

Fall 2023

University of Texas, Dallas, HIST 4358

## **From Dice to Mahjong: History of Games and Gambling in China**

Tuesday 1-3:45; CB 1.106

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Office hours: JO 4.902 (appointments by request; individual assistance is always available by appointment. I look forward to hearing from you)



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Welcome! You can also find a copy of this syllabus on eLearning-**Course Information**. Check out the **Weekly Schedule** as well. These guide your work in this course. I recommend you print out the **Course Content Chart** in **Course Information** so you can check your weekly progress. If you have any questions, please post them in the **Help Forum** of the **Discussions** board.

### I. What are we doing here?

#### 1. What is this course about?

-Games and gambling may be considered one of the most important forms of human play in the contemporary world. Think about yourself, what do you like to play and what does it say about you and the society that you are in? Yes, this is a course to explore games, and the world around those games.

--in this course, I intend to do three things: first, to introduce students to Chinese history, society, and Chinese diasporas through the lens of games and gambling; second, to encourage students to use the unique perspective of games and gambling to interpret the broader world around them; and third, to guide students to academic research and writing by sharing my own experiences.

-as the sole author of the first and only English monograph about the history of lottery in China, I am excited to share what I know about Chinese games with the students, and more

importantly, how to navigate academic writing and research (or in general, how to write when we are doing a million of other things☺)

-this course covers from early periods, for example, how did philosophers such as Confucius make sense of games in 500BCE, to contemporary times, for example, how did “The Glory,” the No. 1 most-watched k-drama on Netflix in 2023 used the Japanese game “Go” to drive the plots forward;

-this course focuses on China and overseas Chinese communities, with mentioning of comparable cases in Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America;

-this course is highly interdisciplinary, starting with history, the course materials reflect the most representative and updated scholarship on games across disciplines; we will explore how games are discussed in the broader context of philosophy, education, women and gender roles, political science, sociology, religion, finance/mathematics/probabilities, Asian American studies and diasporas, psychology, and literature and film;

-although this course has no prerequisite for students in terms of language and cultural background; it’s an intensive upper-level seminar with the highest expectation for undergraduate students in terms of reading and writing;

-in terms of specific assignments; students will read primary sources, journal articles, and entire monographs, and watch film clips and documentaries to prepare for their reading responses; they will choose the topics that they are interested in and lead discussions throughout the semester; they will engage in a whole-class role-play game; and they will explore a topic, learn to develop their own research and present their research in class; they will also learn to provide feedback to their peers, and explore a platform to display their research project in a format that they design. This project could a conventional research article, or any creative formats that speak to the students’ own interest and backgrounds; so this course is highly creative and self-driven;

-this course will be mostly discussion based, with background lectures given by the instructor;

-this course uses no textbook; I will provide all the readings in PDF formats on eLearning, and students will access to some of the digital copies through the Library website.

## II. Why do we do what we do?

### 1. What will I achieve in 16 weeks?

Here are the learning objectives I submit to the University—but really, I just hope you will think twice about anything after 16 weeks. In 5-10 years, you may forget everything about world history, but I hope you are a better thinker, writer, and reader, and most importantly, live your life better, and continue to learn by yourself.

### III. How do we do it?

#### 1. What do we do in the class meetings?

The course is taught through a combination of class lectures and individual readings. It is vital you both attend and participate in lectures. You will be responsible for the material covered in lectures as well as readings. These are interdependent, thus failure to fully participate in any of these elements will have a severely detrimental effect on your performance in this course. Like most upper-level humanities courses, this is a reading and writing intensive course.

#### 2. What does the online classroom look like?

**Blackboard site**--We will use the course Blackboard site. You can use this site to view class grades (posted in the **Grade Center**) and the class syllabus will be updated and posted. Class readings (except the required textbook) will be posted on eLearning as well.

