

## **HSEA 4884--China's "Sprouts of Capitalism": Early Modern Chinese Economic History in Comparative Perspective**

Professor Madeleine Zelin  
Office Address: 926 International Affairs Building  
Telephone Number: 854-2592  
E-mail: [mhz1@columbia.edu](mailto:mhz1@columbia.edu)  
Office Hours: Tuesday 4-6

### **Prerequisites**

Students without a background in modern Chinese history should consult with the instructor.

### **Course Objectives**

A close examination of China's early modern economic development set against the background of major debates in the field of world economic history and within the field of modern Chinese history. The time frame for this course is approximately the late 18th to the early 20th century.

### **Method of Instruction**

We will meet once a week for two hours in a seminar setting. Each week we will deal with a major issue of importance to understanding China's economic development and the interaction between environmental, political, legal and cultural factors in the development process. Students will prepare a set of readings for each session and classes will consist of discussions of those readings and other material of relevance raised by students and by the instructor. Each class session will end with a brief introduction to the following weeks readings by the instructor.

### **Method of Evaluation**

Student evaluation will be based on three elements:

- 1) participation in class discussions.
- 2) two critiques of approximately 5 pages each based on the readings assigned for two separate class sessions.
- 3) a final paper of approximately 15 pages in which each student will develop further one of the issues raised by the class or a related issue in the study of China's modern economy. Students wishing to work in areas of comparative economic history or who wish to extend themes raised in this class to an examination of contemporary China may be allowed to do so in consultation with the instructor. Students will present their papers for discussion during the last two weeks of the course. Students wishing to work collaboratively may do so with permission of the instructor. In such cases the 15 page guideline will not apply.

Grade weighting:

1. class participation (20%)
2. critiques (30%)
3. final paper (50%)

### **Suggested Books to Buy**

Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence, China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

### **Syllabus**

#### **January 21: Introduction**

*Review of course goals and requirements. Discussion of the historical background to China's early modern economic history*

#### **January 28: Narratives of Modernization**

*A discussion of some of the main Western narratives of modernization, including those of Marx, Weber, World Systems theorists and Neo-institutional economists. How does China fare within these large narratives of world economic history? Do they suggest areas for investigation and possible modification of theory?*

Required Readings—

Denemark and Thomas, "The Brenner-Wallerstein Debate", *International Studies Quarterly*, 32.1 (1988), pp. 47-65. (link)

Otto van der Sprenkel, "Max Weber on China," *History and Theory* 3.3 (1964), pp. 348-370. (link)

North and Thomas, "An Economic Theory of the Growth of the Western World" *The Economic History Review, New Series*, Vol. 23, No. 1. (Apr., 1970), pp. 1-17.(link)

Recommended Readings—

Arif Dirlik, "Chinese Historians and the Marxist Concept of Capitalism: A Critical Examination," *Modern China*, Vol. 8, No. 1. (Jan., 1982), pp. 105-132. (link)

#### **February 4: Property and the Family in China**

*How do economic historians think about property? Is this approach relevant to China? What were the political, social and economic implications of China's early modern property regime? How were women in particular affected by this property regime?*

Required Readings—

Shuzo Shiga, "Family Property and the Law of Inheritance in Traditional China" in Buxbaum, ed. *Chinese Family Law and Social Change* [Pak 1]

Zelin, "A Critique of Rights of Property in Pre-War China," Zelin, et al, ed. *Contract and Rights of Property in Early Modern China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press (forthcoming) (link)

## February 11: Approaches to the Agrarian Economy

### Required Readings:

- Philip Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta 1350-1988*, 58-92. [Pak 2]
- Eastman, "Agriculture: An Overview"
- Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence, China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 69-107. [Buy]

### Recommended Readings:

- Brenner and Isett, "England's Divergence from China's Yangzi Delta," *JAS* 61.2 (May 2002), pp. 614-651. (link)
- David Faure, "The Plight of the Farmers: A Study of the Rural Economy of Jiangnan and the Pearl River Delta, 1870-1937," *Modern China*, Vol. 11, No. 1. (Jan., 1985), pp. 3-37. (link)

## February 18: The City and the Market Economy

*The structure of the market in early modern China and its influence on economic development.*

### Required Readings:

- Rhoads Murphey, "The City as a Center of Change: Western Europe and China," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 44, No. 4. (Dec., 1954), pp. 349-362. (link)
- Eastman, "Commerce in the Late Imperial Period" (link)
- Gary G. Hamilton, "Regional Associations and the Chinese City: A Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 21, No. 3. (Jul., 1979), pp. 346-361. (link)
- Mark Elvin, "The High-Level Equilibrium Trap: The Causes of the Decline of Invention in the Traditional Chinese Textile Industries," Willmott, ed. *Economic Organization in Chinese Society*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 137-182. [Pak 3]

## February 25: Pomeranz—*The Great Divergence*

*How different were the advanced sectors of Britain and China in 1800 in terms of key indicators such as labor productivity and standards of living?*

### Required Readings:

- Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence, China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-68, 108-297. [buy]

### Recommended Readings:

- Philip Huang, "Development or Involution in Eighteenth Century Britain and China? A Review of Kenneth Pomeranz's *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*." *JAS* 61.2 (May 2002), pp. 501-538. [link]

