Course Description:

How did traditional Chinese people write about themselves and the society they lived in, and what can we learn from these writings about the millennia-long civilization? Revolving around the themes of self and society, this course introduces some major literary texts and authors in pre-modern China (ca. 17th century BCE to 13th century CE). The central topics we will discuss include the intersections between literature and history, religion, gender, urban life, art, and print culture. By the end of this course, you will be familiar with major intellectual traditions and literary genres in pre-modern China, and will be able to analyze literary texts through close reading and against historical context. The course will also prepare you for further studies in Chinese literature and history.

Class meets three times a week. Each class meeting comprises a 30-minute lecture followed by a 20-minute discussion. The readings for each class total about 30 pages. You are also responsible for online posting before each class (see requirements). No prerequisite.
Required texts:

- All other readings will be made available as PDF files.

Recommended Texts:


Requirements:

1) All weekly readings are due before class. Active participation in class discussion is very important.
2) By midnight before every class meeting, submit one question specifically about the primary readings (indicate exact sentences or paragraphs) to the online class forum.
3) Three short response papers assigned throughout the semester. Papers will be graded on originality, compelling argumentation, and clarity of style. Rubrics for paper writing will be handed out at first class meeting.
4) In-class midterm exam and final exam. Exams include identifications and short essays.
5) Prior knowledge of Chinese language or literature is not required. All readings will be in English. Class is taught in English.

Grading:

Classroom participation: 10%; online posting: 10%; response papers: 30%; midterm exam: 20%; final exam: 30%

Class Schedule and Readings: (readings with * are optional)

**Week 1**
1. Introduction: Course preliminaries, “The Chinese Dynasty Song”
2. Words from Heaven and the Sage Kings
   - David Keightley, “The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of the Late Shang Dynasty”
3. Songs of Love and Power
   - Selections from *The Book of Songs*, trans. Arthur Waley

**Week 2**
1. The Confucian Self
   - Selected writings by Confucius and Mengzi, from *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*
2. Rule by Poverty and Cruelty
   - Selected writings by Mozi, Xunzi and Hanfei Zi from *Readings*
3. How to Be an Immortal
- Watson, trans., *Zhuangzi*, pp. 89-95, 97-111.
- Mini-debate in class: “How should America be ruled?” (speak in the voice of one master)

**Week 3**
1. The Art of War
   - Selections from Sunzi, *The Art of War*
2. Shamanism in *The Songs of the South*
3. The Grand Scribe and the Beginning of History

**Week 4**
1. History in a Woman’s Voice
   - “Ban Zhao,” “Thoughts upon Reading the ‘Biography of Ban Zhao,’” in Idema and Grant, *Red Brush*, 17-42.
2. Writing the Chinese Empire
3. Writing the Ephemeral Life
   - “Nineteen Old Poems”
   - “Southeast Fly the Peacocks

**First paper due**

**Week 5**
1. The Voice of the Steppe
   - “Ballad of Mulan” and other folk songs
2. The Buddhist Conception of Self and Society
   - “On Why Monks Do Not Bow Down Before Kings”
   - Selections from *Platform Sutra*
3. Man and Mind in Literature
   - Selections from Liu Xie, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*

(To be continued)