TRADITIONAL CHINESE LITERATURE

Recommended:

- Chapters 1, 2, 6 (section 2), and 9, (section 1) from Schirokauer, Conrad and Donald Clark’s Modern East Asia: A Brief History. [Purchased book]

**Thursday morning session: Philosophy and Poetry**

The selections from *The Analects* and the *Chuang Tzu* (Zhuang Zi) are philosophical readings meant to give you a basis from which to continue the readings. They represent a small sample of the “Classics” with which any literate person in pre-modern China would have been conversant. Note the difference between the two – The Analects seeks to set out a code of behavior for members of society, while the Chuang Tzu is concerned with more abstract matters. These works exert great influence over Chinese culture and society, and their impact can be seen in literature right up into the 20th century.

As you read the poetry, look for images of nature, love and friendship, and how they may reflect the author’s views about society. Think about the two philosophies you have read and how they are reflected in the poetry. Think about how poets were influenced by earlier poetry. Form is important in Chinese poetry, but it is difficult to convey when reading works-in-translation. We will discuss it during the workshop.


Optional:


Thursday afternoon session: Prose Narrative

Chinese prose and fiction have their origin in dynastic histories, ghost stories and in storytelling. Authors hooked readers, or listeners, with compelling characters and exciting plots, and through them conveyed important social/moral lessons. “Death of Hsiang Yu” is from one of the first histories. Yuan Zhen’s and Bo Xingjian’s stories are Tang dynasty romantic (and cautionary) tales. Feng’s story, which is notably longer and more complex, is likely a compilation of the work of oral storytellers. Notice the use of the storyteller narration in the text. Many of the plots and characters of histories and early stories are later used in novels and in drama.

Required:


Optional:


MODERN CHINESE LITERATURE

Recommended:

- Chapters 10, 13, 14 (section 1), 15 and 16 from Schirokauer, Conrad and Donald Clark’s *Modern East Asia: A Brief History*. [Purchased book]

**Friday morning session: May Fourth Tradition**

The early 20th century was a time of experimentation in literary styles and language. Many Chinese people were reading Western philosophy and literature for the first time. Lu Xun’s “Preface” in Call to Arms served, literally, as a call to arms for Chinese youth of the May Fourth Movement. “A Madman’s Diary” was the first work of original fiction to appear in the vernacular language. As you read, think about how a selection reflects Lu Xun’s views about literature and its relationship to Chinese society and culture. Keep in mind that there were also fierce debates between advocates of art for art’s sake and art for humanity’s sake, and that not all artists agreed with Lu Xun. Think back on your reading of *The Analects* and *Chuang Tzu*, too. How do these philosophies fare in the early 20th century?

- WEN Yiduo, “Dead Water.” p. 506. [Columbia Anthology—Purchased Book]
- SHEN Congwen, “Xiaoxiao.” p. 97-110. [Columbia Anthology—Purchased Book]
- DING Ling, “When I was in Xia Village.” p. 143-158. [Columbia Anthology—Purchased Book]

Optional:

- ZHU Ziqing, “The Silhouette of His Back.” p. 627-629. [Columbia Anthology—Purchased Book]
- ZHANG Ailing, “Sealed Off.” p. 188-197. [Columbia Anthology—Purchased Book]
- BA Jin, “Dog.” p. 120-125. [Columbia Anthology—Purchased Book]
Friday afternoon session: Post-Mao Literature

With the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, there was an outpouring of new literature. The first type to appear was “Literature of the Wounded.” This type was published in the years immediately following the Cultural Revolution. It tends to be very sentimental and details the abuses suffered at the hands of Red Guards and the Gang of Four. We will also look at Bei Dao’s poetry. He rose to prominence during the 1976 Democracy Wall movement, and is now in exile. In the early eighties, Root-searching literature became prominent. This literature is more reflective and seeks to look deep into Chinese culture for the root of the problems modern China encountered. The Avant-Garde, or Experimental, authors explored new writing techniques. They experimented with plot, time, and voice. Their stories are often characterized by violence, death and decay, and are sometimes shocking even to Western audiences. As you read, think about earlier readings. Do you find any echoes of Lu Xun? Is there a rejection of his tradition?

- CAN Xue, “Hut on the Mountain.” p. 383-86. [Columbia Anthology—Purchased Book]

Optional: