

**History 221: The Imperial Chinese World  
Connecticut College, Fall 2014, (25 students)**

**Course Description**

This was a survey course in pre-modern Chinese history through 1800 CE. We began with China’s prehistory and the roots of Chinese thought, and then focused on the imperial or dynastic period from 221 BCE onward, ending with the height of the Qing at the end of the eighteenth century. This course was an opportunity for students not only to learn the outlines of Chinese history, but also to develop confidence and fluency in speaking and thinking about China.

I created and taught this survey as part of a conscious effort to teach Chinese history in a way that emphasizes the diversity and imminence of what became the Chinese past. The goal was to have students engage with that complexity and make part of it their own. We followed five courses of analysis through each dynasty: political, social, cultural/material, intellectual, and international history. This helped students find a niche through which they could relate to the rest of the material, both during each period and across the semester.

**Activities**

Students regularly engaged in roleplaying and concept mapping exercises, as well as participating in small-group discussions. Assessments were based primarily on text and object analysis exercises, which asked students to evaluate and contextualize a pre-prepared or unseen passage or artifact on the basis of their knowledge.

**Final Evaluations**

*Qualitative*

- “Professor Schluessel is a great teacher and engaging. He cares a lot about his students and it was a pleasure to be in his class. I felt very unsure of myself in the beginning of this course as my knowledge in Chinese history, but his guidance and encouragement helped me a lot.”
- “History, in general, is not interesting to me as it concerns the past – and from my perspective, not in the least useful. However, the professor of the course was outstanding! He made the material fascinating! I think part of it was that he had such palpable enthusiasm in engaging in the material, that it was hard not to also become interested.”
- “This class was nothing but a pleasure and hands down the best course I took this year. My only complaint is the professor will not be here again next semester.”

*Quantitative (by percentage)*

Prompt	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Course requirements were clearly stated		20%	80%
Instructor was responsive and available		13%	87%
Assignments returned in a timely manner		20%	80%
Comments were constructive and useful		13%	87%
Instructor taught in a way that made you take responsibility for your own learning		27%	73%
Assignments gave opportunity to synthesize or apply knowledge		33%	67%
You either mastered body of material or developed intellectually	7%	27%	67%
Instructor treated students with respect			100%
Challenged you to do your best work		29%	71%
Instructor encouraged class participation		7%	93%
Texts or other materials were appropriate	7%	13%	80%