History of Medicine in China

Course description:

What is Chinese medicine? Many of us today associate it with the exotic practices of acupuncture and herbal remedy, and the all-encompassing concepts of yin-yang and qi. These impressionistic views of Chinese medicine, however, belies a more sophisticated understanding of the long-lasting system of healing. We may ask further: How does Chinese medicine actually work? What are the cultural milieus in which it develops and flourishes? And how do we evaluate it in juxtaposition with modern biomedicine?

To answer these questions, we must probe the roots of Chinese medicine and ponder how it has become what it is today. Surveying Chinese medical history from antiquity to the present, this course pursues three major goals. First, we will study the foundational concepts in Chinese medicine and their evolution in history. Particular attention will be directed to the perception of illnesses, the body, and medicinal substances. Second, we will explore the highly diverse and miscellaneous practices of Chinese medicine in society through the lens of religious healing, medical institution, practitioners, and gender. Third, we will examine in the more recent past how Chinese medicine interacted with Western medicine and how it transformed itself during this contested process. Overall, this course seeks to not only enrich our understanding of Chinese medicine in the past, but also utilize historical knowledge to illuminate our ways of living today.
Assessments:

- Short-paper assignment: 15%
  Write a short essay (3-4 double-spaced pages) that summarizes and synthesizes all required readings or movie of a particular week in Unit 1. **Due Jan. 25 in class.**
- Podcast assignment: 15%
  Produce a podcast (maximal length 2 minutes) that summarizes and analyzes a primary source of a particular week in Unit 2. **Due 9 PM Feb. 21 on Blackboard.**
- Short-video assignment: 15%
  Produce a short video (maximal length 2 minutes) that examines a historical image from the readings of a particular week in Unit 3. **Due 9 PM Mar. 20 on Blackboard.**
- Two pop-up quizzes in class: each 10%
  Each quiz (10 minutes) includes several multiple-choice questions and a short essay question. The content of the quiz is based on the readings and the lecture in the preceding week.
- Final paper or podcast/video: 25%
  The research project combines course readings/lectures and your own research to explore a specific topic in the history of Chinese medicine. It may take either of the following forms:
  1. A paper of 8-10 double-spaced pages
  2. A podcast or video of 6 minutes maximum (2 segments of up to 3 minutes each or, 3 segments of up to 2 minutes each)
  **Due 5 PM Apr. 11 on Blackboard.**
- Class participation: 10%
  Although this is a lecture-based course, I will leave ample time in each lecture to interact with you, either asking you questions or let you ask questions. Active engagement in class is key to your learning.

On media assignments:

One unique feature of this course is the media assignments. Compared to the conventional paper-writing exercise, these alternative assignments offer you the opportunity to explore the creative use of podcasts and short videos for effective intellectual communication. If this is the first time for you to make a podcast or video, don’t worry. **This is your chance to learn.** I will provide you with sufficient guidance and technical support over the course so you can master the skills of multi-media production and create works that edify yourself and impress your friends. I hope this will be a valuable and fun learning experience.

Technical notes: For podcasts, you can simply use the voice-recording device on your computer to do the job. You can also use more advanced software such as Audacity (for both PC and Mac) and GarageBand (for Mac). For short videos, you can start with PowerPoint (for PC) or Keynote (for Mac). For editing images and videos, you can consider using Photoshop and iMovie (for Mac) respectively. More advanced video-editing software are Final Cut (for Mac) and After Effects. All of these software have tutorials on YouTube or [www.lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com).
Course policies:

- Finish all required readings of the week before the class
- Come to class on time. If you have to miss a class, please let me know in advance.
- Laptops are allowed in class only for taking notes. All other uses—from checking emails, to instant messaging, to random internet surfing—are prohibited.
- Submit your assignments on time. Late submission will incur a penalty of one-third a letter grade per day of lateness.
- There are no make-up quizzes.
- Academic integrity. Any use of another source’s words or ideas—Internet included—without acknowledging the source is plagiarism. If you have any questions about UT’s policies on plagiarism, please consult me or refer to: http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources

Key text for the course:


The text is on course reserve at the Gerstein Science Information Center.

Useful Online Resources:

- Nathan Sivin: Guides to Research, Chinese Science and Medicine http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~nsivin/refe.html

Schedule:

Note: All readings are in English (“Primary” refers to primary sources; “Secondary” refers to secondary sources). All readings are available on the course Blackboard.

**Unit 1: Introduction to Chinese medicine**

In this introductory unit, we will explore some central issues and key questions that motivate the study of Chinese medicine. What is the value of studying traditional Chinese medicine? How do we view and evaluate it today? What makes it different from Western medicine? Why is history important to its practice today?

