 97-115 (“The Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976, Images of a Present and Past Decade”).
- TUES 15 Nov: Lecture and discussion: “Human Rights, Intellectual Property.” Read *Western Images of China*, 116-137 (“Images of Post-Mao China”).
- THUR 17 Nov: Read: *Western Images of China*, 138-156 (“Western Images Since 1989: Politics and International Relations”), 157-176 (“Western Images Since 1989: Economics and Society, The Future”, 177-89 (“Conclusion”), and 190-191 (“Afterword”).
- TUES 22 Nov: No class.
- THUR 24 Nov: No class.
- TUES 29 Nov: Movie: *A Great Wall*
- THUR 1 Dec: Movie: *A Great Wall* (conclusion and discussion).
- TUES 6 Dec: Assignment to be announced.

Final Examination: Friday 16 December 2011 at 8:00-10:00 AM in HUM 128 (our usual classroom. Please do not ask to take the exam early or at an alternate time. Everyone in the class must take the exam on 16 December.