

## HIST 4323 Early China via Sima Qian

Spring 2024 | M 4:00–6:45 PM

Prof. J. Michael Farmer

JO 5.612

farmer@utdallas.edu

Office Hours: By appointment.

### Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions:

There are no pre-requisites or other restrictions for this course, however, ***it is strongly suggested that students complete HIST 3301 prior to enrollment in this course.*** Knowledge of Chinese language is not required.

### Course Description:

This **undergraduate research seminar** will examine the history of early China (early bronze age through the end of the Han empire in 220 CE) through the writings of its greatest historian, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BCE).

### Required Textbooks and Materials:

#### ***All Books Required.***

Durrant, Stephen W. *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian*. Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1995. ISBN: 0791426564

*Additional required readings available via eLearning.*

*All volumes of the Nienhauser, et al. translation of Sima Qian's Shiji (Grand Scribe's Records) are available on Course Reserve at McDermott Library.*

**Assignments & Academic Calendar:**

*All assignments will be submitted via eLearning.*

*Detailed assignment guidelines will be available via eLearning.*

**Primary Source Analyses [20%]:**

Students will prepare a one page primary source analysis paper (PSA) on an assigned primary document, five total (see schedule).

**Article Captures [10%]:**

Students will write a 5–7 page “article capture” on two works of secondary scholarship, selected by students from a list of approved journals.

**Research Project [70%]:**

As the capstone of this research seminar, students will conduct research, and write a research paper in which they formulate a thesis from primary source documents and support that thesis on the basis of additional research. A Research Topic Statement, Preliminary Draft Essay, and Final Revised Essay will be submitted. The Research Topic Statement is 15% of the final grade; Draft is 25% of final grade; the Final Revised Essay is 30% of final grade.

*Failure to complete ALL PARTS of the Research Project will result in an automatic grade of F for the class.*

*All work will be submitted via eLearning.*

*All work is due on Mondays by 4:00 PM.*

While **Discussion Board** activities will not be a regular and graded feature of this course, there will be a Discussion Board on eLearning where we can post and respond to course and research related matters outside of class time. *Additionally, there will be **required** DB prompts for Week 1 and Week 16.*

*Additional learning exercises may be assigned by the professor. These will be announced in class and via eLearning.*

**Tentative Schedule:**

I will make every reasonable effort to follow this reading and discussion schedule. Any modifications to this outline will be announced via eLearning. It is your responsibility to be aware of the schedule and prepare the assigned materials prior to due dates.

KEY:

+ = Item available via eLearning.

\* = Due Date for Assignment

WK	Date	Early China via Sima Qian
1	1/20	<b>MLK Holiday: No Class</b> <b>DB: Intro</b>
2	1/27	<b>Introduction to the Course</b> <b>Early China:</b> Historical Overview + Historical Overview Readings: Gernet, Parts 1-2 Ropp, Ch. 1-2 <i>RHIC</i> , Section 1 Ten Things About Early China <b>DB: AMA</b>
3	2/3	<b>The Life of Sima Qian</b> + The Life of Sima Qian [ <i>NOT PSA eligible</i> ] + Grand Scribe’s Own History, Memoir 70 + “Letter to Ren An”  <b>Grand Scribe’s Records: Text and Context</b> + Nienhauser, <i>Grand Scribe’s Records</i> , 1: Intro <b>* PSA 1 Due</b>
4	2/10	<b>Grand Scribe’s Records: Ancient History</b> + The Chou, Basic Annals 4 <b>* PSA 2 Due</b>
5	2/17	<b>Grand Scribe’s Records: Ancient History</b> + Po Yi, Memoir 1 <b>* Article Capture 1 Due</b>

