Course Title : CHINA THROUGH THE EYES OF THE WEST

Course Code : HST193/GEC335

No. of Credits/Term : 3

Mode of Tuition : Sectional approach

Class Contact Hours : 3 hours per week

Category in Major Prog. : General Education, Category C. Also available as a Free Elective for non-history major only.

Prerequisite(s) : None

Co-requisite(s) : None

Exemption Requirement(s) : N/A

Restriction : History Major students cannot take the course as a free elective, or to fulfill history major requirements, but it can be taken as a General Education Course.

Brief Course Description : This course intends to give students an understanding of how Western views of China have changed through history, and how many of the same views still resonate today. One key theme is that often the West has viewed China in terms of its own needs, desires and fears, rather than through making any genuine attempt to “understand” China as it really is. The history of contacts between China and the West will be largely focused on contemporary texts, ranging through travellers’ and missionaries’ accounts, novels, poems, periodicals, newspapers, films, etc. If time allows, there will also be some discussion of Hong Kong in its historical role as a crossroads between East and West.

Aims : This course intends to give students an understanding of the dynamics between China and the West through history, with a focus on providing them with insights into how China and the Chinese have been (and possibly still are) viewed by others. Students should also gain a deeper appreciation of the rich history of interactions between China and the West.

Learning Outcomes : a) acquire a sound understanding of the development of western views of China; b) be able to think creatively, critically,
independently and analytically, particularly concerning concepts of representation of ethnicity and culture and the interrelationship between societal attitudes and historical development;

c) be aware and sensitive concerning the degree to which subjectivity and individual needs inform how other peoples are perceived and represented;

d) become more effective and discriminating in analysing primary sources;

e) understand how to conduct historical research employing a wide range of media and information technologies, including books, film, other forms of visual material (e.g., paintings, cartoons, photographs); and the Internet;

f) be able to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.

Indicative Content : I. “The Inscrutable Oriental”

A. Stereotypes of ethnicity
B. Stereotypes of the Chinese
C. Orientalism and exoticism
D. Case study: Orientalism

Reading: Mackerras, pp. 1-8

II. Early European Views of China

A. Classical Greek Views of Asia
B. Classical Roman views of Asia and China
C. Asia in early Christian cosmology.
D. Early Medieval Views of China

Reading: Mackerras, pp. 11-23

III. Marco Polo in China

A. The Silk Road
B. The Travels of Marco Polo: A vision of China as a realm of plenitude.
C. Did Marco Polo really visit China?
D. What do The Travels say about Polo and the Europe of his time?
E. Case Study: The Travels of Marco Polo

Reading: Spence, pp.1-18

IV. Early-Modern European views of China

A. The European “Age of Discovery”
B. Early Iberian contacts with China
C. The Jesuit Mission in China, from
cultural accommodation to the Rites Controversy.

D. Case Study: *The Diary of Matteo Ricci*


V. The European Enlightenment and China
A. The nature of the European Enlightenment.
B. The impact in Europe of Jesuit and other contemporary writings on China.
C. The sinophiles: Voltaire, Leibniz and Oliver Goldsmith.
D. The sinophobes: Adam Smith and Baron de Montesquieu.
E. The *chinoiserie* craze.
F. Case Study: Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Citizen of the World*

Reading: Spence, pp. 81-100.

VI. 19th Century Western Views of China
A. The Industrial Revolution.
B. European imperial expansion.
C. Ideological justifications for imperialism.
D. The impact of Western encroachments on China from the Macartney mission to the Boxer Rebellion.
E. Sinophobic nineteenth century Western views of China.
F. Case study: *Punch* magazine

Reading: Mackerras, pp. 39-57.

VII. The Yellow Peril
A. China as a “future threat to the West”.
B. The 19th century Chinese Diaspora.
C. Fear of Chinese immigration in the USA and Britain.
D. Chinatowns and transgression: opium dens, “white slavery” and miscegenation.
E. Early Hollywood and China: *Broken Blossoms* and *Piccadilly*.
F. Fu Manchu and other manifestations of the Yellow Peril in popular literature
and film.  
G. Case Study: Jack London’s “The Unparalleled Invasion”


VIII. Arcadian China: Early Twentieth Century Views of China
A. The fin-de-siecle crisis.
B. Conservative sinophilia.
C. Radical sinophilia.
D. Images of China in early twentieth century juvenilia.
E. The Sino-Japanese War.


IX. Western views of China and the Chinese, 1949 to the Present

i.) Views of Communist China:
A. Negative and positive Western views of China, from 1949 to 1972.
B. Western views of China from the 1972 Nixon visit to the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.
C. Western views of China today.

ii.) Views of Chinese generally:
A. World War Two and the discrediting of theories of racial superiority.
B. Multiculturalism in an age of globalisation.
C. Contemporary Western interest in China and Chinese culture; growth
of tourism in China.


Teaching Method: Lectures will provide students with a good knowledge of historical Western views of China, and assist them to think about questions of identity, whether about self-identity or the way they – being Chinese – are perceived by people from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Selected readings are discussed in class.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes: a, b and e) Successfully gaining minimum passing grades in the mid-term, final examination and individual assignment (a choice between a critical interpretation of primary sources or a creative “tourist brochure” concerning China or Hong Kong in the context of the themes of the course, heritage issues, or set in a specific historical period).

c) Active participation in an introductory discussion on national/ethnic stereotyping, and demonstrating sufficient sensitivity and discernment in the individual assignment and final examination.

d) Active participation in discussions of primary sources, and demonstrating adequate analytical skills in the individual assignment and final examination relating to the wealth of textual and visual material covered in lectures, the readings, and the films shown in class.

f) Showing an aptitude for cogent and clear communication of facts and opinions in class discussions, raising and answering questions during lectures, and in the class assignment and final examination.

Assessment: Continuous Assessment 70%:
Final exam 30%

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings:
Dawson, Raymond., The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of
Mosher, Steven. *Hegemon: China’s Plan to Dominate Asia and the World*, San Francisco, Encounter Books