SYLLABUS: HUMANITIES 131
CHINA’S ANCIENT WORLD
Y.K. Lo


Lo issued the ASIANetwork plenary session attendees an invitation to a banquet, as he described the performance approach to the course. The class is divided into four or five Taoist and Confucian families. The course guides the students as they come to understand their social roles. Y.K. Lo described the implementation of the course syllabus that follows here. (The phrase "digestion time" means that the class does not meet formally, but that the students read on their own.)

Objective

Consider this as a banquet invitation. R.S.V.P. by 1650 CE. By attending and working the room in this banquet, you will immerse yourself in "China’s Ancient World" and gain some "performative knowledge" of traditional Chinese cultural values and practices through experiential learning. To be sure, you will still have to do a fair amount of reading for the course, but the focus of learning will be on class discussion and group performance. That’s how we work the room.

The purpose of this banquet is to fill your stomach, as the Taoist sage Lao Zi advised us ages ago, namely, immerse yourself in this culinary event, and let the food permeate into the fiber of your self. As one would unlearn one’s taste in order to appreciate the true flavors of a foreign cuisine, you will need to unlearn for your stomach in this banquet, too. It is hoped that you would realize that food for thought is after all food for stomach, if they are of any practical use to yourself. The banquet features a sumptuous buffet including early beginnings of the Chinese people, society, and writing; early Chinese world view; the Chinese language; Chinese philosophy and religiosity; social customs; science and technology; medicine; feng shui; architecture; martial arts, food and cooking; and entertainments. If possible, we’ll try to stir-fry some chop suey ourselves.

Required texts

Patricia Ebrey, Cambridge Illustrated History: China (CIH), Cambridge, 1996
Patricia Ebrey, Chinese Civilization and Society: A Sourcebook (CC), Free Press, 1993
Gia Fu Feng and Jane English, tr., Lao Tsu Tao Te Ching, Vintage, 1989
John E. Wills, Mountain of Fame (MF), Princeton, 1994
Gregory Whincup, Rediscovering the I Ching, St. Martin’s Griffin, 1986

Feedback and weightings

One panel discussion 15% 2/25
One collaborative play 20% 3/6
One midterm 30% 3/13
One paper (3-4 pages) 25% 4/13
One collaborative feng shui project 10% 5/8

Tentative Menu

Pre-historic China
1/19 Introductions; read Analects, Books1-5
1/21 Wenke, “From Tribe to Empire in North China”
Keightley, "The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture”
1/23 Digestion time; read CIH 10-27

Early world view
1/26 History of Civilization; “Canon of Yao;” Yu (MF 3-10)

