

UCUG1604 (L01) - History of Chinese Civilization: From Antiquity to Late Imperial

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Course Title: History of Chinese Civilization: From Antiquity to Late Imperial

Course Code: UCUG 1604

No. of Credits: 3 credits

Any pre-/co-requisites: N.A.

Class Time & Venue: Tuesdays, 12:00-2:50pm, E1-101

Instructors:

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description:

This course offers a comprehensive, globally oriented exploration of China's historical development and its connections to the wider world, examining the political, social, and cultural transformations that shaped China as a civilization, nation, and state. The course highlights how Chinese identity, values, and traditions evolved through interactions with both internal forces and external influences. Students are encouraged to move beyond simplifications by analyzing historical events, choices, and values within their specific contexts and by engaging directly with primary sources and historiographical debates to develop critical thinking and cross-cultural competence.

Recognizing that history has traditionally relied on language-based narratives, the course also integrates technological approaches suited to HKUSTGZ's science-and-technology, interdisciplinary environment by combining Chinese history with Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Through guided use of QGIS, students examine capital site selection across major dynasties (Qin–Han, Tang–Song, Ming–Qing), analyzing how factors such as natural environment, transportation networks, and economic foundations shaped political decision-making.

Across written assignments, presentations, discussions, spatial analysis exercises, and a creative culminating project involving dramatized historical performances, students learn to interpret and communicate how spatial patterns and historical evidence together explain continuity and change in China's historical trajectories, fostering both analytical rigor and an empathetic understanding of the past in an interconnected world.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to be able:

- **Gain a holistic understanding of major ideas, political developments, and cultural movements in Chinese history** by focusing on broad historical trends and applying interdisciplinary approaches to analyze their significance.
- **Analyze how interactions with non-Chinese societies shaped Chinese politics, culture, and economy** through comparative perspectives and problem-solving frameworks that explore cross-cultural influences and global connections.
- **Develop basic research, critical thinking, and presentation skills** by engaging in historical inquiry, critically analyzing primary and secondary sources, formulating research questions, evaluating evidence, and constructing well-supported arguments.
- **Build a foundational understanding of key historical theories, paradigms, and narratives in modern scholarship** and apply interdisciplinary synthesis to evaluate their relevance and limitations in interpreting Chinese history.

Three special GIS sessions (i.e., Weeks 4, 8 and 11) are dedicated to the historical geography of dynastical China.

By the end of these three sessions, students will be able to:

1. Explain how capital site selection criteria evolved across major Chinese dynasties, with attention to the roles of natural environment, transportation networks, and economic foundations.
2. Use guided GIS tools in QGIS (e.g., spatial queries, buffer analysis, network analysis and layer overlays) to explore historical geographic factors influencing capital location.
3. Interpret and communicate how spatial patterns revealed through GIS analysis support historical explanations of capital selection and relocation.

Assessments:

1. Weekly attendance and participation: 10%

2. QGIS historical map: 25%

3. QGIS in-class assignments: 10% (3% for first two and 4% for the third)

3. Final Performance (Historical Reenactment Skit based on primary sources): 40%

4. Peer-Review 5%

5. Final Self-Reflection: 10%

Weekly Topics:

Week	Date	Topics	Brief outline	Related CILOs
01	01.27	Introduction to the course	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of Chinese historical periodization, geography, linguistic and ethnic groups.• Understand some of the historical theories and paradigms.• Pre-history of the Chinese civilization.	CILO-1, 2, 3, 4
02	02.03	The Shang civilization and the Zhou Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First literal civilization.• Oracle bone, bronze and human sacrifice.• The Zhou Revolution and the new political ideology of heaven.• The founding of Zhou and feudalism.	CILO-1, 2, 3
03	02.10	From Warring States to the Qin Empire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The classic period of Warring States and Spring/Autumn.• From Bronze to iron.• The Qin Unification and its significance.	CILO-1, 2, 4
04	02.24	Qin and Han Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Map-making principles• GIS data introduction• Conduct spatial analysis with instructor	CILO-1, 2, 4
05	03.03	The Han Empire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expansion under Han Wudi.• China and the non-Chinese world.• Three Kingdoms and the age of disunification.	CILO-1, 2, 3, 4
06	03.10	Sui and Tang	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Central Asia and China.	CILO-1, 2, 4

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese cosmopolitanism. • Wu Zetian and women in Tang China. • The fall of aristocracy society. 	
07	03.17	Song and Yuan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture achievement. • Rise of civilian society. • Urbanization, commercialization, and national identity. 	CILO-1, 2, 4
08	03.24	Tang and Song Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct spatial analysis with instructor • Ming and a new type of government. • Tributary system. 	CILO-1, 2, 4
09	03.31	Ming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entering the Global Stage. • Capitalist sprouts. • The Rise of Manchu in Northeast Asia. 	CILO-1,2, 4
10	04.07	Qing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Golden Age under Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong. • Population growth and Social Issues. • Opium War and its subsequences. 	CILO-1, 2, 4
11	04.14	Ming and Qing Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create your own GIS data • Conduct spatial analysis with instructor • China and the West. 	CILO-1, 2, 4
12	04.21	The End of Imperial China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late Qing efforts of modernization. • 1895 Sino-Japanese War. • 1911 Revolution and the fall of Qing. 	CILO-1, 2, 4
13	04.28	Final group presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student groups present their skit and drama. 	CILO-2, 3, 4

Final Grade Descriptors

Each assessment score will be based on the average of multiple evaluations. For group-related tasks, the score will be shared equally among all members, while individual assessments will be assigned solely to the student based on their performance. The final score for each student will be the sum of the average scores from all categories, reflecting both group and individual contributions.

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of intercultural communication theories and concepts, with exceptional ability to apply them in real-world contexts. Exhibits creativity in analyzing cultural dynamics, strong critical thinking, and exceptional collaboration skills in group work and projects. Goes beyond core requirements to deliver insightful reflections and innovative solutions to intercultural challenges.
B	Good Performance	Shows solid knowledge of intercultural communication principles and competence in applying them to practical scenarios. Demonstrates the ability to analyze cultural differences and evaluate communication strategies effectively. Displays motivation to engage with course material and contribute meaningfully to group discussions and projects.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate understanding of intercultural communication concepts and the ability to address familiar problems with appropriate solutions. Shows basic analytical and critical thinking skills when examining cultural issues. Participates in group activities and shows consistent effort to meet the learning objectives.
D	Marginal Pass	Demonstrates threshold knowledge of intercultural communication and a limited ability to analyze or apply concepts. Effort is evident but may lack depth or critical insight. Contributions to group work and projects meet minimal expectations, with some potential for improvement in understanding and engagement.
F	Fail	Exhibits insufficient understanding of intercultural communication concepts and lacks the ability to apply

them effectively. Fails to demonstrate critical thinking, engagement with course materials, or meaningful participation in group work. Does not meet the basic standards required for achieving the course learning objectives

Course AI Policy:

Students are empowered and guided to use generative AI tools in assessed assignment tasks. Such use must align with the University's academic integrity guidelines for students while ensuring they are achieving the ILOs. The declaration and acknowledgment statements must be addressed for each assignment. The examples are described below.

Declaration: I did/I did not knowingly use generative AI tools in this assignment task.

Acknowledgment (If you did use any generative AI tools, please complete the following acknowledgment)

- In this assignment, I followed the University's guidelines for students on academic integrity. No content generated by generative AI tools has been presented as my own work. I take responsibility for the work submitted.
- Process: In my assignment preparation, I acknowledge the use of (generative AI tools and link to webpages of the tools) to (how they were used - e.g. to generate ideas, to paraphrase elements of texts, lines of argument, to find pieces of evidence, to create conceptual maps, to help illustrate key concepts, etc.) for (why they were used - e.g. to help you get the writing started, to stimulate thinking, to clarify language and accuracy, to translate text, etc).
- Record: I have kept a record of my use of AI tools, including the specific tool(s) used, the prompts submitted, and responses generated. I understand that my teachers may ask me to provide this information.

Resubmission Policy:

N.A.

Required Texts and Materials:

N.A.

Academic Integrity:






Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST(GZ)'s Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to Regulations for

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Additional Resources:

- HKUST-GZ Library
- HKUST-GZ Office of Student Affairs

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Tue Feb 24, 2026	 GIS Session 1 In Class Report and Map (https://hkust-gz.instructure.com/courses/3030/assignments/21473)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Mar 24, 2026	 GIS Session 2 In Class Report and Map (https://hkust-gz.instructure.com/courses/3030/assignments/21530)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Apr 14, 2026	 GIS Session 3 In Class Report and Map (https://hkust-gz.instructure.com/courses/3030/assignments/21532)	due by 11:59pm
Tue May 5, 2026	 GIS Final Historical Map (https://hkust-gz.instructure.com/courses/3030/assignments/21535)	due by 11:59pm
	 Roll Call Attendance (https://hkust-gz.instructure.com/courses/3030/assignments/21710)	