Here is a quick guide of the online classroom:

The **Announcements** area of the classroom that you see each time you log in will be used on least a weekly basis to post updates and comments on class matters. I will also email the class to remind students of important due dates.

The **Weekly Schedule** area, arranged in folders by week, houses the content for the course.

For each **Assignment**, you will be provided full information, criteria, rubrics, and examples.

Please submit individual assignments on the **Blackboard Site** unless otherwise indicated in assignment instructions. *\*Please do not email assignments to the instructor.*

The **Discussions** area contains discussion forums of the course. Each discussion forum will be opened for posting. There is a **“Help Forum”** where you can ask questions about readings, assignments, and other course requirements (for example, if you are looking for a group to join or your group seeks a new member) to the whole class, and you are strongly encouraged to answer each other’s questions.

*\*Remember that our classroom server is set to U.S. Central time. Therefore all due dates are noted as of U.S. Central time.*

### 3. What types of assignments should I expect from this course?

- **Map Quiz (10%)** A short map quiz will ask students to locate and identify major cities, rivers, provinces, and neighboring countries that will frequently appear in this course.

- **Reading posts (50%)**

-short answers covering the key concepts, events, names, arguments, object/image/text short analysis from the assigned readings, lectures, films, and in-class discussion. They are usually no more than a paragraph or two, unless specified. There will be 5 short posts in total (5% main post **due the end of Mondays**, 5% individual response\*2 **due the end of Tuesdays**);

-Each student will join a group at the beginning of the semester. Feel free to switch groups throughout the semester. You will work within groups of **2-5 members** to prepare the reading responses to the assigned question(s). Points will be awarded to each group for their post and facilitation of discussion. You will also receive points for your individual responses to other posts. Detailed instructions will be posted and explained.

*\*Both group and individual completion options are available for the reading posts. It is beneficial to discuss with your group even if you choose to complete the posts individually.*

- **Whole-class role-play game (10%)**

See **Weekly Schedule** for the date. Detailed instructions will be posted and explained.

- **Research project (30%)**

The class project includes 10-15 minutes class presentation (10%), and a final project (15% final post, 5% individual response\*2).

*\*both group and individual completion options are available for the class project. It is beneficial to discuss with different groups even if you choose to complete the post individually.*

There will also be **multimedia option** for students who may prefer to work in audio or video formats. Detailed instructions will be posted and explained.

#### 4. How much time should I budget to spend on this course every week?

I understand everyone is very busy so here is my suggestion:

- Read course materials: at least 120-180 minutes, depending on how fast you read (don't forget to take notes when you read);
- Attend class meetings: 150 mins;
- Prepare for various assignments, including reading responses or working with your group members or on your own: 60+ minutes;
- So 6-7 hours per week on average.

#### 5. What does a typical week look like?

Each class week begins on Wednesday and ends on Tuesday;

- Wednesday-Sunday

- follow the weekly schedule and complete the assigned readings and prepare for class meetings;

- Monday

-prepare for reading posts; reading posts are due the end of selected Mondays;

- Tuesday

-attend class;

-complete individual responses to reading posts; individual responses to reading posts are due the end of selected Tuesdays;

#### 5. If I can learn the materials at my own pace, does it mean that I can just skip classes?

Active and consistent participation is key to your success.

Why should you attend the class meetings? I developed the class workshops for a number of reasons. First and foremost to clarify course contents and answer your questions. I have carefully planned the class meetings because they are provocative and provide a different

perspective to the required texts. Please participate, ask questions, and interact with your classmates as a learning community.

## 6. What materials do I need to purchase for this course?

I will post all course materials online. Please do complete the readings before weekly meetings and take notes when you read.

### IV. Tips to succeed in this course

#### 1. What can I do to succeed in this course?

**Spend time and do the hard work**--The course is taught through a combination of class lectures and individual readings. It is vital you listen to the lectures. You will be responsible for the material covered in lectures as well as readings. These are interdependent, thus failure to fully participate in any of these elements will have a severely detrimental effect on your performance in this course. Like most humanities courses, this is a reading intensive course.

