

**FA 178a: Seminar on Chinese Calligraphy: History and Practice**  
Summer 2019  
(Tentative syllabus, to be finalized)

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**Course Description and Objectives**

This seminar examines the art and history of Chinese calligraphy. The goal is to introduce students of different Chinese-language levels (not limited to native-speakers) to canonical works of calligraphy as well as the enthusiasm and creativity these works have generated through the ages. From anonymous oracle bones and stone inscriptions to famed masterpieces, such as Wang Xizhi's "Lanting Pavilion Preface," and from original renderings to copies of others' compositions, this course showcases the kaleidoscopic range that makes calligraphy a visual-linguistic art form beyond "words." The multifaceted functions of stylized writing—such as for political, religious, and expressive purposes—will also be explored.

In addition to acquiring knowledge of history, students engage in hands-on study through copying and creating calligraphy. We will discuss and reflect on calligraphy aesthetics through the ages. Students will gain a better appreciation of art from concept to product. This course which crosses between art history and studio aims to train visual thinking and improve hand-eye coordination. Students will also learn the rudiments of deciphering challenging script types such as the seal and cursive scripts, and to produce calligraphy for evaluation.

This "oral communication" course requires each student to make two Powerpoint presentations: a 15-minute introduction of an assigned reading and a 25-minute presentation on their final research topic. Students will receive feedback for improvement.

A supply list is provided. Students are responsible for bringing the required calligraphy tools to class.

Success in this course requires at least nine hours of work for every three hours of class time.

**Requirements**

1. Attendance. Active participation in class discussions and regular completion of assignments are expected. 30%

Active, earnest, thoughtful and prepared (25% or up)

Mostly passive but diligent and attentive (20% or up)

Little apparent sign of engagement and preparedness (below 20%)

More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade; explain your absences in writing.

Oral introduction of readings (occasional). Read assignments thoroughly, present major points, and pose questions to stimulate discussions. (To be counted as part of overall attendance.)

2. Calligraphy assignments: students will submit practice calligraphy works on a regular basis. 25%
3. Powerpoint presentation on a research topic of your choice in consultation with the professor. 20-25 minutes per presentation. 20% (Graded for clarity, time management, and organization).
4. Final research paper (approx. 10 pages); topic is identical to the oral presentation. It is a written elaboration, expansion, and refinement of the oral presentation. More instructions will be given around the middle of the semester. 25% (Graded for research effort, presentation such as proper footnoting and illustration, and writing style.)

### **About Readings**

Weekly readings are available on LATTE (assignments are listed in the calendar below). Before coming to class students should have already done the readings assigned for the day. Students will be asked to discuss the main points and be ready to pose questions regarding their contents and assumptions. Students are expected to approach the materials thoughtfully and critically. Some of the readings are meant to provide the relevant historical background for understanding the topic of the week, while others advance specific viewpoints.

### **Calendar is Subject to Change; please check LATTE for updates**

#### I: Introduction: Historical Overview

1. Chinese Language (Written and Spoken) vs Calligraphy
2. Different Script types
3. Calligraphy as Performance
4. Hands-on: How to hold the brush and your posture; making your first strokes

#### Readings:

Bottero, Francoise and Christoph Harbemier, "The 'Shuowen Jiezi' Dictionary and the Human Sciences in China." *Asia Major*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series. Vol. 21, no. 1 (2008): 249-71.

Hollman, Thomas O. "Calligraphy." In *Chinese Script: History, Characters, Calligraphy*, 91-112. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

#### II: From Pre-paper to Paper

1. Four Treasures of the Literati Studio (Paper, Brush, Ink, and Inkstone)
2. Shang and Zhou Dynasties (Oracle Bone Script and Great Seal Scripts)
3. Qin Dynasty: Small Seal Script
4. Han Dynasty: Stone and Bamboo Strips

## 5. Hands-on: Hidden Tip (Centered-tip) practices for Seal Script

### Readings:

Brown, Shana. "The Discovery of the Oracle Bone Inscriptions." *Pastimes: From Art and Antiquarianism to Modern Chinese Historiography*, 87-102. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011. \*

Hollman, Thomas O. "Ingenuity and Passion." In *Chinese Script: History, Characters, Calligraphy*, 38-54. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.\*

Li, Wendan. "The Development of Chinese Calligraphy I: The Seal Scripts." *Chinese Writing and Calligraphy*, 100-114. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009.

### III: Seal Carving; Writing Auspicious Sayings;

#### Readings:

Li, T. Y. "Chinese Seals: A Lecture delivered on Monday, 12 June 1961." *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1962): 49-53.

Bai, Qianshen, "From Wu Dacheng to Mao Zedong: The Transformation of Chinese Calligraphy in the Twentieth Century." In Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith, eds., *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*, 246-283. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001.\*

### IV: Seal Script Practice

1. Hands-on Seal Carving
2. Learning with a digital dictionary

#### Readings:

Li Wendan. "The Development of Chinese Calligraphy II: The Clerical Script." *Chinese Writing and Calligraphy*, 115-28. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009.

