Early Chinese Calligraphy (G6117x)
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Course Description
The goal of this class is to study major developments in the history of Chinese calligraphy from the Shang through the Tang dynasties. In addition to examining the works of individual calligraphers, we will attempt to understand how the history of calligraphy has been written, both in China and in the West, how calligraphy conveys meaning, and why it has been valued above all other arts in China. Although this course is “on the books” as a lecture, it will be conducted as a seminar.

Readings
Readings will be drawn from a wide range of books and articles on my seminar shelves in Avery Fine Arts Library and in the Starr Library or at the Reserve Desks in these libraries. The weekly assignments are fairly specialized, and it is assumed that any students needing more background information will read independently in the following recommended texts:

Fu, Shen et al. Traces of the Brush: Studies in Chinese Calligraphy  
(Starr Library ND1457.C52 N483)  
(Fine Arts ND1040 H24)  
(Fine Arts ND1040 C445)  
(Starr Library ND1457 .C53 S52 1982)  
(Fine Arts ND1040 T78)  
(Starr Library NK3634 .A2 C554 1991)

All required readings are in English. Students who can read Chinese or Japanese will be given supplemental assignments in these languages. As the semester progresses, assignments and topics may be altered to fit the needs of students.

There are no textbooks required for this class, but the following books, some available at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or at Amazon.com, are highly recommended for purchase:


**Requirements**

Vigorous participation in class discussion is the principal requirement of the class. Please keep in mind that nothing you say will be held against you. Calligraphy is hard to describe, and we are all struggling to find words to articulate what we see.

All students will give seminar reports on substantial topics and will turn in written versions of their reports in the form of polished seminar papers. Grading will be based on the quality of the papers.

**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

9/6  Introduction and Organizational Meeting

9/13  The Origins of Writing, in China and beyond: Theories and Archaeological Evidence  
Xu Shen, *Shuowen jiezi*, “Postface”  
Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development*, chs. 1-2  
Chaves, “The Legacy of T’s’ang Chieh”  
For further reading: Qiu, *Chinese Writing*, read at will

(9/20)  Shang Oracle Bones: The Collection at Columbia University  
Keightley, *Sources of Shang History*, chs. 1-2  
Bagley, “Writing in Anyang”  
Chou, *Oracle Bone Collections in the United States*, read sections on CU bones

(9/27)  Bronze and Stone: Cast and Carved Inscriptions of the Zhou Dynasty  
Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, chs. 2-3  
Wilson, "The Stylus and the Brush"  
Li, "Ancient Reproductions and Calligraphic Variations"  
Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies” (only for the most determined)

10/4  The Stele Inscriptions of the Han Dynasty  
Nylan, “Calligraphy, the Sacred Text, and Test of Culture”  
Proser, "Moral Characters" (read as much as time allows)
10/11  **Wang Xizhi and the Culture of Chinese Calligraphy, Part 1**  
Ledderose, *Mi Fu*, Chapter 1, “The Classical Tradition”  
Harrist, “A Letter from Wang Xizhi”  
Harrist, “The Aesthetics of Replication and Deception”

10/18  **Wang Xizhi and the Culture of Chinese Calligraphy, Part 2**  
Ledderose, “Some Taoist Elements”  
Hay, “The Human Body as a Microcosmic Source of Macrocosmic Values”  
Kraus, *Brushes with Power*, Part I

10/25  **Early Texts on Calligraphy**  
McNair, “*Fashu yaolu*”  
Barnhart, “Wei Fu-jen’s *Pi Chen T’u*”  
Knieb, “*Le Sitishu shi de WeiHeng*”  
*Lidai shufa lunwen xuan*, (selections TBA)

11/1  **Brush and Chisel--Calligraphy of the Northern Dynasties**  
Lu, “Calligraphy of Stone Engravings in N. Wei Loyang”  
Hua, "The History of Revival of N. Wei Stele-Style Calligraphy"  
Harrist, “The Virtual Stele”  
Tsiang, “Monumentalization of Buddhist Texts in the Northern Qi Dynasty”

11/8  **Academic Holiday**

11/15  **Calligraphy and Rulership at the Tang Court**  
Goldberg, “Court Calligraphy of the Early T’ang Dynasty”  
McNair, “Public Values in Calligraphy and Orthography”  
Harrist, “Record of the Eulogy on Mt. Tai”  
Chang and Frankel, trans. *Two Chinese Treatises on Calligraphy*, pp. ix-16

11/22  **Yan Zhenqing and Huai-su**  
McNair, *The Upright Brush* (finish reading the entire book)  
Peter C. Sturman, “The Thousand Character Essay”  
Schlombs, *Huai-su*, read as much as possible

11/29  **Student reports**

12/6  **Student reports**

12/13  **Student reports (note extra session)**


McNair, Amy. “Fa shu yao lu, a Ninth-Century Compendium of Texts on Calligraphy.”


Nylan, Michael. "Calligraphy, the Sacred Text, and Test of Culture." In Liu et al., eds., *Character and Context*. Seminar Shelf, Avery Library.


N.B. All photocopies are on the Avery Library Seminar Shelf.