6	2/24	<b>Grand Scribe's Records:</b> <b>Recent History</b> + First Emperor of Ch'in, Basic Annals 6 <b>* PSA 3 Due</b>
7	3/3	<b>Grand Scribe's Records:</b> <b>Recent History</b> + Empress Dowager Lü, Basic Annals 9 <b>* Research Topic Statement Due</b>
8	3/10	<b>Grand Scribe's Records:</b> <b>Foreign Relations</b> + The Hsiung-nu, Memoir 50 <b>* PSA 4 Due</b>
9	3/17	<b>Spring Break</b>
10	3/24	<b>Grand Scribe's Records: Thematic Lives</b> + General Wei, Memoir 51 <b>* Article Capture 2 Due</b>
11	3/31	<b>Grand Scribe's Records:</b> <b>Foreign Relations</b> + Barbarians of the Southwest, Memoir 56 <b>* PSA 5 Due</b>
12	4/7	<b>Grand Scribe's Records: Thematic Lives</b> + Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, Memoir 57 <b>* Paper Draft Due</b>
13	4/14	<b>Grand Scribe's Records: Thematic Lives</b> + Ch'ü Yüan and Scholar Chia, Memoir 24
14	4/21	<b>Appraisals:</b> Durrant, <i>The Cloudy Mirror</i> + Peterson, "Sima Qian as a Cultural Historian" + Nylan, "Sima Qian: A True Historian?"
15	4/28	<b>Research Presentations</b>
16	5/5	<b>* Final Revised Paper Due</b> <b>DB: Takeaways</b>
<b>Final</b>		<b>No Final Exam</b>

**Course & Instructor Policies:**

**Grading Policy:**

Percentages for the course assignments have been noted above. The following gradescale will be used: 0–59 [F]; 60–62 [D-]; 63–66 [D]; 67–69 [D+]; 70–72 [C-]; 73–76 [C]; 77–79 [C+]; 80–82 [B-]; 83–86 [B]; 87–89 [B+]; 90–92 [A-]; 93–100 [A]. In narrative form, [F]=failing; [D]=below average; [C]=average; [B]=above average; [A]=exceptional.

*The professor reserves the right to curve, round, or otherwise adjust grades at his sole discretion.*

**Note regarding eLearning Gradebook:** The eLearning Gradebook is a basic record of raw scores for all scored course assignments. *I do NOT use the eLearning Gradebook to calculate final grades for the class;* I use a stand-alone program that allows me to weight assignment categories (as noted above) and make other calculations. Self-calculated grade estimates made from the eLearning Gradebook are not likely to be the same as on my gradebook. If you need to know your class average, please arrange an Office Hour session and I will happily give that information to you. [I am aware that this information appears twice in the syllabus. There's a reason for that...]

**Attendance, Participation, and Discussion:**

Attendance is mandatory! Please consult the university calendar before scheduling vacations, weddings, or other extra-curricular events that may keep you from your responsibilities in this class. You are responsible for the material and any assignments regardless of whether you were in a given class meeting or not. Any extended absence (two or more consecutive sessions) should be reported to me via email as soon as possible. Every student is expected to actively participate in the discussion of the assigned readings. While there may be no set percentage of the course grade dedicated to this requirement category, students who do not regularly attend and actively participate in class will not fare well in the course.

*Allowances will be made in accordance with University policy to students who must miss class due to Covid infection and/or exposure. I will extend this allowance to other students who may be ill with other communicable illnesses. Please contact me directly to arrange accommodations.*

**Late work:**

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Late work will not be accepted. For all work not completed by the due date, the student will receive a grade of 0 (zero) for the assignment. Exceptional circumstances may be taken into account. If you feel your circumstances merit special consideration, please notify me via email or in person as soon as possible.

**All assignments will be submitted via eLearning.**

**Written assignments** must be uploaded in either Word or PDF formats.

These assignments must be typed, double-spaced, in a 10–12 point serif typeface (Times, Palatino, Garamond, Gentium, etc.). Pages must have one-inch margins and contain your name and page number in the upper right-hand corner of each page.

**Discussion Board** assignments are submitted directly in eLearning (no file attachments).

***Assignments not meeting these technical specifications will not be accepted.***

**Personal Electronics:**

Any non-class related use of personal electronics in the classroom will result in the immediate confiscation of the device. Confiscated devices will be returned at the end of the class period. Repeat offenses will result in a failing grade in the course.

