

HUM 271CS  
Spring 2014

MICHELE FINE

## **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

- *Compact History of the World*, edited by Geoffrey Parker, Barnes & Noble 2002 – It is primarily a reference book with many maps. Very useful.

- *A Short History of the World*, by Geoffrey Blainey, Ivan R. Dee, 2002. Delightful and easy to read narrative, primarily focused on cultural transformations.

- *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

Research paper	300 points	
Class presentation	100 points	
Other ***	200 points	
	.....	for a total of 600 points

\*\*\* 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 penalize.

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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