The Chinese language
1/28 Diamond, “Empire of Uniformity”
Ch’en et al, “The Development of the Chinese Language and Its Script”
The Bedchamber Ancestral Rites Collaborative play due
3/9 Lecture on Sex
3/30 Family feud (outlines due)
2/27-3/4 The Yin and Yang of a humanistic tradition
2/25 Fortune cookies; read Analogs, Books 6-15
2/23 The Preamble; Late Shang divination records (CC 3-5); Whincup, Rediscovering the I Ching
2/22 Chinese Almanac; selections from the Almanac
2/20 The Preamble; Late Shang divination records (CC 3-5); Whincup, Rediscovering the I Ching
2/18-20 The Yin and Yang of a humanistic tradition
2/16 Lecture on Chinese Almanac; selections from the Almanac
2/14 Midterm followed by second semester recess
2/13 Legalist Teachings (CC 102-104); Ssu-ma Ch'ien, "Letter to Jen An, "The Biographies of Po-yi and Shu-ch'i"
2/11 Tao Te Ching; Chuang Tzu, "The Secret of Caring for Life," "Autumn Floods"
2/9-11 Guanshiyin; Dedicatory Colophons
The Daoist (CC 68-90); read CIH 86-107
Chinese religiosity
2/16 Lecture on Chinese Almanac; selections from the Almanac
2/14 Midterm followed by second semester recess
2/12 Buddhist doctrine (CC 98-99); Scripture of Forty-two Chapters; The Earliest Tales of the Bodhisvatta
2/10 Guanshiyin; Dedicatory Colophons (CC 102-104); Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch (MF 114-126); The Platform Sutra; The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-chi
2/8 Religious Taoism
Local cults (CC 80-82); Ge Hong's Autobiography (CC 91-96); Tianyinzi; Scripture of the Ten Precepts as Spoken by the Celestial Honored One; Precepts for the Perfect Truth Daoist Sect (CC 146-150);
2/6 Qiu Chuji, The Daoist (MF 181-200)
Family and social rituals
3/6 Kinney, "Dyed Silk: Han Notions of the Moral Development of Children"
The Classic of Filial Piety (CC 64-68)
Ancestral Rites (CC 157-163); Family Instructions (CC 238-244); Social Rituals (CC 42-45);
Collaborative play due
3/9 Lecture on Chinese wedding; Concubines (CC 245-249)
Sex
3/11 Sex in History: China; The Question of Sex; Art of the Bedchamber
3/13 Midterm followed by second semester recess
Role models
3/30 Two Avengers (CC 38-41)
Biographies of Reasonable Officials, Wandering Knights, Diviners; Lives of Eminent Monks (CC 99-102)
4/1 Ban Zhao (MF 90-99); Lives of the Nuns; Biographies of Good Women; Women Virtues and Vices (CC 72-76)
Widows Loyal unto Death (CC 253); Women's Lives (CIH 158-161); Women and Problems They Create (CC 164-168); Read CIH 108-135
Martial arts
4/3-8 Video: Shaolin Kungfu
Taiji quan (3-4 page double-spaced type written paper due)
Food and cooking
4/10 Tea and food (cooking strategies, regional cuisine, medical values of food)
4/13 Fortune cookies
Science, technology, and medicine
4/15 Video: The Genius That Was China
Examples of Chinese scientific and technological discoveries
4/17-20 Yin and Yang in medical theory (CC 77-79)
Theoretical concepts; Lecture on Chinese herbs
Architecture and geomancy
4/22 Chinese architecture; "Roofs and Houses"
Video: Ming Garden
4/24 Digestion time
4/27-29 The Errors of Geomancy (CC 120-122)
Arts and literature
5/1 Ssu-ma Ch'ien, "Letter to Jen An, "The Biographies of Po-yi and Shu-ch'i"
Liu Hsieh, "On Tao, the Source"
Tales of Ghosts and Demons (CC 105-108);
"Tu Tzu-ch'un"
The Great Maudgalyayana Rescues His Mother from Hell"
"A Tower for the Summer Heat"
5/4 Video: The Emperor's Eyes; Tang Poetry
Chinese painting; Guide to Capturing a Plum Blossom
CIH 162-163
Entertainments
5/6 Guest lecture on Chinese music
5/8 Mahjong and chess; painting and calligraphy Feng shui; project due.
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MATERIAL CULTURE: THEMES AND ISSUES
Caroline Reeves
Caroline Reeves teaches courses including "Stuff!" an upper-level seminar on material culture; "The Cult of Mao Zedong," a first year seminar; "Barbarians in the Middle Kingdom," a survey course on pre-modern China; "Women in Chinese History," and her favorite, "Modern Chinese History Since 1800."
Reeves' talk on bringing material culture into the classroom included the following list of themes and
issues that can be used to inform discussions incorporating objects.

**Historiographical issues:**
Objects and objectivity
Whose objects?
What questions can objects answer?

**Socio-economic issues:**
Whose objects are preserved?
Objects as "art"

**Museum culture:**
Objects de-contextualized
The objectification of objects behind glass (de-naturalization)

**Globalization:**
Historical currents (Braudel, Fernand, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, 1981)
Future trends?
Ethnicity and objects—do objects make ethnicity or does ethnicity make objects?
Transnationalism as a "new" phenomenon

**Personal relationships with objects:**
Objects as status
Objects as identity
Gendered objects?
Morality and objects: materialism

**Objects as spokespersons**
The beauty of material culture is that it is all around us. Of course it would be wonderful—ideal!—to have access to resources such as a college museum, and the wherewithal to borrow special collections tailored to your course's needs. But bringing material culture into the classroom is an option open to all of us, no matter what our location or financial resources. All it takes is creativity and an understanding of how to connect the intellectual dots between the objects you present and the ideas you hope to inspire.

