Military Tradition in

Imperial China

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Office Hours: T TH, 15:00-16:30

Meetings: The course meets Tuesday and Thursday from 13:30-14:50 in Armitage Hall Room 221

Course Description

Warfare is one of the human activities that can drastically reshape society in a relatively short time, and yet an important means of state- and empire-building. In fact, not only warfare but military culture as a whole can provide us an important perspective of understanding a civilization or country. In this seminar, we will survey the changes and continuities of the military tradition in Chinese civilization from the beginning of the imperial period in the second century BCE to the zenith of the last dynasty in the eighteenth century.

The aims of this course are to familiarize students with the subject matter of Chinese military history and above all to aid students in exploring interests in this still understudied field of Chinese studies. Each session will be devoted to the discussion of a particular topic, such as developments in Chinese military thoughts, tactics, and strategy; military institutions; interactive relationship between society and military; civil-military relations within government; cultural responses to military conquests; and military technological advances. Readings will be drawn from classics in the field as well as the most recent scholarship.

Background in pre-modern Japanese history will be helpful, but not essential. A student willing to do the works, but having no background, can still hope to do very well.
Required Texts
The following three books will be used as primary readings for the course and are recommended to be purchased (all available at the University Bookstore):

1. David A. Graff and Robin Higham eds. *A Military History of China* [MH]

2. Ralph D. Sawyer trans., *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* [SMC]

3. Nicola Di Cosmo ed. *Military Culture in Imperial China* [MC]

A good portion of our readings are in article or book-chapter forms, and will be available on the course website, i.e. *Sakai*.

Course Requirements
Grades will be determined as follows:

1. **Presentation and participation in discussion (30%)**
Students are expected to finish assigned readings before class and equip themselves for discussion. Everyone will have at least one session of presenting and summarizing the readings of the day and of serving as discussion leader.

2. **Book report and Presentation (25%)**
Students are expected to choose one recent scholarly monograph from the recommended book list, which will be released in the second week of the course. After choosing a book, every student is required to write a 5-6 double-spaced pages report and present it in class as well. The grade of the book report will be determined by both written report (20%) and oral presentation (5%). It is expected to show the student’s critical reading and thorough understanding of the chosen book as well as other relevant material read in class.

3. **Thought essay on military classics (20%)**
Students are expected to choose one of the Seven Military Classics and write an essay on it. Requirements and guidelines for the essay will be given two weeks before the due date. The length of the essay should be 5 pages in double-spaced format.
4. **Research Review Essay and Presentation (25%)**

Students are expected to write a research review essay on a topic of one’s own choosing. Each week’s theme provides many possibilities; in addition, other topics can be consulted with the instructor. It aims to let student to familiar with the important scholarship and recent trend of research of one specific topic and to provide one’s own reflection. Students are encouraged to utilize and explore research resources of the library to complete this assignment. The grade of this item will be determined by both written essay (20%) and oral presentation (5%).

Due dates for each assignment and associated presentation are in the schedule below. Late submission will not be accepted for any reasons other than documented emergencies.

**WARNING:** You are responsible for knowing how to adhere to the code of academic honesty. If you submit plagiarized work, you will fail the assignment, fail the course, and will be subjected to the university’s official adjudication process. If you are not sure of what constitutes plagiarism, consult the instructor before submitting your papers.

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**Schedule**

**Week 1**  
Introduction  
**Jan 22**  
Class description and policy briefing (no reading)  
**Jan 24**  
Studying Chinese Military History Today  
  John K. Fairbank, “Introduction,” in *Chinese Ways in Warfare*  
  Hans Van de Ven, “Introduction,” in *Warfare in Chinese History*  
  Nicola Di Cosmo, “Introduction,” in MC

**Week 2**  
Military Tradition in Pre-Imperial China: Theory  
**Jan 29 & Jan 31**  
MH Ch. 6; SMC Ch. 1-6 (only translator’s introductions)

**Week 3**  
Intellectual Foundation of Chinese Military Tradition: Sun Zi’s Art of War  
**Feb 5 & Feb 7**  
SMC Ch. 3 Sun-tzu’s Art of War; Arthur Waldron, “Foreword,” in Victor H. Mair trans., *The Art of War: Sun Zi’s Military Methods*, pp. XI-XXVII.
Week 4   Intellectual Foundation of Chinese Military Tradition:
Feb 12 & Feb 14   SMC Ch. 1/2/4/5/6

Week 5   Military Tradition in Pre-Imperial China: Practice
Feb 19 & Feb 21   MC Ch. 1-2; Frank A. Kierman, “Phases and Modes of Combat in Early China”; Tsang Shui-ling, “Goose File’ Formation: What does It Look Like?”

Week 6   Early Imperial China and Its Military Practices
Feb 26 & Feb 28   MC Ch. 3-4; Michael Loewe, “The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti”; Mark Edward Lewis, “The Han Abolition of Universal Military Service”

Week 7   Medieval Martial Empire: The Tang Dynasty as an example
Mar 5 & Mar 7   MC Ch. 7; SMC Ch. 7

Week 8   The Role of Military in a Multi-Empire System

Thought Essay due in class (Mar 14)

Week 9   Military Innovation in a Multi-Empire System
Week 10  Military Tradition of the Last Native Dynasty
Apr 2 & Apr 4  MC Ch. 8-9; Edward L. Dreyer, “The Poyang Campaign, 1363: Inland Naval Warfare in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty”; Frederick W. Mote, “The T’u-mu Incident of 1449”; Charles O. Hucker, “Hu Tsung-hsien’s Campaign Against Hsu Hai, 1556”; Kenneth M. Swope, “A Few Good Men: The Li Family and China’s Northern Frontier in the Late Ming”

Week 11  The Manchu Conquest and New Military Impulses
Apr 9 & Apr 11  MH Ch. 7; MC Ch. 12-14; Nicola Di Cosmo, “Military Aspects of the Manchu Wars against the Caqars”

Week 12  Was There a Chinese Way of Warfare?

Week 13  Book Report Presentation
Apr 23 & Apr 25

Week 14  Review Essay Presentation
Apr 30 & May 2

Book Report due in class (Apr 30)

Review Essay due by May 6, 10:00 am.