

Poh Gang Hao

HH2126: Heroes and Heroines in Asia

Course Description

Heroes and Heroines in Asia utilizes an approach of comparing historical and literary human archetypes to describe and discuss human perceptions of the ideal being, the heroic female and male. Comparison of different character types and human beings' divergent perceptions of heroes and heroines shaped the histories we write of the roles of individuals and communities in the world. This course focuses on the examples found in premodern Asia. This course analyzes the myths and legends associated with heroes and heroines, and examines archaeological remains, such as statues, paintings, and temples linked to such individuals in conjunction with historical records. For the prehistoric period, archaeological remains provide important artifacts which can be used to hypothesize the importance and role of heroic beings, who would have been ancestor figures. As we get into the historical period, kings, queens, and other figures assumed important positions as heroic figures of authority who possessed spiritual powers. With the advent of world religions, for example, new archetypes were created, and new traits were qualities which members aim to emulate. This course examines the evolution of the ideal individual (hero and heroine) in premodern Asia. It considers whether continuity or change was more characteristic of the direction in which the heroic figure developed across time and region.

The following represent themes covered in this course:

1. Art and the artist's role in the development of ideal types
2. Religion and the construction of the perfect human
3. Technology and energy capture: the blacksmith, for instance, as a heroic individual
4. Culture and interaction
5. Trade and exchange
6. Urbanization
7. War and conflict
8. Social structure: ascribed versus achieved status

Course Policies

Grading Breakdown:

- Participation, 15%
- Mid-term paper (Week 5), 20%
- Short essays and map quiz (Week 9), 25%
- Final research project, 40%
- **Participation in class discussions - 15%**
- Students are expected to participate in class discussions and any activities conducted within the classroom.

Mid-term Essay - 20%

Students are required to complete one mid-term essay (800-1,000 words in length excluding footnotes and references). The student will write an essay in response to a question which the instructor will pose a week before the mid-semester recess week.

Individual Research Project – presentation (10%) and research essay (30%) - 40%

Each student is expected to complete an individual research project at the end of the semester. For this assignment, students will complete a written research paper on 6 objects they have chosen to focus on in their history of objects. The project comprises two parts: i. presentation (5-minute presentation + 5-minute question-and-answer), and ii. Individual essay 1,500-1,800 words each). The topic of the final project must be related to one or more themes examined in this course. The student will be evaluated based on the following criteria: 1. coherence, content, and structure of her/his presentation, such as delivery of their slides' contents and balanced coverage of their selected items, and 2. ability to field questions from the audience. The presentations will take place during the last two seminar meetings of the course: weeks 12 (last hour of the class) and 13.

Students will submit their list of objects in week 10 to the instructor for approval.

Individual short written assignments and map quiz (Week 8) - 25%

Students are expected to complete two short written assignments on topics the instructor selected for the course. The word limit of the written assignment is 500 words. The instructor will announce the topics on Week 7 of the course. Students are expected to construct a question related to the topic and write a 500-word response on the topic and question. Students have one week to complete and submit the written work by the start of class on Week 8.

A map quiz will be conducted during class on Week 8. More information will be provided closer to the quiz.

Formative feedback:

You will receive formative feedback through written responses to your papers and presentations. You will also receive verbal feedback through in-class discussions or one-on-one meetings, as necessary.

General expectations:

You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and activities, attend all seminar classes punctually, and take all scheduled assignments and tests by due dates. You are expected to take responsibility for following up with course notes, assignments, and course-related announcements for seminar sessions you have missed. You are expected to participate in all seminar discussions and activities.

Absenteeism:

Absence from class without a valid reason will affect your overall course grade. Valid reasons include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies. A short summary (500 words) of the weeks reading should also be submitted to make up for the absence.

If you miss a lecture, you must inform the course instructor via email prior to the start of the class.

Late Work and Extensions:

Any assessable material that is late will be penalized at the rate of 10% (of the maximum grade) per day. Missing a presentation or not scheduling a presentation will result in a zero grade for that component.

Extensions will only be granted in very special cases and only then when requested at least one week in advance of a deadline.

Electronics Policy:

Laptops and tablets are permitted for reading course materials, but cellphones are not. If these devices become a source of distraction, they will be banned on site.

Academic Integrity:

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust, and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, you must recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion, and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the [academic integrity website](#) for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

GAI Usage:

Use of General Artificial Intelligence (GAI) is permitted in the following situations: 1) Assist in generating key ideas only; 2) Assist in refining syntax and grammar for correct language submission only. The final write-up **MUST** be the student's own work. Students must preserve a digital paper trail showing the way the GAI assistant was used. This should be a Word document specifying the particular GAI assistant used and include the prompts given to the GAI assistant and the GAI output, or outputs if several are generated. **Use of GAI assistance is not permitted in the development or generation of this assignment or project.**

On the Digital Paper Trail:

Students are required, besides submitting the final work in the NTULearn facility, to also submit the paper trail as a Word document or documents, in a second and separate assignment section for this purpose under NTULearn. For assignments where the submission is non-digital, the students can create a photo journal or a blog to document the journey and submit the pdf of this instead.

This digital paper trail must be maintained for later reference, at least until the end of the Academic Year following the semester in which the relevant assignment is submitted. This is to preserve the potential evidence in case there is a later complaint or suspicion relating to academic integrity violations regarding that submission, or for further investigation by the school or other schools or the university when other

academic integrity matters are raised regarding the same student, and it is deemed desirable to cross-check conduct in earlier courses.

The student must sign and submit with the assignment/project write-up a declaration regarding such use. In addition, the student must provide footnote or in-text references in the submission indicating any text paraphrase or significant fact or idea that originated with the GAI assistant. The updated referencing guideline from NTU library is now available. Click [here](#) to see.

See example below:

Reference list entry example (with a shareable link generated by the AI tool)

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (Aug 7 version) [Large language model].

<https://chat.openai.com/share/46ce4720-19bd-4c21-84f0-7a69ec4af03d>

***Students should note that failure to submit this paper trail fully or in a timely fashion may lead to a presumption that the student has an improper intention or purpose in such failures in any relevant academic integrity proceeding regarding that assignment submission. It may even, on its own be an independent academic integrity violation if found to be deliberate.

Week 1: Introduction

Readings:

- Segal, Robert. "Introduction" *In Quest of the Hero*.
- Pearson, Carol. *The Hero Within*. New York: Harper and Row, 1989. Selected excerpts.

Week 2: Heroes of Indian Epics: Heroes and Villains/Arch-Rivals

Readings:

- Adamjee, Qamar, Durham, Jeffrey, et al. *The Rama Epic: hero, heroine, ally, foe*. San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 2016.
- Buck, William. *Mahabharata*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Gitomer, David. "King Duryodhana: The Mahabharata Discourse of Sinning and Virtue in Epic and Drama". *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112, 2 (1992): 222-232.
- Hildebeitel, Alf. *Dharma*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010: Chapter 6.

Week 3: Classical Heroes- The Perfect Being

Readings:

- Braginsky, Vladimir. *The Turkic-Turkish Theme in Traditional Malay Literature*. Brill, 2015: "Kings of Rum, Their Heirs and Vassals (2): If Iskandar Zulkarnain of Istanbul is Unavailable, a Turkish Prince or Nobleman Will Do Nicely."
- Goh Geok Yian. *The Wheel-turner and His House: Kingship in a Buddhist Ecumene*. Dekalb: NIU Press; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015.
- Pham Quynh Phuong. *Hero and deity: Tran Hung Dao and the resurgence of popular religion in Vietnam*. Chiang Mai: Mekong Press, 2009: selections.

- Strong, John. *The Legend of King Asoka: A Study and Translation of the Asokavadana*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Week 4: Heroes of the Localized Literary Traditions

Readings:

- Drewes, G.W.J. "Javanese Poems Dealing with or Attributed to the Saint of Bonan." *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 124, 2 (1968): 209-240.
- Holt, John Clifford. *Spirits of the place: Buddhism and Lao religious culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009: Chapter 1 and Appendix 1.
- Kieven, Lydia. "Lovers, sailors, fighters in illustrations of Javanese Panji tales manuscripts." In Irene Schneider and Holger Warnk (eds.) *Knowledge, Science and Local Tradition: Multiple Perspectives on the Middle East and Southeast Asia in Honor of Fritz Schulze*. Gottingen: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2021.

Week 5: Heroines of the Localized Traditions:

Readings:

- Andaya, Barbara. *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2006.
- Anderson, Elise. "The Construction of Amannisa Khan as a Uyghur Musical Culture Hero". *Asian Music* 43, 1 (2012): 64-90.
- Dror, Olga. *Cult, Culture, and Authority: Princess Lieu Hanh in Vietnamese History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007.
- Pauwels, Heidi. *The Goddess as Role Model: Sita and Radha in Scripture and on Screen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008: selected chapters.
- Flueckiger, Joyce. *Material Acts in Everyday Hindu Worlds*. SUNY Press, 2020: selected chapters.

Midterm essay due

Week 6: The Folk Hero-Si Lidah Pahit; Bhima the blacksmith; Maung Tin De

Readings:

- Busse, Mark. "Wandering Hero Stories in the Southern Lowlands of New Guinea: Culture Areas, Comparison, and History". *Cultural Anthropology* 20, 4 (2005): 443-473.
- Gibson, Thomas. "The Hero Legend in Colonial Southeast Asia." *Philippine studies, historical and ethnographic viewpoints* (2013): 437-476.
- McLaren, Anne and Emily Yu Zhang. "Recreating "Traditional" Folk Epics in Contemporary China: The Politics of Textual Transmission." *Asian Ethnology* 76, 1 (2017): 19-41.
- O'Connor, S.J. "Iron-working as a spiritual inquiry." *History of Religions* 14, 3 (1975): 173-190.

Week 7: Explorers

Readings:

- Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998: Preface and Introduction.
- Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *Three Ways to be Alien: Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011: Introduction and Chapter 3.
- Sochaczewski, Paul Spencer. "An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles. The Hero's Journey of Alfred Russel Wallace." In Indraneil Das and Andrew Alek Tuen. *Naturalists, Explorers and Field Scientists in South-East Asia and Australasia*. Springer, 2016.

Week 8: Merchants

Readings:

- De Clercq, Eva. "Memories of Yoginipur: Delhi's Digambara Merchant Community after Timur." *South Asia* 40, 3 (2017): 531-543.
- Fox, Ariel. "Playing against Type: The Moral Merchant on the Early Qing Stage." *Journal of Chinese literature and culture* 6, 2 (2019): 383-411.
- Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar. "'Strangers' and 'stranger-kings': the sayyid in eighteenth-century maritime Southeast Asia." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, 3 (2009): 567-591.

Short essays due and map quiz in class

Week 9: Warriors

Readings:

- Haar, B. J. ter. *Guan Yu : The Religious Afterlife of a Failed Hero*. First edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Selected chapters
- Fogg, Kevin. "Making an Indonesian National Hero for Lombok: The shifting category of pahlawan nasional." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 47, 137 (2019): 1-22.
- Wilson, William Ritchie. "The Way of the Bow and Arrow. The Japanese Warrior in Konjaku Monogatari." *Monumenta Nipponica* 28, no. 2 (1973): 177-233.
- Kosuta, Matthew. "Ethics of War and Ritual: The Bhagavad-Gita and Mahabharata as Test Cases". *Journal of Military Ethics* 19, 3 (2020): 186-200.
- Jiang, Xue-Ting. "An Aesthetic Study of Martial Arts in Ancient Chinese Legendary Heroines." *Journal of Hebei Institute of Physical Education* 29, no. 1 (2015): 93-96.

Week 10: Ascetics, Monks, and Ancestors

Readings:

- Chambert-Loir, Henri. "Saints and Ancestors: the cult of Muslim saints in Java." In H. Chambert-Loir and A. Reid (eds.) *The Potent Dead*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2002.
- von Hinuber, Haiyan Hu. "The sea voyage to China attempted by Indian Buddhist monks during the years from 305-435." *Studies in Chinese Religions* 6, 4 (2020): 347-359.
- Sen, Tansen. "In Search of Longevity and Good Karma: Chinese Diplomatic Missions to Middle India in the Seventh Century." *Journal of World History* 12, 1 (2001): 1-28.
- Richey, Jeffrey. "ASCETICS AND AESTHETICS IN THE ANALECTS." *Numen* 47, no. 2 (2000): 161-174.

- Patrick Olivelle. "KINGS, ASCETICS, AND BRAHMINS: THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF ANCIENT INDIAN RELIGIONS." In *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe*, 116-. BRILL, 2013.

Week 11: Artists: weavers, potters, woodcarvers, sculptors, painters, puppeteers

Readings:

- Hoogervorst, Tom and J. Jakl. "The Rise of the Chef in Java." *Global Food History* 6, 1 (2020): 3-21.
- Kim, Jinah. "Painted Palm-Leaf Manuscripts and the Art of the Book in Medieval South Asia." *Archives of Asian Art* 65, 1-2 (2015): 57-86.
- Miksic, John and Goh Geok Yian. *Ancient Southeast Asia*. New York and London: Routledge, 2017: Introduction and other excerpts.
- Totton, Mary-Louise. "Cosmopolitan tastes and indigenous designs – virtual cloth in a Javanese candi". In Ruth Barnes. *Textiles in Indian Ocean Societies*. Routledge, 2005.

Week 12: Superheroes/Comic Heroes, anti-heroes (nagas, nats)

Readings:

- Gutierrez, Anna Katrina. "American superheroes, manga cuteness and the Filipino child: the emergence of glocal Philippine comics and picturebooks." *Journal of graphic novels and comics* 5, 3 (2014): 344-360.
- Chen Yea-Wen, et al. "The Superhero in Our Hearts is Chairman Mao": The Structuring of Chinese Sojourners' Conceptualizations of (Super)Hero Identities". *The Howard Journal of Communication* 27, 3 (2016): 218-235.
- Jackson, Roy. *Muslim and Supermuslim: The Quest for the Perfect Being and Beyond*. Springer, 2020: selected chapters.
- Martin, Daniel. "The Americanization of the Hong Kong Kung Fu Hero: Orientalism and Social Class in Marvel Comics' Iron Fist." *Journal of Popular Culture* 51, 6 (2018): 1521-1539.

Week 13: Student Presentations