**Supermarket source**
For example, your local supermarket is a marvelous resource for bringing material culture into the classroom. Many stores now house an "Ethnic Foods" section that can be a treasure trove for the imaginative teacher. A can of lychees (under two dollars) sparked one of the most exciting conversations of the semester in my pre-modern China class. We read an article on China's "medieval economic revolution" that mentioned the circulation of luxury items such as lychees in China from the 9th century on (Blunden, Caroline and Elvin, Mark, *Cultural Atlas of China*, 1983). Most students had read the article without considering that they did not know what a lychee is. When I brought in canned lychees and passed them around (with toothpicks for easy eating), once we recovered from the shock of actually seeing and tasting lychees, we began talking about how those lychees got to us in 1998, and what those same processes would have entailed in the pre-modern world. Important concepts of transportation networks, the connection of local and world markets, the creation of tastes (for the exotic, for the hitherto unknown, for the rare commodity), and the commercialization of agriculture sprang to life vividly as we poked at our sweet, squiggly lychee nuts.

What about chopsticks? Available almost everywhere—if not at the supermarket, perhaps through your nearest Asian restaurant—five dollars buys more than enough for forty students, and bowls of popcorn provide good target practice. Discussions can revolve around notions of civility/civilization; pinching one's food rather than piercing it; materials from which chopsticks are made and the economic differences that those physical differences can reveal; the varieties among Chinese/Japanese/Korean chopsticks, as well as the fact that not all Asians eat with chopsticks after all.

**Fashion**
Fashion provides another riveting topic. Bringing in a piece of Asian clothing is a good start, but the questions accompanying the object must create more than a show-and-tell atmosphere: they must spark your students' intellect—even their emotions. And they can. Questions such as, "How do you feel when you see a white woman wearing sari/cheongsam/kimono/kente cloth?" ignite passionate discussions about ethnicity and objects, and you can further problematize these questions by pointing out that now t-shirts and jeans are accepted as "international" couture in many places around the globe, not worth a second glance. Fashion magazine photos, readily available at negligible cost, can also illuminate these conversations, as well as sensitize students to the images that accost them daily, including blatantly orientalist images.

All kinds of objects—or pictures of objects referenced to things tangible in your students' worlds—can be paired with the issues/topics mentioned above to create dynamic, memorable classroom discussions that wake students up to the vibrancy of your teaching.

**Further resources**
Resources for thinking about material culture include Lubar, Steven and Kingery, W. David, eds.,

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THE MUSEUM AS A TEACHING ENGAGEMENT WITH MATERIAL CULTURE

Stephanie Spray Jandl

Stephanie Spray Jandl, Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Associate at the Williams College Museum of Art, has for the past five years, worked with Williams faculty to help them use art and material culture from the museum's collection in their curriculum. Jandl and the third panelist, Caroline Reeves, have collaborated on courses taught by Reeves.

A professor of religion recently called to ask if the Williams College Museum of Art had any art that might relate to a course she was about to teach on Hinduism. Noting that we had nothing Indian on view in the museum's galleries, she wasn't hopeful but said, "Even if you have just one or two things, that would be very useful." Imagine her surprise when I told her that we had an Indian collection comprised of more than 100 works of art—temple hangings, sculpture, and manuscript pages—that spanned ten centuries. Enthusiastic about this newly discovered resource, she brought her class to the museum numerous times over the course of the semester so her students could study first-hand depictions of the major narratives of the Hindu religion. Both the professor and the museum were pleased that, for these students, Hindu mythology took on an added vibrancy through simple contact with material culture.

Today, I will outline how you, too, can draw upon the teaching support a museum has to offer. I will assume you have no prior experience of working with a museum, although some of you may find this material familiar. We will look first at how to find material culture to complement your teaching, and then we will briefly go over typical museum guidelines for safely teaching with material culture. Museums, you will find, are valuable and accessible teaching resources that are easy to use.

Becoming informed

Begin your work by getting to know the Asian collections at the museums nearest you—ideally one on your own campus. In general, you will find that museums affiliated with a college or university will be enthusiastic about working with you since most of them provide teaching support to their campuses as part of their mission. Public museums are not set up to give such extensive attention to curricular support, but they always welcome student groups in their galleries, so they are an equally valuable resource that should not be overlooked. You can expedite your reconnaissance work by taking advantage of museum publications, which are widely distributed to university libraries. Most museums have compiled a "handbook," which highlights key holdings, and some have published catalogs focused on specific areas of their collections. One can often find more extensive information on a museum's website, which most museums now have.

Although you will learn a considerable amount about a museum's collections by perusing its galleries and publications, you will be shortchanging yourself if you stop here. Most museums have the majority of their collections in storage—some as much as 95%. This is for several reasons: most museums have collections larger than available gallery space and many types of art—textiles and scrolls, for example—are sensitive to light and are thus displayed only infrequently. Therefore, you should always take the additional step of exploring what a museum has in storage.

Contact the museum's education department and ask who on staff works with faculty. Some museums have a staff position dedicated to faculty needs, while at other museums, it is the curators, educators, or registrars who work with faculty. When you meet with the person you are referred to, tell him or her about the objectives of your curriculum and the kind of material culture that you might be looking for. Because most museum professionals know their collections well, you will likely receive valuable suggestions for suitable material culture as well as some background information on these works that will allow you to make connections with your curriculum. Take advantage of the knowledgeable staff and the research a museum has done on its collections, as this will greatly facilitate your organizational work.

Museum visit logistics

After you have taken the time to get to know the museum's Asian collection, you may find that the most relevant works for your teaching are on display in the galleries. If this is the case, then call the museum's education department and schedule a time to bring your class to the gallery. By doing this, the museum can assure you that no other groups will disturb you while you are meeting with your class—in other words, you won't encounter a group of boisterous 2nd-graders. Confirm that the works you plan to teach with will still be on view for your class session; museums frequently change exhibitions or move objects from view, so it is always prudent to check first.
The education department of a museum can help you with the logistics of your class visit as well. If you are interested in having someone from the museum speak to your class about the Asian collection, they can probably arrange this. If the museum charges admission, the education department can usually offer you a discounted group rate. And, of course, they can give you additional information on any works of material culture on display should you be interested.

It is possible, however, that your campus museum will not have works in its Asian collection that align with your curriculum. If this is the case, consider a field trip to a museum in your vicinity as most museums welcome classes from neighboring institutions. At the Williams College Museum of Art, for example, we regularly work with four or five colleges that are within a 75-mile radius of our campus. As before, contact the museum's education department to either schedule a time to bring your class to the galleries or to be referred to someone who can help you get to know what is in storage.

Loan procedures

If you would like to work in greater depth with material culture—that is, you would like to teach with it numerous times over the course of the semester, or, perhaps, assign research papers to your students—then multiple field trips out of town would be impractical. In this case, ask your campus museum about the possibility of borrowing material culture from another teaching museum. For example, there might be an extensive collection of Japanese Ukiyo-e prints at a college collection several hours away that would be ideal for your curriculum. Your campus museum might be able to borrow some of these prints expressly to support your teaching. Such a loan can be an effective solution for a lack of useful material culture in your campus museum. It is, however, important to note that a loan does involve advance planning, a considerable amount of work for both museums involved, and some costs, which your department will probably have to assume. If your museum agrees to sponsor such a loan, they will handle the administrative work with some planning assistance from you.