**Week 1** (Jan. 11): Orientation

**Week 2 (Jan. 18): Thinking with Chinese medicine**


**Unit 2: Key concepts in Chinese medicine**

In this unit, we will trace the origins of Chinese medicine in antiquity (the Han period and before) and study the central concepts of sickness, the body, and drugs that laid the foundation for Chinese healing. We will examine both the canonical works—*The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine* and *The Divine Farmer’s Classic of Materia Medica*—and alternative medical thoughts that developed outside these canons.

**Week 3 (Jan. 25): Health and illness**

What is health? What is illness? What are the prominent ways of imagining sickness in ancient China? How do they differ from our understanding of disease today? How does the perception of illness change over time? What is the connection between illness and the perception of the body?

| Primary | *The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine (Huangdi neijing 黃帝內經)*, Ch. 1-7, trans. Ilza Veith, 1949, 97-131. |


**Week 4 (Feb. 1): The body and the world**

What is the “body” in Chinese medicine? Why is there a history to the body? How do physicians in the Chinese and Greek traditions perceive and experience the body differently? What is the relation between the body and the cosmos in China? What is the political implication of a Chinese body?
Week 5 (Feb. 8): Medicines and foods
Happy Chinese New Year! Year of the Goat ends; Year of the Monkey begins.

What is a medicine? What distinguishes a medicine from a foodstuff in China? What makes a drug efficacious? How are medicines classified in pharmacological canons? How are they prepared? What is the relation between medical theories and drug therapy? Who consumed these drugs in society?

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Week 6 (Feb. 15): Family Day
Have a good break!

**Unit 3: Chinese medicine in society**

In this unit, we will go beyond medical theories and examine how Chinese medicine was practiced and transformed in society. Inspecting the medieval through the late imperial era (3rd–19th century), we will explore the intimate connection between medicine and religion, the state’s effort to standardize and promulgate medicine, the various types of medical practitioners and their interaction with patients, and the role of women in Chinese medicine.

Week 7 (Feb. 22): Medicine and religion

During the Six Dynasties (220-589) and the Tang (618-907), religious therapies flourished. What are the Daoist, Buddhist, and shamanistic approaches to healing? How did religious practitioners
visualize the body and conceive the sickness? How did their views differ from (or resemble) those of canonical medicine? How did one religious group differentiate their healing practices from others?


**Week 8 (Feb. 29): Medicine and the state**

Chinese medicine underwent marked transformation during the Song (960-1279). What was the role of the state during this period in standardizing and transmitting medical knowledge? Why did the Song government make such an effort? How were medical texts selected, and produced with the rise of printing? How did the state regulate local medical practices?


**Week 9 (Mar. 7): Medicine and social practice**

From the Song period on, China’s ruling class became increasingly involved in medical learning and practice. Why and how did these elite scholars practice medicine? How did their approach differ from non-elite healers? How did different types of practitioners learn medicine, and how did they gain credibility? In what way did patients’ experience inform these healers’ practice?
Week 10 (Mar. 14): Medicine and gender

Where are women in Chinese medicine? In what ways does Chinese medicine conceive women’s bodies and illnesses differently? What are the disorders specific to women? How does women’s medicine tell us about sexuality in traditional China?

Week 11 (Mar. 21): Chinese medicine in global context

How did foreign medical ideas and practices influence Chinese medicine? Conversely, how did Chinese medicine travel to other parts of the world and interact with local knowledge? How was Chinese medicine transformed during this process?

### Unit 4: Chinese medicine in the modern age

In this final unit, we study the history of Chinese medicine in the past century when it has been facing the serious challenge posed by modern science. We will explore how Chinese medicine negotiated with Western medicine and reinvented itself to gain legitimacy, a contested process that is still going on today.

#### Week 12 (Mar. 28): Chinese medicine and modernity

What were different attitudes towards Chinese medicine in the early 20th century? What were the stakes for these various groups? What kind of new features did Chinese medicine acquire during its transformation? How did Chinese medicine engage in China’s modernization agenda?

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#### Week 13 (Apr. 4): Chinese medicine today

How is Chinese medicine practiced in contemporary China? How does it connect to historical knowledge? How is Chinese medicine practiced differently outside China? What is the challenge of practicing Chinese medicine in the modern world? What is the future of Chinese medicine?

| Primary | Tu Youyou’s Nobel Lecture on 7 December, 2015:  
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– This syllabus is subject to change –