Wong, Dorothy C. "The Origins and Rise of Han Steles." In *Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist Use of a Symbolic Form*, 25-41. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004.\*

Bai, Qianshen and John Finlay. "The World within a Square Inch: Modern Developments in Chinese Seal Carving." *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (1993): 26-63.\*

### V: Running Script

1. The Three Greatest Works in Running Script
  - a. Wang Xizhi, "Preface of the Lanting Pavilion"
  - b. Yan Zhenqing, "Draft Eulogy for Nephew Jiming"
  - c. Su Shi "Hanshi tie"
2. Hands-on Clerical Script
3. Seal Carving Practice Continues

#### Readings:

Harrist, Jr., Robert. "Replication and Deception in Calligraphy of the Six Dynasties Period." *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, The Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties*, edited by Zong-qi Cai, 31-59. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004.\*

Richter, Antje. "Beyond Calligraphy: Reading Wang Xizhi's Letters." *T'oung Pao*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series. Vol. 96, fasc. 4/5 (2010): 370-407.

#### VI: Transmission and Dissemination

1. Tang Canon—Question of Copying
2. Yan Zhenqing's "Draft Eulogy for Nephew Jiming" continues and his Regular Script
3. Librarian's Session

#### Readings:

McNair, Amy. "'The Nest Tipped and the Eggs Overturned': The An Lushan Rebellion." *The Upright Brush: Yan Zhenqing's Calligraphy and Song Literati Politics*, 38-59. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998.\*

-----, "Public Values in Calligraphy and Orthography in the Tang Dynasty." *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995): 263-78.\*

#### VII: Regular Script

1. Huaisu's *Autobiographical Essay*
2. Scripture Copying and Engraving
3. Running Script Copying

#### Readings:

Harrist, Jr. Robert E. "Mountain as Material: Landscape Inscriptions in China." In *Cultural Histories of the Material World*, edited by Peter N. Miller, 151-64. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

Tsiang, Katherine R. "Embodiments of Buddhist Texts in Early Medieval Chinese Visual Culture." In *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture*, edited by Wu Hung, 49-78. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005.\*

#### VIII: Rubbings and Cursive Script; Buddhism and Calligraphy (including sutra inscription)

1. Stele (*Bei*) vs Copybook or Model Letters (*Tie*)
2. Sun Guoting's *Shupu*
3. Demonstration of Scroll Mounting
4. Calligraphy Project Discussion

#### Readings:

Li, Wendan. "The Development of Chinese Calligraphy IV: The Running and Cursive Styles." *Chinese Writing and Calligraphy*, 140-54. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009.

Wu Hung. "On Rubbings: Their Materiality and Historicity." *Writing and Materiality in China*, edited by Judith T. Zeitlin, Lydia H. Liu and Ellen Widmer, 29-72. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003.\*

IX: Political and Emotional Calligraphy: Song Dynasty to Yuan Dynasty

1. Huang Tingjian's and Ouyang Xiu's calligraphy
2. Su Shi's calligraphy
3. Zhao Mengfu's calligraphy

Readings:

Egan, Ronald C. "Calligraphy and Painting." *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi*. Cambridge (Mass.), 261-309. Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University: Harvard-Yenching Institute: Distributed by the Harvard University Press, 1994.

McCausland, Shane. "A Life Portrait of a Calligrapher." In *Zhao Mengfu: Calligraphy and Painting for Khubilai's China*, 11-111. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011.\*

X: Japanese Calligraphy: Introduction

Readings:

Gunn, Robert W. "Intimacy, Psyche, and Spirit in the Experience of Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy." *Journal of Religion and Health* 40, 1 (Spring 2001): 129-66.

Shimizu, Yoshiaki. "The Rite of Writing: Thoughts on the Oldest Genji Text." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 16 (Autumn 1988): 54-63.\*

**Final Calligraphy Assignment Due**

XI: Paper Consultations

XII: Oral Presentations

XIII: Ming and Qing Dynasties to Modern: Graceful to Super-emotional

1. Wen Zhengming
2. Late Ming Eccentricity
3. Northern Stele School in Modern Times
4. Calligraphy for Reform

**Term Paper Due**

Readings:

Bai, Qianshen. "Illness, Disability, and Deformity in Seventeenth-Century Art." In *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture*, edited by Wu Hung and Katherine R. Tsiang, 147-70. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center 2005.

Burnett, Katharine P. "What The Texts Say: Originality in Seventeenth-Century Calligraphy Theory and Practice." In *Dimensions of Originality: Essays on Seventeenth-Century Chinese Art Theory and Criticism*, 167-200. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2013.

Mattysen, Mieke. "Scholars should be considered the last of the Four Classes': The Case of Zheng Banqiao." *Journal of Asian History* 47, no. 2 (2013): 219-44.

Wong, Aida Yuen. "Calligraphy Theory, National Strengthening and *Gongyang* Philosophy." *The Other Kang Youwei: Calligrapher, Art Activist, and Aesthetic Reformer in Modern China*, 11-35. Leiden: Brill Academic Pub., 2016.

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If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please provide the relevant documentation immediately.

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually as section 5 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential Sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask.