

Writing and Authority in Early China

Fall 2012

Syllabus

Course unique numbers: 31690 (ANS) & 39575 (HIS)

Meetings: Mondays, 3-6pm in [MEZ 2.124](#)

Course website at <https://webspace.utexas.edu/~dms2244/courses/ans379-writing/>

For the updated version of this syllabus, consult the course website.

Instructor

[David Sena](#)

Assistant Professor, [Department of Asian Studies](#)

E-mail: dsena@utexas.edu

Tel: (512) 471-7965

Office: [WCH 5.104C](#)

Office hours: M 12-1pm; W 12-2pm

Course Description

This course examines the critical role of writing in one of the world's oldest literate civilizations. Beginning with the origin of Chinese characters in the Bronze Age, we examine the crucial role of writing in staking claims of political, social, and religious authority in ancient and early Imperial China (ca. 1200 BCE-200 CE). Aiming to situate writing within the cultural practices in which it was generated, we explore a diverse array of textual artifacts, including inscriptions on bone, bronze, and stone and manuscripts on bamboo and silk, in addition to texts in the received literary tradition. Topics include the magico-religious dimensions of writing, the sociology of writing and textual production, and the role of canon and commentary in articulating and challenging imperial claims of legitimacy.

This course carries a [University Writing Flag](#). Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete a substantial writing project, and receive feedback from your instructor and your classmates to help you improve your writing.

This course carries a [University Global Cultures Flag](#). The goal of this flag is to challenge students to explore the beliefs and practices of non-U.S. cultural communities in relation to their own cultural experiences so that they engage in an active process of self-reflection.

Requirements

- **Reading assignments:** Students will be expected to have completed the required reading assignment for each class before the class meeting. Completion of the reading assignment involves not only reading the required pages but also thinking critically about what you have read, relating it other readings and topics in the course, and formulating questions.
- **Participation:** This course demands consistent, punctual, and active participation. All students are expected to contribute actively to class meetings by posing questions and by responding to the questions and comments of other students based on the material in lectures and readings. Students who attend class regularly but do not contribute actively can expect a grade of no higher than "C" for class participation (20% of one's overall grade).

Absence policy: Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to sign in on an attendance sheet to be distributed during each class. It is each student's responsibility to sign this sheet before leaving the classroom. More than two absences will negatively affect one's grade for class participation.

- **Informal writing:** Short written assignments consisting of about one page each are assigned on a weekly basis, as detailed in the [course schedule](#). Assignments vary in nature, including response pieces on particular passages in the primary readings as well as analytical summaries of scholarly articles. Students are required to submit these assignments via e-mail to the instructor in advance of the relevant class meeting and should be prepared to discuss the assignment in class. Informal writing assignments will be evaluated on a check +, check, check - basis. Assignments that are complete, submitted on time, and thoughtfully composed will receive a mark of check. Incomplete, late, or cursory submissions will receive a mark of check -. Only those assignments that are exceptional in quality (not quantity!) will receive a mark of check +.
- **Short paper:** A paper of 4-5 pages, topics to be announced, is due *at the beginning of class* on Monday **10/1**.
- **Midterm exam:** A take-home midterm examination consisting of short essay questions will be distributed on Monday 10/8 and due via e-mail to the instructor on Friday **10/12**.

- **Final paper project:** Written work during the second half of the semester will be oriented toward a final paper of 10-12 pages, due on Friday **12/7**. Paper topics are open within the general purview of the course, but students are required to develop their paper topics in consultation with the instructor during office hours. The final paper project includes the following interim assignments, each of which will be counted as an informal writing assignment:
 - *Paper proposal:* A single paragraph that explicitly states the topic, question, or thesis to be addressed in your paper as well as the potential line of argumentation to be used. Due Monday **10/22**.
 - *Draft bibliography:* A list of potential sources, primary and secondary, in proper bibliographic format. Due Monday **10/29**.
 - *Paragraph outline:* A brief outline that includes a single topic sentence for each paragraph of the final paper (as currently envisioned). Due Monday **11/5**.
 - *First draft:* Complete, first draft of paper. Due Monday **11/19**.
 - *Peer review:* Each student will formally review the first draft of one classmate's paper. The review will consist of mark-up and marginal comments directly on the draft as well as a one-page written critique that addresses both the content and style of the paper. Specific recommendations for improving the paper should be included within the commentary and marginal notations. Due Monday **11/26**.
 - *Presentation:* Each student will make a brief but formal presentation of their work during the final class meeting of the semester. Due Monday **12/3**.

Late assignment policy: Late papers and exams will be penalized 1/3 of a full letter grade for each full day or portion thereof beyond the scheduled due date.

Grading

Final grades will be calculated according to the criteria below. Grades of plus/minus will be assigned as appropriate.

- class participation: 20%
- informal writing: 15%
- short paper: 20%
- midterm exam: 20%
- final paper: 25%

Textbooks and Readings

The following item is required and available at the [University Co-op Bookstore](#):

- Mark Edward Lewis, [Writing and Authority in Early China](#) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), ISBN 9780791441145.

Online Course Materials

Additional required readings for the class will be distributed electronically via the [course website](#). Students are responsible for downloading and printing (if necessary) these materials. Access to copyrighted material is restricted to students who are enrolled in the course. In order to acquire this material, it is necessary for you to have access to [WebSpace](#), UT's online file storage and sharing system. If you have not done so already, please [sign up for WebSpace](#) as soon as possible and then [verify](#) that you are able to access these readings via the links on the [course schedule](#). Use your regular uteid and password to authenticate when prompted. Contact the instructor immediately should you have any difficulty accessing the course documents.

Course Website

A website for this course has been established at <https://webspace.utexas.edu/~dms2244/courses/ans379-writing/>. It is essential that you establish some means of accessing the site because the updated syllabus, course schedule, assignments, handouts, and important announcements will all be distributed through the website. Student grades will be posted in [Blackboard](#). If you have any trouble accessing these tools, please consult the instructor.

Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC)

Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the [Undergraduate Writing Center](#), which offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate. UWC consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing in ways that foster independence and preserve the integrity of student work. Assistance is available by appointment (tel. 471-6222) or on a drop-in basis at [FAC 211](#).

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

Students who violate University rules on [scholastic dishonesty](#) are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information please visit the [Student Judicial Services](#) website: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact [Services for Students with Disabilities](#) at 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

Schedule of Class Meetings

For reading assignments please consult the course website at <https://webspace.utexas.edu/~dms2244/courses/ans379-writing/>.

Meeting	Date	Title	Assignments Due
	9/3	Labor Day holiday; no class meeting	
1	9/10	Course introduction and historical overview of the Chinese Writing System	
2	9/17	<i>Writing in the Religious Context of Ancestor Worship</i>	
3	9/24	<i>The Social Context of China's Earliest Writing</i>	
4	10/1	<i>Heaven's Mandate: Political Authority and the Written Word</i>	short paper
5	10/8	<i>Authority of the Master: Textual Traditions of the Hundred Schools</i>	take-home midterm distributed; due 10/12.
6	10/15	Individual paper consultations with instructor	
7	10/22	<i>Investigation of the Unknown: Divination and Hemerological Writing</i>	final-paper proposal
8	10/29	<i>Recipes, Techniques, and Arts: Technical Literatures</i>	bibliography
9	11/5	<i>Mastering the Past: The Evolution of Historical Writing in Early China</i>	paragraph outline
10	11/12	<i>Poetry and Authorial Voice</i>	
11	11/19	<i>Encompassing the World in Writing</i>	first draft
12	11/26	<i>Cannon and Commentary: Creation of a Textual Empire</i>	peer review
13	12/3	Student Presentations	
	12/7	Final papers due via e-mail	final paper