**Class Recordings:**

Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

**Class Materials and Intellectual Property:**

The instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

**Office Gun Policy**

All persons entering my office (JO 5.612) will be given oral notice indicating that my office is an exclusion zone.

**Sharing Confidential Information**

Students considering sharing personal information in email, in person, or within assignments or exams should be aware that faculty members and teaching/research assistants are required by UT Dallas policy to report information about sexual misconduct to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Per university policy, faculty have been informed that they must identify the student to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Students who wish to have confidential discussions of incidents related to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct should contact the

Student Counseling Center (972-883-2527 or after hours 972-UTD-TALK or 972-883-8255), the Women's Center (972-883-8255), a health care provider in the Student Health Center (972-883-2747), the clergy person (or other legally recognized religious advisor) of their choice, or an off-campus resource (i.e., rape crisis center, doctor, psychologist). Students who are sexually assaulted, harassed, or victims of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, or stalking, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the UT Dallas Police Department at 972-883-2222 or to the Title IX Coordinator at 972-883-2218. Additional information and resources may be found at <http://www.utdallas.edu/oiec/title-ix/resources>.

### **Course and Instructor Amendments to the University Policies:**

#### **Email Use:**

Email is the preferred method of communication for this course. I generally reply to messages that require a response (and not all messages require or merit a response from the professor!) within two business days. You may also reach me via Teams chat.

#### **Academic Support Resources**

The information contained in the following link lists the University's academic support resources for all students. Please see <http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources>.

#### **UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures**

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

#### **Your Responsibility:**

Students are responsible for all information contained in this syllabus and schedule, as well as any amendments or changes announced by the professor or Teaching Assistant(s) in class. Changes to the course schedule or syllabus will also be announced in class and/or by email. It is your responsibility to regularly check your UTD email account.

*Failure to abide by the policies contained in the syllabus and any amendments or changes announced by the professor may result in a failing grade in the course.*

*These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.*

[revised 9 January 2025]

## History, Writing, and this Class

Most of you are enrolled in this class because at some level you have developed an interest in history. To this point your interests have likely been passive; that is to say, you have enjoyed reading books or watching documentaries about historical topics. In this course you will shift from being consumers of history to producers of history. You will learn how to “do history.”

“Doing history” might be summed up by three interrelated acts: reading, thinking, and articulating your ideas about the past. The written word lies at the heart of the historical enterprise. Many of the surviving artifacts from the past are written documents, and most of the scholarship that attempts to make sense of these artifacts is also in written form. As such, you will be regularly engaged with writing. You will read the documents from the past. You will read ancient and modern historians’ attempts to organize the artifacts into meaningful representations of different times and places. You will think about both the primary and secondary documents at your disposal and offer your own representation of the past. You will do this through a variety of written assignments; that is how the professional historian works.

Although the creation of original ideas (or critical examinations of old ones) is the most significant act that the historian performs, for ideas to be tested and accepted they must first be shared. These ideas are shared in the form of books, articles, and short essays presented orally at conferences. Audiences will vary. At times historians write for each other. Other times they write for non-specialist or lay readers. And at other times they write for students. Depending on the audience, historians adopt a variety of voices; some formal, others informal. It is important to know how to present your ideas to each specific audience.

The format of historical writing is not simply to satisfy the whims of senior historians (or history professors). Rather, proper presentation of your ideas in writing adds credibility to your argument. Correct style, tone, format, documentation of evidence, etc. tell the reader that you have “sweated the small stuff,” and therefore your big ideas can be taken seriously. Conversely, failure to follow the conventions of the discipline signals to your reader that you have not mastered the simple matters of style, causing them to possibly doubt your ability to handle the more complex issues of content. While the viewpoint expressed above (“bad writing = unintelligence”) is most likely unfair and untrue, the perception remains. Thus it is your responsibility to demonstrate a competency in the craft of historical writing if you want your ideas to be taken seriously.

In this course you will have ample opportunity to examine primary and secondary documents, formulate your own ideas about them, and express those ideas in clear and concise essays. You will not only learn the “facts” about the history of early China, you will “do history.”