

# Heroes and Bandits in Chinese History and Fiction

## History 338

Thurs. 1:00-4:00 (KJ 107)

Thomas A. Wilson (Office: KJ 128)

- photocopies
- e electronic reserve on Burke Library home page (under “reserves”)
- \* on reserve in Burke Library
- ◇ background or supplementary reading
- √ JSTOR

### I. The Problem of History and (vs.?) Fiction 9/9

- Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, 1-25
- Gabrielle Spiegel, “Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative,” *History and Theory* 22 (Feb. 1983) 1: 43-53 (JSTOR)
- √ Michael Nylan and Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China,” *T'oung Pao* 84 (2003): 59-99

### II. Experimental Reading in History and Fiction 9/16

*Wu Tzu-hsu/Wu Zixu (6th century BC)*

- “Biography of Wu Tzu-hsu,” *Records of the Historian*, 16-29
- “Wu Tzu-hsu,” *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, 123-165
- √ David Johnson, “Epic and History in Early China: The Matter of Wu Tzu-hsu,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 15 (Feb. 1981) 2:255-271
- “Awaiting the Right Time,” *The Annals of Lü Buwei*, 312-315
- ◇ Charles Hucker, *China's Imperial Past*, 21-47

**Friday, first essay due: the problem of narrative and history 9/17**

### III. Studies on Loyalty and Dissent 9/23

Ch'ü Yuan/Qu Yuan (338?-278 bc) & Chia I

- e “Biographies of Ch'ü Yuan [Qu Yuan] and Master Chia,” *Records of the Grand Historian of China* 1:499-516
- Qu Yuan, “*Li sao* On Encountering Trouble,” *The Songs of the South*, 67-78
- \* Laurence Schneider, *A Madman of Ch'u*, 1-47

### IV. Ancient Chinese Historians 10/7

A. Ssu-ma Ch'ien/Sima Qian

- “Biography of Ssu-ma Ch'ien,” *Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Grand Historian of China*, 42-69
- \* Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror*, 1-27
- Michael Nylan, “Sima Qian: A True Historian?,” *Journal: Early China* 23 (1998)
- ◇ Burton Watson, *Early Chinese Literature*, 92-103

B. Pan Ku/Ban Gu (32-92) & Pan Chao/Ban Zhao (d. ca. 116)

- Lynn Swann, *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China, First Century A.D.*, 40-73, 82-99
- ◇ Watson, *Early Chinese Literature*, 103-119

### V. Hagiography 10/14

Confucius/Kongzi

- “Confucius,” *Selections from Records of the Historian* (tr. Yang), 1-27
- “Pictures of the Sage's Life”

(Heroes and Bandits: 1)

- Zhu Weizheng, “The Confucius of History and the History of Confucius,” *Coming Out of the Middle Ages*, 63-80
- Thomas Wilson, “Ritualizing Confucius/Kongzi: The Family and State Cults of the Sage of Culture in Imperial China,” *On Sacred Grounds*, 43-94
- Lionel Jensen, “The Genesis of Kongzi in Ancient Narrative: The Figural as Historical,” *On Sacred Grounds*, 175-221

**Friday, second essay due: morality and judgment in historical writing** 10/15

**VI. Emperors and Would-be Kings** 10/21

- “The Basic Annals of Hsiang Yü [233-202 BC],” *Records of the Historian*, 68-104
- “Hegemon King says Farewell to his Queen,” *Eight Chinese Plays from the 13th Century to the Present*, 111-37
- “The Basic Annals of Emperor Kao-tsu [Liu Pang (247-195 bc)],” *Records of the Historian*, 105-148
- “The Five Emperors, Basic Annals,” *The Grand Scribe’s Records*, 1-18
- ◊ Hucker, *China’s Imperial Past*, 121-133

**VII. Knights and Assassins** 10/28

A. Wandering Knights

- “Wandering Knights,” *Records of the Grand Historian of China* 2:452-461
- “Wandering Knights,” *Courtier and Commoner in ancient China: Selections from the History of the Former Han*, 222-246
- \* James Liu, “The Historical Knight-Errant,” *The Chinese Knight-Errant* (CR 4529.C6 L5), 1-44

B. Assassins

- Ching K'o in “The Assassin-Retainers,” *Records of the Historian* (Watson trans.), 55-67
- “The First Emperor of Ch'in, Basic Annals,” *The Grand Scribe's Records*, 127-177

Alternative translations:

- “The Assassin-Retainers,” *The Grand Scribe’s Records* (Nienhauser trans.), 319-334
- “The Assassins,” *Records of the Historian* (Yang Hsien-yi trans.), 385-402

**VIII. Film** 11/4

“The Emperor and the Assassin,” 荆軻刺秦王 Chen Kaige, dir. (1999, 163 mins.)

**IX. Student presentations** 11/11-18

topics selected by students in consultation with professor

**Friday, third essay due** 11/19

**X. The Three Kingdoms (A.D. 221-280)**

Luo Guanzhong, *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel* (Moss Roberts, trans.)