Note also Pomeranz' response to Huang--Pomeranz, Kenneth. "Beyond the East-West Binary: Resituating Development Paths in the Eighteenth

Century World." *Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 2 (2002). [link]

### **March 3: The State and the Economy in the Late Imperial Period**

*What positive and negative roles does the state play in early economic development? What can we say about the role of the late imperial state's role in the economy.*

Required Readings:

William Jones, trans. *The Great Qing Code*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, Articles 24, 80, 82, 84, 87, 88, 89, 90-100, 118-156, 270-275, 280, 344-354. [Pak 4]

Dwight H. Perkins, "Government as an Obstacle to Industrialization: The Case of Nineteenth Century China," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (Dec., 1967), pp. 478-492. (link)

Zelin, "Economic Freedom in Later Imperial China," (forthcoming) (link)

Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays*, Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962, pp. 5-30. [Pak 5]

### **March 10: Imperialism**

Required Readings:

Chi-Ming Hou, "Economic Dualism: The Case of China 1840-1937," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 23, No. 3. (Sep., 1963), pp. 277-297. (link)

Robert Dernberger, "The Role of the Foreigner in China's Economic Development," in Perkins, *China's Modern Economy in Historical Perspective*, Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1975, pp. 19-47. [Pak 6]

Rhoads Murphey, "The Treaty Ports and China's Modernization", in Skinner, ed., *The Chinese City Between Two Worlds*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974. pp.17-71. [Pak 7]

Robert Eng, "Chinese Entrepreneurs, the Government, and the Foreign Sector: The Canton and Shanghai Silk-Reeling Enterprises," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3. (1984), pp. 353-370. (link)

Recommended Readings:

Fairbank, "The Creation of the Treaty System," *Cambridge History of China*, volume 10, pp.213-63. (on reserve)

### **March 17: Spring Break**

### **March 24: Institutions of Capital**

*How did China's institutional framework (including property rights discussed earlier) influence economic development—an examination of early modern banking, investment and information transfer*

Required Readings:

Leonard T. K. Wu, "The Crucial Role of the Chinese Native Banks," *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 4, No. 12. (Jun. 19, 1935), pp. 89-93. (link)

Zelin, "Capital Accumulation and Investment Strategies in Early Modern China: The Case of the Furong Salt Yard" *Late Imperial China*, June 1988. [Pak 8]

Susan Mann Jones, "Finance in Ning-po: The Ch'ien-chuang," in Willmott., ed. *Economic Organization in Chinese Society*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 47-77. [Pak 9]

Yen-p'ing Hao, *The Commercial Revolution in Nineteenth Century China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 72-111. [Pak 10]

Recommended Readings:

Robert Gardella, "Squaring Accounts: Commercial Bookkeeping Methods and Capitalist Rationalism in Late Qing and Republican China," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2. (May, 1992), pp. 317-339. (link)

Robert Gardella, "Contracting Business Partnerships in Late Qing and Republican China: Paradigms and Patterns" (forthcoming) (link)

**March 31: The Making of a Modern Labor Force**

*An examination of gender, native place, and organizational issues in the making of China's early twentieth century urban labor force.*

Required Readings:

Emily Honig, "The Contract Labor System and Women Workers: Pre-Liberation Cotton Mills of Shanghai," *Modern China*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Symposium: The Making of the Chinese Working Class. (Oct., 1983), pp. 421-454. (link)

Gail Hershatter, "Flying Hammers, Walking Chisels: The Workers of Santiaoshi," *Modern China*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Symposium: The Making of the Chinese Working Class. (Oct., 1983), pp. 387-419. (link)

Elizabeth Perry, *Shanghai on Strike, the Politics of Chinese Labor*, Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1993, pp. 16-64. [Pak 11]

**April 7: Networks or Corporations—A Chinese-style of Business?**

Required Readings:

Sherman Cochran, *Encountering Chinese Networks: Western, Japanese, and Chinese Corporations in China, 1880-1937*, pp.1-11, 44-69, 117-146 [Pak 12]

Pomeranz, Kenneth, "'Traditional' Chinese Business Forms Revisited: Family, Firm, and Financing in the History of the Yutang Company of Jining, 1779-1956, Late Imperial China, 18.1 (June 1997), pp. 1-38. (link)

William Kirby, "China Unincorporated: Company Law and Business Enterprise in Twentieth- Century China" *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1. (Feb., 1995), pp. 43-63. (link)

Recommended Readings:

Susan Greenhalgh, "Families and Networks in Taiwan's Economic Development" in Winckler and Greenhalgh, ed. *Contending Approaches to the Political Economy of Taiwan*. [on reserve]  
Guy Hamilton, "Overseas Chinese Capitalism" in *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity*, Tu Wei-ming, ed., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 328-249. [on reserve]

#### **April 14: Growth or Stagnation in the Early Twentieth Century**

Required Readings:

John K. Chang, "Industrial Development of Mainland China 1912-1949"  
*The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 27, No. 1. (Mar., 1967), pp. 56-81. (link)

Thomas Rawski, *Economic Growth in Prewar China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 1-64. [Pak 13]

Recommended Readings:

Chen Han-Seng, "Economic Disintegration in China," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 4/5. (Apr. - May, 1933), pp. 173-181. (link)

#### **April 21: Student Presentations**

#### **April 28: Student Presentations**