

## **Chinese Studies MPhil Papers**

All papers are assessed by a 5,000-word essay unless otherwise specified. Students choose their essay topics in consultation with their paper instructors and dissertation supervisors.

Please note that papers are usually only offered if there are at least two takers. Modules offered vary according to the staff available each academic year and the interests of students. Additional papers may be introduced. Please consult your potential supervisor to discuss the options available.

### **Asia in Theory (Convenor: Dr Adam Yuet Chau)**

This team-taught seminar is intended to expose graduate students in Chinese Studies to a wide range of historical, social and literary theories, as well as research and analytical methodologies. Readings will be taken from a variety of disciplines, covering a wide range of geographically-specific and comparative studies. Topics covered include: What is theory and how to do it?; Foucault; keywords; gender and performance theory; internet research methodologies; literary theory; historiography; science and technology studies; sociology of culture; ritual and religion; disciplines and genres; cultural studies; etc. There will also be research practicums to help students hone their research skills. All students in the modern and contemporary pathways of the MPhil Programme in Chinese Studies are required to take this paper (those doing pre-modern topics can either take this paper as one of their option papers or audit). Occasionally some students in the Japanese Studies MPhil Programme will also join the paper. 'Dissertation only' MPhil students in Chinese Studies and all First-year DEAS doctoral students are highly recommended to audit this paper and to participate as actively as possible.

### **Modern Chinese literature (Dr Heather Inwood)**

This paper aims to introduce students to the field of modern Chinese literature as it evolved through the 20th century and up to the present. Literature, whether popular or elite, has had a vital place in modern experience. In the first term students become familiar with some of the major canonical writers and issues. Teaching in the second term is organised around a particular topic: possible examples are post-Mao and contemporary fiction; fiction and film in Republican popular culture; Chinese modernism.

### **China in a Global WWII (Professor van de Ven)**

The Second World War was an axial moment in East Asia. It reshaped the geopolitical contours of the region and it continues to have a deep impact on the historical identities of its citizens, the constitutions of its governments, and the high and low cultures of its societies. The focus is on China in this paper; it places China in the wider context of a global Second World War, paying attention to the fighting itself and the changes that took place in its nature to explain the rise of the Chinese Communists. But students will also pay attention to literature, the press, and film and consider the aftermath of the war, including the difficulties of social and economic rehabilitation and the way these traumatic years are commemorated today in public events and museums.

### **Cultural History of Late-Imperial China (Dr Noga Ganany)**

This seminar-style interdisciplinary paper explores a range of topics relating to the cultural history of late-imperial China, including religious practice, print culture, literature and the arts. The main goal of this course is to introduce students to a variety of sources (textual and visual) and research methodologies in the study of late-imperial China. The temporal scope of this paper is the second millennium AD, broadly from the Song Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty (960-1911). By the end of the course students will 1) acquire advanced familiarity with key cultural and historical developments in late-imperial China; 2) acquire experience in reading and analysing a range of primary sources, including texts from the Daoist canon, inscriptions, local gazetteers, and literary works, among others; and 3) familiarise themselves with recent scholarship in the study of late-imperial China and practice reading secondary materials critically.

### **Death and Religion in China (Dr Noga Ganany)**

This paper examines the notions of death, the afterlife, and the netherworld in Chinese religious and cultural practice. Our purpose is threefold. First, the paper provides a roadmap to conceptualizations and practices relating to death in various aspects of Chinese culture. Using primary and secondary sources of different media, we will raise questions concerning the relationships between death rituals, writing about death, and visual depictions of death and the afterlife. Second, this paper offers an interdisciplinary discussion of Chinese religions, including key religious traditions (Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism) and popular practices. Third, this paper addresses critical issues in the study of Chinese religions.

### **The Anthropology of China (Dr Adam Yuet Chau)**

This paper introduces methods and theories in the anthropological study of Chinese society (with the main emphasis on the PRC). Topics covered include social institutions; social relations and sociality; death and death rituals; food, identity and politics; space and place; language, society and politics; religion and society; ethnicity and ethnogenesis; Taiwan and Hong Kong; the internet in China; visual literary and symbolic analysis; gender and the body; globalisation; etc. There will also be sessions dedicated to honing research and analytical skills. Some topics can be added to cater to specific cohort's research interests. The students will learn to appreciate the value of fieldwork and anthropological theories in contributing to a deeper understanding of how Chinese society and culture work.

### **Chinese Art and Visual Culture (Dr Hajni Elias)**

This paper examines Chinese art and material culture stretching from the Neolithic period to the present with a focus on dynastic and modern times. It provides an object and theme based learning experience, including lectures on important media and developments in Chinese art as well as handling sessions of Chinese art collections at the Fitzwilliam Museum and the British Museum (COVID circumstances permitting). It explores the making and meaning of Chinese art and how it reflects the culture, religion and philosophy of its period. It also introduces the history of Chinese art collecting in the 20 - 21st centuries and considers current art market trends with an examination of some of the driving forces behind them. COVID circumstances permitting a day trip is planned to visit the British Museum and the Eskenazi Gallery of Chinese Art in London.

### **Classical and literary Chinese texts [Dr Imre Galambos, Professor Roel Sterckx]**

Guided readings of philosophical and other selected texts from pre-imperial and early imperial China. Assessment by examination in June.

### **Early China [Professor Roel Sterckx]**

An topical introduction to Warring States, Qin and Han society with a weekly writing assignment (themes include religion, intellectual and economic life, agriculture, perceptions of law and order, and others). The second part of the seminar focuses on sinological methods and the student's chosen dissertation research.