To illustrate how the loan process works, let's look at the loan the Williams College Museum of Art recently arranged for Caroline Reeves. In the fall of 1996, she approached our museum about borrowing twelve objects of material culture from Harvard's Peabody Museum for use in the spring semester. She had chosen a museum affiliated with a university, which was appropriate since teaching museums are much more likely to lend to fellow teaching institutions. Because she planned on working intensively with the objects, it was clear to us that such a loan would be well worth the administrative work. Reeves, who was already familiar with the Peabody's collection, gave us a list of the works she wanted to borrow, which had been compiled with the assistance of the Peabody's registrar. We in turn submitted a formal request to the Peabody to borrow the objects. All of the works were approved, for several reasons: Reeves and her contact at the Peabody had focused on objects that were not scheduled for other uses and were appropriate for travel; the loan was between two teaching institutions; and Reeves knew people at the Peabody, which made them feel secure that the objects would be safely handled. The costs associated with this loan were approximately $650. (The majority of this expense was for shipping, so it's important to borrow from museums that are not too distant. There are ways to reduce the transportation costs, which your local museum can discuss with you.) With a few cost-saving decisions, we found that the expense of Reeves' loan was modest and was overshadowed by the curricular benefits it brought to her and her students.

Once you have secured works of material culture that you can teach with, either from storage at your local museum or by loan, where and how do you actually teach with these objects? You will probably be asked to bring your class to the museum to teach with the objects there. This is for security reasons: an object is much less likely to be accidentally damaged or lost if it stays within the secure confines of the museum. Most museums have a room that can accommodate a small- to medium-sized class—frequently it is referred to as the "Print Room." This space will have climate control, creating a stable environment in which art can be examined. This means, for example, that scrolls can be brought out without being subjected to the dangerous effects of a sudden change in temperature and humidity. While it may seem inconvenient to move one or several class sessions to the museum, it is in fact a great opportunity. Students love to go behind-the-scenes at a museum and experience works of art that are not behind glass; our professors frequently comment on the enthusiasm and invigorated discussion that such a visit brings.

Care of objects of material culture

Before you begin your material culture session, your museum contact person will discuss guidelines for safely teaching with the objects. In some circumstances you will be allowed to handle the objects, in which case you will be given some white cotton gloves to wear. These gloves, despite their stuffy image, actually play a critical role in the preservation of art and material
culture by protecting objects from the detrimental effects of the oil that is always present on our fingertips. Your students will, of course, be asked not to bring any food or drink into the classroom. It's important not to be afraid of the art; just follow the common-sense guidelines given by the museum and the art will be safe.

Museums are a valuable and accessible teaching resource. Once you have done the groundwork of familiarizing yourself with material culture in local collections—both what is in the galleries and, more importantly, what is in storage—you will be able to draw upon this expertise for years to come. In my experience, once professors have familiarized themselves with our collection, they enthusiastically keep coming back every year to teach with art and material culture. In the past five years, when we have actively reached out to the faculty, we have seen the number of students coming to our Print Room with their classes rise from 750 per year to over 2,000. Working with a museum is easy, and they want to help you, so take advantage of the unique opportunities museums offer to support your curriculum through engagement with material culture!

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RESOURCES

Asian Educational Media Service (AEMS)
The summer 1998 newsletter of the Asian Educational Media Service published reviews of eight new video titles on China, Japan, India, and Indonesia. Multiple copies are available for distribution by organizers of workshops and institutes for pre-college and college-level educators.

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Education About Asia

Education About Asia is a journal published by the Association for Asian Studies, in conjunction with the Freeman Foundation, which goes to over 8,000 subscribers throughout the United States and twenty-two countries. The exclusive focus of Education About Asia is improving classroom teaching at all levels. Our articles are for teachers and professors, from elementary school through university.

The Association for Asian Studies is happy to provide copies of Education About Asia for institute or workshop leaders who order twenty or more copies for $3.00 an issue. This price is less than half the $7.00 single-issue cost of EAA. (ASIANetwork is an AAS affiliate.)

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Journal of Indian Philosophy and Religion

Subscriptions: Individual, $20; Institutional, $35

The journal publishes articles on the wide range of philosophies and religions indigenous to South Asia. It includes book reviews and scholarly work of comparative and critical studies of Eastern and Western philosophies.

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FORTHCOMING IN THE DECEMBER 1998 ASIANetwork EXCHANGE