**Participation is key**—The center of this course will be your active and consistent participation, which will be your opportunity to address the course materials critically in class discussions and your individual responses.

**Take notes when you read; take notes when you listen to the lectures; ask questions during the lectures**--Be sure to take notes on the lectures, as well as your readings and the discussion about the readings. The purpose of these notes should be to summarize the core content of the lecture/discussion/reading as well as to critically engage with it. This means if there is something which you disagree with, do not understand, totally love, etc. you should identify and note why, and ask during the lectures to further your learning. These notes will be very important for you to complete your quizzes and discussion posts.

Especially when you read, I strongly advise you to take notes. You can do this by underlining key passages or writing in the margins (note: not in library books!) or by taking separate notes. Whatever system you use, you'll need some sort of record. It will be hard to keep up if you aren't writing things down.

**Keep an open mind and bring your own perspective**--The success of this course (and how much you learn/benefit from it) is heavily dependent on you completing and understanding the assigned readings and being ready to discuss them in class. As a discipline, history is not about memorizing facts or dates but, rather, interpreting what is

written down or presented on screen, figuring out whether you agree with the author's statements and, most importantly, why you agree (or do not agree) with them. Being able to read the materials in this course, take notes on them, and then articulate what you agree with, what you do not agree with and what you have questions about will be central to your success.

\*Welcome to share what you find in the **Student Lounge** forum.

## V. How will you be evaluated in this course?

### 1. How do I get an A in this class?

Grades are based on a scale of 100 points and are distributed among major assignments as follows:

#### GRADING SCALE

A 93-100

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D+ 63-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

F 0-59

You will earn a grade through your work in various types of learning assessments. These areas are broken down as follows:

Map quiz	10%
Reading responses	50% (5 in total)
Class role-play game	10%
Research project (10% class presentation; 15% final post; 5% peer review)	30%

All assignments are due according to the posted dates and as described in the instructions, either submitted in class or posted in a designated **Discussion board**;

Unless otherwise noted, grades will be posted in the **Grade Center**.

## 2. What is “plagiarism” and how can I make sure I don’t plagiarize?

\*A few words about “plagiarism” if case you get confused:

The main principles you need to know are:

1. If you are relying on somebody else’s ideas or information, cite that person.
2. If you use someone else’s words, enclose those words in quotation marks and cite that person. Taking someone else’s prose, modifying it slightly, and passing it off as your own is never appropriate, even if you include a footnote.
3. You may not turn in work that is identical to or derivative of work you have turned in for another class without both prior permission and a clear accounting of what is old and what is new.
4. Without the instructor's permission, no collaborating with another, knowingly assisting another or knowingly receiving the assistance of another in writing an examination or in satisfying any other course requirements;

I will report any violations to the Dean. For UTD’s academic integrity policy, please see:

<https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/dishonesty/>

## 2. Can I appeal my grades?

If, after receiving a graded assignment, you are confused by the grade or feel that it is not an accurate representation of your work, you have two options:

1. Go to your teacher's office hours and ask for a clarification. You can then sit down and talk about your work, grading standards, possibilities for improvement, and so on.
2. Submit to your teacher, in writing, an account of why you felt that grade you received was inaccurate (not disappointing-inaccurate). If appropriate, she will be happy to regard your work. This will not result in a lower grade.

## 3. Can I "re-submit" an assignment to improve my grades?

While I understand your concerns with your grades. I will not be able to offer any "resubmit" option for the following two reasons:

1. I grade your overall class performance. This includes all your assignments and class preparedness. Your grade reflects your performance during the semester, especially how you pay attention and take notes during lectures and discussions and review your notes consistently. Those are all important foundation to lead to your later success over the whole course.
2. Any "retake" option will result in more favorable treatment toward students who request it. Being fair to the whole class is important.

If you hope to improve your grade, here is my suggestion:

-after receiving a grade, review the questions, your responses, and your notes;

-bring the assignment to me before or immediately after class so we can review the assignment together; I hope to advise you to prepare for the next assignment by improving how you pay attention and take notes during class, and help you do better later this semester;

-so if you hope to improve your grades, the earlier you take action during the semester, the more likely you can make a difference later on. Best of luck.

## VI. My role as an instructor

### 1. Who is my instructor?

My name is En Li. Please call me Dr. Li (Ph.D. in Chinese History, Washington University 2015) or Professor Li (Assistant Professor at UTD since 2023, you can find my faculty profile page here: <https://profiles.utdallas.edu/en.li>). I am a historian of late imperial and modern China, with a focus of social and cultural history of China and overseas Chinese communities. My first book, *Betting on the Civil Service Examinations: The Lottery in Late-Qing China* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2023), highlights the significance of *weixing*, a highly organized lottery game where money was bet on surnames that would pass the civil service exams, and reveals critical development with Chinese culture and society in the late nineteenth century. I have published peer-reviewed articles and book reviews in various journals such as *Frontier of History in China*, *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, *Recreation and Society in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, and *The Common Reader*.

As one of my many ideas about new writing projects, I have been tracing a case about Hawaiian dance (or grass-skirt dance) first got introduced to Chinese urban centers between the 1920s and 1940s. Having been learning and performing Hula in Hong Kong, Taipei, Tokyo, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Des Moines for the past decade, I am excited to explore the transnational history of Hula dance beyond Hawai'i, and I am especially interested in how mobility, narrowly defined as bodily and broadly defined as geographically, changed people's perception about the world, established new social cohesions, and provided people, women in particular, with unprecedented professional, educational, and marital opportunities.

My course offerings include the histories of China and East Asia, as well as Asian good books and good movies. Prior to arriving at UTD, I was a tenured professor at Drake University, and I was honored with the University's Arts and Sciences "Outstanding Teacher of the Year" Award in 2021 and nominated for the Madelyn M. Levitt Mentor Award in 2022.

I was born and raised in Guangzhou, China, as an only child. When I am not teaching or writing, I like to play the violin, indulge in good books, movies, and musicals, and search for the best dim sum in Dallas with my husband and children.

### 2. What if I need help for this course?

You will probably feel overwhelmed during the first 2 weeks before you find your way. That's completely normal. We've all need help in something at some point in our lives. If you find yourself not understanding the assigned readings, lectures, and assignments, you can:

A. Ask before, during, or after the class meetings;

B. Ask the class—please post your question(s) in the **Help Forum**. I will log on to forum nearly every day, whether or not the class is meeting. The **Help Forum** is generally the best place to ask most questions. You are encouraged to respond to each other's question(s). And before you ask a question, check the **Help Forum** first.

C. Ask me-- If you need to contact me on an individual basis, please use email (please call me Dr. Li/Professor Li, [en.li@utdallas.edu](mailto:en.li@utdallas.edu)), and I will try to reply within 24 hours on the weekdays, and within 36 hours on the weekends. Your communication is important to me. To ensure that I see your message among my email, please use the class name and number in your subject line.

D. If you need any other individual help, please make an appointment with me during my office hours. I look forward to talking with you.

For all UTD's academic support resources for all students, please see <http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources>

### 3. What if I start to fall behind, miss an assignment?

Please review the ways to ask for help in the previous question. I want you to know that I am on your side during all of this. I see myself as collaborator who encourages and helps you succeed while you do the hard work of learning. Please try to approach your relationship with me (and with your classmates) in that spirit.

In addition, it is likely that all of us will have times in this semester when we are not at our best. I understand that. If that happens, you don't need to feel self-conscious about it with me and it does not affect your working relationship. If at any point you need extra support, please do get in touch.

