

## HIEA 166: CREATING MING HISTORIES

Friday 9-11:50  
Phone: (858) 822-0814  
Office hours: MW 3-4 & by appointment

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The Ming dynasty (1368-1644) coincides with “early modern” Europe, and was long seen as its reverse: autocratic, inward-looking and stagnant. Recently, scholars have complicated this vision of the Ming with new research about topics like politics and government; about banditry, rebellion, civil war, and political legitimation; about commercialization and the variety of cultural models available to people; about the varieties of religious experience in Ming China; and about gender relations. This colloquium focusses on discussion and research. In alternate weeks we will read a short primary source (in translation), and then a lively scholarly book that uses that source, so that you can see what historians do with their source materials, as well as learning about Ming history and society. In your paper, you’ll practice creating history yourself.

### Readings:

Coursepack available from University Readers.

Sarah Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming China*

Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*

Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle*

David Robinson, *Bandits, Eunuchs and the Son of Heaven*

\*Kenneth Hammond, *Pepper Mountain: the Life, Death, and Posthumous Career of Yang Jisheng*

Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students*

### Requirements:

- Attendance and active, informed class participation, based on reading notes, 30%.
- Weekly e-post (one paragraph) after class discussion, by 10 pm Sunday, 20%
- Final paper, 15 – 20 pages, and assignments leading up to it, 50%
- Let me know *immediately* about any problems with the readings, attendance, etc.

Discussion: Read the assignment with care, take notes, and bring the reading and your notes to class (I may collect them occasionally). As a general guideline, for primary sources you should note the meaning of each few sentences and the questions they raises: read the primary sources intensively. For secondary sources, read extensively: include in your notes 1. the main points the author is making 2. how the author uses primary sources and 3. questions the readings raise and points of interest to you.

E-posts: Post *on time* one paragraph on what you learned from class discussion, what questions were not answered, further thoughts, connections with earlier class material, etc. If someone has posted what you wanted to say, respond to or extend his or her comment. If you post early, check in again at the end.

WebCT: Check WebCT often for the e-posts, details on the paper assignment, announcements, etc.

Final paper: Select (in consultation with me) a primary source or two from the Ming period (1368-1644), in English translation. I will guide you as do an intensive reading of your text, and research in reference and secondary materials to contextualize and explicate the text it.

Week Zero (Sept. 24): Introduction

Zhu Yuanzhang, "In Praise of Auspicious Melons" (handout)

Week One (Oct. 1): A Story, and an Overview of Ming Society

Sarah Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming China*

Choose any textbook on Chinese history and read the Ming chapter(s).

Week Two (Oct. 8): Economy and Society, From Beginning to End

Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure*

Library session: we will meet at Geisel library.

Week Three (Oct. 15): The Yongle Reign – Primary Sources

Zhu Yuanzhang, "The August Ming Ancestral Instruction" (coursepack)

Empress Xu, "Instructions for the Inner Quarters" (coursepack)

→ One paragraph description of final paper primary source due.

Week Four (Oct. 22): The Yongle Reign – Secondary Source

Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle*

→ Hand in some initial reading notes on your primary source.

Week Five (Oct. 30): Mid-Ming Banditry and Rebellion – Primary Source

Xie Fen, "An Account of a Mirror for the Future," transl. David Robinson (coursepack)

Gordon Harvey, *Writing With Sources*

→ Full close reading notes of primary source due, with research questions.

Week Six (Nov. 5): Mid-Ming Banditry and Rebellion – Secondary Source

David Robinson, *Bandits, Eunuchs and the Son of Heaven: Rebellion and the Economy of Violence in Mid-Ming China*

→ Answers to questions on who, what, where, when questions due.

Week Seven (Nov. 12): Autocracy and Moral Autonomy – Primary Sources

Yang Jisheng, "Final Instructions" (coursepack)

→ Oral report on your paper and your research process. Bring a paragraph or two to share.

Week Eight (Nov. 19): Autocracy and Moral Autonomy – Secondary Source

Kenneth Hammond, *Pepper Mountain: the Life, Death, and Posthumous Career of Yang Jisheng*

→ Draft due, combining close reading with research.

Week Ten (Dec. 3): The Wife's Role

Joseph McDermott, "The Domestic Bursar" (coursepack)

Ban Zhao, "Instructions for Women" (coursepack)

Feng Menglong, "Two High-Minded Magistrates Vie to Take on an Orphan Girl as Daughter-in-Law"

→ Second draft due.

Final paper due December 8, 11:00. Include all earlier written assignments with my comments.

\*\* The syllabus may change.\*\*