**A. The Three Kingdoms** 12/2

*Three Kingdoms*

- \* Liu, *An Introduction to Chinese Literature*, 195-212
- √ Prasenjit Duara, “Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War,” *Journal of Asian Studies* (Nov. 1988), 778-795
- Yang, “From History to Fiction—The Popular Image of Kuan Yü,” *Renditions* (Spring 1981), 67-79

**B. The Three Kingdoms in Opera** 12/9

*Three Kingdoms*

- “The Battle of Ch’ang-pan P’o,” *Famous Chinese Plays* (895.1208 A72f), 25-37

(Heroes and Bandits: 2)

- “Beating the Drum and Cursing Ts’ao Ts’ao,” *Famous Chinese Plays*, 39-52
- “The Capture and Release of Ts’ao Ts’ao,” *Famous Chinese Plays*, 132-151
- “The Meeting of the League of Heroes,” *Famous Chinese Plays*, 201-210
- “The Yellow Crane Tower,” *Famous Chinese Plays*, 230-251

**last essay due: the *Three Kingdoms* and history in fiction** 12/10

## Course requirements

Each student is expected to read the assignments very carefully and to participate in class discussions with great enthusiasm.

**Papers:** There are four essay assignments (5-8 pp.) based on the sources listed in the syllabus, with the exception of the third essay, which may be based on any historiographically pertinent source(s) concerned with Chinese or any other history. My expectations for these papers are high: cogent prose and thoughtful analysis of the texts. The essays are due in my mailbox *in the history office* (do not send via campus mail) by noon on the assigned date. Please arrange your study schedule so that you have enough time to write and print out your essays in a timely manner. **Revisions:** Any paper that receives a grade lower than C- may be revised. Each student *must* revise at least one essay. In both cases, the final grade for the assignment is determined by the average of the original and revised grades.

**Grading criteria:** A “good” (i.e., B) essay is *clearly written* and *logically sound*. An “excellent” (i.e., A) essay presents a *compelling argument* for a thoughtful and imaginative *interpretation* of the sources that is evident only upon thoroughly re-reading the sources and careful reflection upon the problems raised. A *compelling argument* requires (1) a clear formulation of a *problem*, (2) *analysis* of the texts under scrutiny, and (3) a scrupulous *use* and *citation* of supporting *evidence* from the texts. A *thoughtful interpretation* requires digging beneath the surface meaning of the texts to a subtler understanding of their connections to broader contexts. A “prose” grade of C- (i.e., slightly less than “satisfactory”) is assigned to grammatically correct but informal and stylistically weak writing; and D+ or below for repeated infractions of basic rules of writing, depending upon frequency and egregiousness of such errors.

An important part of a writing assignment is to formulate an *interesting* and *original* topic or theme. Don’t simply summarize the content of your sources. Present an *argument* or a *thesis* based on your own *interpretation* of the sources. Be sure to develop your ideas fully. Keep in mind that the most important ideas of the essay should be clearly stated, explicated, and documented. Don’t assume that any major point you want to make is self-evident. If you quote a passage from the sources, provide enough information so that your reader does not need to consult the source for further clarification. In using evidence to support your argument, don’t assume that the facts speak for themselves. A thorough understanding of a text requires reading, reflection, and *re-reading*. A well written paper requires editing, self-critique, and *re-writing*.

**Documentation:** You must cite all sources of information used, *even if you don’t quote a source directly*. If you do not cite the sources from which you derive information, or on which you base your description of an event, or interpretation of an idea, etc., the implication is that the idea is your own, or that it is based on your own primary research. Failure to cite such sources is *plagiarism*. Be sure to cite exact page numbers of any source from which you quote directly, although it is rarely necessary to cite the same source more than once in the same paragraph. Use proper citation forms (i.e., footnotes, end notes, in-text parenthetical notes) as described in the *Hamilton College Style Sheet*. Be consistent in the citation format used.

An *interpretive* essay might include a critical examination of ideas about a political practice, certain social relations (gender, ideological), or cultural, philosophical values. You need to describe such practices, put them in historical perspective, and critically assess prevailing attitudes toward them. An interpretive essay might also entail a critical examination of the perspective, sensibilities, values, etc. of the author of a particular text. Think about what the author is trying to say. Also think about what the author is trying to conceal from the reader. Raise your own criticisms and reflect on how you think the author might respond to them. Engage in a dialogue or argument with the author through the text. *Don’t be a passive reader* by allowing the text to divulge its meaning at its own leisure... turn up the bright light and interrogate it; ask *your* questions.

**Grading criteria for class participation:** “Excellent” (your A range): frequent participation that demonstrates thorough understanding of the readings by using concrete examples with critical assessment of the sources. “Good” (B range): consistent participation showing sound grasp of the readings by using concrete examples with occasional critical assessment of the sources. “Satisfactory” (C range): participation that shows an understanding of the readings. “Poor” (D range): infrequent to rare

participation that suggests hasty or inattentive reading of the sources. "Failing": (you know).

**Course grading criteria**

regular class participation:

20%

essay assignments:

20% each = 80%