LANDSCAPES AND TIMELINES
With an emphasis on CHINA

SYLLABUS

Course Description
The content of this course lies at the intersection of culture and geography, of time and space, of then and now. It is global in scope, but with a human voice which through the novels will articulate various cultures in their own particular historical context. We will learn basic facts about the history and geography of the five continents, and will analyze the novels through a grid of thematic categories.

NB: This course is developed thanks to a NEH grant, and though it will cover all five continents as mentioned above, it will focus primarily on China; all the readings, with the exception of Occidentalism, will be on topics meant to inform us about Chinese culture.

Course
The goal of this course is Understanding, Comprehension, Enlightenment about who we are and where we stand on this planet. This we can only understand by looking “out there”. Therefore, we need to step outside of our cultural boundaries, outside of the comfortable and familiar and discover the foreign.

Course Objectives
To increase your cultural literacy.
To acquire a degree of familiarity with global time and space.
To help “situate yourself ” on the planet.
To understand the relativity and interconnection of world cultures.
***To explore the uniqueness of the Chinese culture, then and now.
Texts


- Occidentalism, by Ian Buruma & Avishai Margalit, Penguin Press, 2004

The above three texts are compulsory and will be read by all.

Do not yet purchase the following novels, as they will be assigned in class. Each student will read one novel.

- Snow Flower and the Secret Fan, by Lisa See
- Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China, by Yung Chang
- The Mother Earth, by Pearl S. Buck
- Shanghai Girl, by Vivian Yang
- The Concubine's Children, by Denise Chong

Assignments

- A Research Paper, 15 pages minimum; 1 working draft + final draft over the semester.
- Class Presentations will be assigned

- Keeping a journal about cultural events, attended, witnessed, read about, or made aware of somehow that you think are significant.

First assignment: In Blainey’s History of the World, read the first 5 chapters, up to p. 52 – and in Occidentalism, please read the first installment, “War Against the West”.

Evaluation

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class presentation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Other ***</td>
<td>200</td>
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*** By other is meant class discussion and participation, and of course attendance.
Attendance is a must and non-negotiable – If you absolutely must be absent, please let me know, as unexcused absence will significantly impact your grade, but any absence, except with a doctor’s note, will be penalized.

For more information about the following important issues:
Academic Integrity/Plagiarism Statement, see MSMC Catalog pp. 39-41
Attendance/Participation Policy, see MSMC Catalog p. 35
Academic Freedom Statement, see Student Handbook p. 104

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