### **Dunhuang and the Silk Road [Dr Imre Galambos]**

This course focusses on the history and culture of the Silk Road from the fifth to the eleventh centuries in the region that is today's North-western China. Particular attention is given to manuscripts and art from Dunhuang, which before the eleventh century used to be a thriving oasis city located at the intersection of Chinese and Central Asian cultures. We will examine how the academic field called Dunhuang Studies emerged from the study of the manuscripts, and how it shaped and contributed to our understanding of medieval Chinese history, society and culture. While exploring topics such as religion, daily life, trade, education, literature or art, we will discover the many ways in which China was influenced by, or had an impact on, cultures to its west.

### **Japanese for Sinologists (Dr Imre Galambos)**

This paper helps equip students who are already proficient in reading Chinese to read Japanese-language scholarship on China. This is not a language paper; the purpose is not to learn to speak Japanese but to be able to read academic work written in Japanese. After some preliminary sessions, the students will bring select Japanese texts relating to their own research topics to read and translate in a group.

## **Sample 'Alternative Papers'**

Students can sometimes choose to take a paper outside of the usual Chinese Studies MPhil paper offerings as an 'alternative paper' (previously known as 'alternative exercise'). These can be regular papers in other faculties (e.g., POLIS, History) or specialised designed papers arranged with the student's dissertation supervisor (similar to 'directed individual study' in the US).

### **Avant-Garde Art in Contemporary China (Dr Adam Yuet Chau)**

[Note: This was a specially-designed paper for an MPhil student in 2014-15 who needed enhanced training in relation to her MPhil dissertation topic.]

This paper is devoted to understanding contemporary Chinese avant-garde art through reading Chinese-language materials. We will look at the evolution of avant-garde art in reform-era China in relation to broader processes such as commodification and globalisation as well as critics' writings on individual Chinese artists. The paper is assessed by a three-hour examination in which the candidate is asked to translate certain select passages from Chinese to English.

### **Chinese Religion and Ritual (Dr Adam Yuet Chau)**

[Note: This was a specially-designed paper for an MPhil student in 2015-16 who needed enhanced training in relation to her MPhil dissertation topic.]

This paper's topical focus is on Zhengyi Daoist priests. Questions to be addressed include: Who are the Zhengyi Daoist priests? (their difference from Quanzhen Daoist priests; as householder ritual service providers); Why is it misleading to call *daoshi* 'Daoists'? What is the 'Daoist liturgical framework'? What are the relationships between Daoist priests and local cults? How were Zhengyi priests trained traditionally and how are they trained today? What is the relationship between the Chinese party-state, the official Daoist establishment (e.g. the Daoxie) and the Zhengyi priests? What are the different analytical frameworks for understanding the role of the householder Daoist priests in local society and in the organisation of the Daoist priesthood (if there is such a thing)? We will be reading related works in Chinese and English by scholars such as Kenneth Dean, Vincent Goossaert, Stephen Jones, Li Xiangping, Yang Der-ruey, MEI Li, Long Feijun, Adam Chau, Wei Deyu, etc., as well as some primary sources. The paper is assessed by a 5,000-word essay in English on a topic chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor.

### **Museums, Art Galleries and Auction Houses (Dr Adam Yuet Chau)**

[Note: This was a specially-designed paper for an MPhil student in 2019-20 who needed enhanced training in relation to her MPhil dissertation topic.]

This paper is devoted to understanding contemporary Chinese museum, art-gallery and auction-house practices through reading Chinese-language materials. Topics covered include the commodification of art; museum display practices; the development of auction houses in China; pricing art; exhibition curation and the figure of the curator; biennales; the international reception of contemporary Chinese art; etc. The paper is assessed by a 5,000-word essay in English on a topic chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor.

## **Related Papers in Other Faculties**

The following papers in other faculties have been used as 'alternative papers' by some of our past MPhil students (with approval by their supervisors and the Degree Committee):

### **China and International Security (Dr Kun-Chin Lin, POLIS)**

This paper focuses on the geopolitical and multilateral governance challenges arising from the People's Republic of China's material, aspirational, and strategic claims over global politics in the 21st Century. It evaluates mainstream theories of international relations and international political economy theories, including power transition, economic integration, and regime-building theories developed in the Western historical context, through juxtaposition to critical perspectives from Asian epistemic communities. Strongly referential to current events, the seminar topics include traditional and non-traditional security issues.

### **China in the International Order (Dr Kun-Chin Lin, POLIS)**

This paper provides an application of international relations and international political economy theories to the case study of China's decline, isolation, and rise in global politics and market over the past century and half. Reassessing power transition, economic integration, and institution-building theories developed in the Western historical context, the paper prepares students to take a critical view on one of the most systemic shift of our time – the rise of China as the world's largest economy with great power aspirations. Combining historical and theoretical perspectives, this course will examine major events and issues that have created pressures and opportunities for China's foreign relations, market expansion, corporate internationalisation, military modernisation, and influence in international organisations.

### **Global China (Dr Rachel Leow, History)**

This paper examines China as a global phenomenon through engaging with the question of the Chinese diaspora, focusing on Southeast Asia with sideway glances into North America and Europe. Both in scope and in magnitude, the movement of people from China into regions across the world remains among one of the great migrations of world history, and the relationship between China and its migrants one of continuing and evolving complexity, profoundly shaped by the course of world-historical events. We will critically situate the history of China and Chinese migration in a range of global problematics, including scale and periodization, diaspora, nationalism, gender, language, and class. In examining these themes, the central focus of this paper will be to challenge students to rethink the dimensions of modern China and Chineseness as subjects of world-historical study, and to situate China within spheres of analysis different to, or alongside, those dictated by conventional narratives of the nation-state. The course thus aims to bring the study of China's modern history firmly into dialogue with methodologies and debates in global history.