### 4. Do you provide any special accommodation?

Of course. If you have a disability and will require academic accommodations in this course, please notify me by the end of the first week of class.

Under UTD policy, for an accommodation to be officially considered, a student must register with Student Access Ability. Please contact their office here:

<https://www.utdallas.edu/studentaccess/>

### 5. What if there are subjects that I feel uncomfortable discussing?

The lectures, slides, and reading in this course may explore extreme subjects: violence, racism, war, and famine. If you anticipate having difficulty engaging with those themes, please come talk to me and we'll figure something out.

Class schedule (please also print out a **Course Content Chart** so you can track your weekly progress; I will update your grades on eLearning regularly)

## **Lecture, Discussion, and Assignment Schedule**

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\*Please note that the syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class.  
Please pay attention to class announcements

### **Week 1. Introduction: Generalizing China, Theorizing Games, and Approaching Academic Writing?**

**8/21-8/25**

\*icebreaking fun;

\*syllabus Q&A

#### Reading

The syllabus (eLearning)

### **Unit 1: Chinese Games**

**8/28-9/1**

#### **Week 2                      Chinese games: why so popular?**

Deborah Sommer, ed. *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources*, "The Analects of Confucius," 41-49; "Mencius," 55-63.

The *Lotus Sutra*, "Expedient means," 23-47

*Chuang Tzu* (selections)

**Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play*, "Play and Ambiguity," 1-17.**

**Essential Guide, Chap 2, "What is Academic Writing?" Chap 3, "What is History?," and Chap 6, "The Short Analytical Essay"**

Research mini workshop I: Giving feedback; (and taking feedback, or not?)

\*Prepare for reading post#1

\*Prepare for map quiz

### **Week 3: Games for children: were there any?**

**9/4-9/8**

Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage*, "4. Modes of Upbringing," 103-128; "6. The Emotional World," 156-183.

***The Ambiguity of Play, "Rhetoric's of Child Play," 35-52***

**Essential Guide, Chap 9, "Primary Source Interpretation"**

**Map quiz (10%) in class**

**Reading post #1 (main post 5% due the end of Monday; individual response\*2, 5% due the end of Tuesday);**

### **Week 4: Games for women: was it okay to have fun?**

**9/11-9/15**

Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage*, "7. Girlhood," 183-220.

*The Story of the Stone*. Chapter 63.

***The Ambiguity of Play, "Rhetorics of Identity," 91-111.***

Optional:

Jiayao Wang. "The Drinking Game in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*: Divination, Prophecy, and Imitation." *International Journal of Divination & Prognostication* 4 (2023): 44-78.

Film clip: *The Story of the Stone*

Research mini workshop II: What do you want to work on—follow your heart; turning dissertation into a book;

**Essential Guide, Chap 7, "Imaginative Projects"**

**Reading post #2 (main post 5% due the end of Monday; individual response\*2 5% due the end of Tuesday);**

## **Week 5: What did rich people play? Games and Elite Status**

**9/18-9/22**

Clunas, Craig. *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Society in Early Modern China*, all (focus on the introduction, chapter 2, 3, 6, and the conclusion)

***The Ambiguity of Play, "Rhetorics of Self," 173-201.***

Research mini workshop III: How to determine on a good (enough) topic?

**Essential Guide, Chap 7, "Imaginative Projects"(continue)**

**Reading post #3 (main post 5% due the end of Monday; individual response\*2 5% due the end of Tuesday);**

Mid-point survey

## **Week 6: Gaming the Officialdom#1-the "Game of Promotion"**

**9/25-9/29**

Wu Ching-tzu, *The Scholars*, "Chapter 3: Examiner Chou picks out true talent. Butcher Hu euts up rough after good news," 32-47; "Appendix: The examination system and official ranks referred to in this novel," 687-692.

Andrew Lo, "Official Aspirations: Chinese Promotion Games," in *Asian Games: The Art of Contest*, 64-75.

***The Ambiguity of Play, "Rhetorics of Imaginary," 127-151.***

Research mini workshop IV: Doing research online and at the library;

**Essential Guide, Chap 10, "Historical Research"**

\*Bring a research topic to class and start researching.

## **Week 7: Gaming the Officialdom#2-“Surname Guessing”**

**10/2-10/6**

En Li, *Betting on the Civil Service Examinations: Lottery in Late Qing China*. Harvard University Asia Center, 2023, Chapters 2, 3.

Research mini workshop V: how to get works done?

**Essential Guide, Chap 10, “Historical Research” (continue)**

\*Report on research topic; draft a research plan in class;

\*Prepare for in-class role-play game.

## **Week 8: How did games help to finance the state? Legalizing lottery gambling in nineteenth-century China.**

**10/9-10/13**

En Li, *Betting on the Civil Service Examinations: Lottery in Late Qing China*. Harvard University Asia Center, 2023, Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

**The Ambiguity of Play, “Rhetorics of fate,” 52-74.**

**Essential Guide, Chap 8, “Historiographic Essay”**

**In-class role-play game: should China legalize gambling in the nineteenth century? (10%)**

## **Week 9: Research week#1; no class meeting**

**10/16-10/20**

\*Prepare for 1 primary source; and 2-3 secondary sources on your topic to present in class;

**Essential Guide, Chap 8, “Historiographic Essay” (continue)**

## Unit 2: Games beyond China

### Week 10: Why were immigrants all gamblers#1?

**10/23-10/27**

Film screening: *Mah-Jongg: The Tiles that Bind* (1999, documentary, 32 minutes)

Annelise Heinz. *Mahjong: A Chinese Game and the Making of Modern American Culture*. Oxford University Press, 2021. [\(first half\)](#)

Game Time! A Test play of Mahjong in class

[\\*Report on 1 primary source and 2-3 secondary sources on your topic in class;](#)

### Week 11: Why were immigrants all gamblers#2?

**10/30-11/3**

Annelise Heinz. *Mahjong: A Chinese Game and the Making of Modern American Culture*. Oxford University Press, 2021. [\(second half\)](#)

**Reading post #4 (main post 5% due the end of Monday; individual response\*2 5% due the end of Tuesday);**

Research project mini workshop VI: what is a good presentation?

[Essential Guide, Chap 11, "The Research Essay"](#)

### Week 12: How does popular culture utilize gaming elements?

**11/6-11/10**

Amy Tan. *The Joy Luck Club* (Selection)

Min Jin Lee. *Pachinko* (Selection)

Optional:

Tara Fickle, "American Rules and Chinese Faces: The Games of Amy Tan's 'The Joy Luck Club.'" *MELUS*, vol. 39, no. 3 (FALL 2014), pp. 68-88.

En Li, "Betting Across Borders: A New Way to Read *The Joy Luck Club* and Other Immigrant Literature through the Window of Play." *Recreation and Society in Africa, Asia and Latin America* 7 (2019): 17-38.

Selected film clips: "Lust, Caution" (2007); "Crazy Rich Asians" (2018); "The Glory" (2022-2023);

**Essential Guide, Chap 11, "The Research Essay" (continue)**

**Week 13: Student presentations in class (10%)**

**11/13-11/17**

**Week 14: Happy Thanksgiving, no class meetings**

**11/20-11/24**

**Week 15: More gamers, better world?**

**11/27-12/1**

Robert Frank. *Success and Luck: Good Fortune and the Myth of Meritocracy*. Princeton University Press, 2017.

*The Ambiguity of Play*, "Conclusion, 214-233."

**Reading post #5 (main post 5% due the end of Monday; individual response\*2 5% due the end of Tuesday);**

Course evaluation

**Week 16: Research week#2**

**12/4-12/8**

**Final research project due December 15 the end of the day (15%);**

**Individual response\*2 due December 17 the end of the day (5%)**