



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Taiwan Program, Summer 2025

CHIN 105: Introduction to Chinese Cultures

Instructor: Prof. Matthew Wells

Email: matt.wells@uky.edu

Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description:

This course is an introduction to Chinese civilization, beginning with the archaeological record and extending to the nineteenth century. Because we are covering a broad period of time – nearly three thousand years – and a rich tradition with many transformations and changes, this course will focus on a few themes and approaches instead of providing a comprehensive survey of the history of Chinese civilization. The purpose of this course is to provide a basic understanding of the development of Chinese tradition and the complexity of its culture by looking in depth at the following questions: what forces came together to produce Chinese civilization and how did they contribute to the formation of the notion of “Chineseness” over time? What were the roles of intellectuals, artists, authors, rulers, and changes in material culture in the development of Chinese cultural tradition? How can literature reveal details of the way people lived, the values they believed in, and the ideas they followed?

2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes: (Add/paste your course objectives and student learning outcomes here. Required for KISS and SACS purposes. You will have the opportunity to make changes here and overall in your syllabus later, as necessary.)

By the end of the class, students who have conscientiously and thoughtfully listened to the lectures, completed all the required readings, and participated in the class discussions, should have gained a clear grasp of the early foundations of Chinese thought (Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism), the fundamental shape of China's bureaucratic empires leading to the development of modern Chinese states, the development of Chinese civilization and how this civilization has come to be studied and understood in a modern context.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

Confucianism

Daoism

Buddhism

Immortality

Zhuangzi and his influence

Poetry

Empire building in East Asia

Synthesis and Innovation in Han Thought

The competing empires of medieval China

Alchemy and medicine

City of Splendor: The Flourishing of Tang Culture

Education and the examination system

Song Lyric Poetry and Landscape Painting

The Rule of Mongols, the Life of Han Chinese and the Writing of Drama

Social Change under the Ming: Commercial Culture and Daily Life

China, Christianity, and the West

Opium War and the concept of nation-state

5. Fulfillment of General Education Requirement:

6. Required Readings and Materials:

Patricia B. Ebrey, The Cambridge Illustrated History of China

Primary source readings are to be found on course Canvas.

7. Graded Assignments:

Attendance and Class Participation (20%). Because this is a lecture-and-discussion course, a significant portion of your grade is based on your attendance and participation in class discussions. Participation in the class discussions should be based on careful reading of the works listed under the relevant class meeting. Readings should be completed before class. You should always bring the assigned readings or your careful notes on the reading to class with you as we will refer to them in detail. I recommend that you take notes as you go through the readings and that you bring those notes, and any questions you have about the readings, with you to class.

Presentation and Discussion Leading (20%). Each student is required to give a presentation on a text, author, or topic chosen from a list provided by the instructor. Students will sign up for their topics on

the Google Doc that specifies the date of each presentation. Two students will form a group and work on the topic. Each presentation should be approximately 15 minutes long. Your presentation should include as much information as possible. You must send me your PowerPoint the day before your presentation. To conclude your presentation, you will provide discussion questions for the class

Short writing assignments (20%). Short in-class writing assignments and reflections addressing specific questions posed by the instructor or classmates.

Imperial Election (20%). Students will research and create an election campaign for one of five emperors. Students will vote, as a class, for which emperor should become our Class Emperor. Criteria for your campaigns and campaign presentations will be given in advance.

Reflective Paper (20%). A final, 3-page reflective paper on modern expressions of classical culture will be due at the end of class.

Work will be graded on this scale:

90 – 100 A

80 – 89 B

70 – 79 C

60 – 69 D

Below 60 E (F)

This course will be graded on this basis, without regard to other scales (i.e., plus-and-minus) which may apply at your college or university. Note KIIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.)

8. Attendance Policy:

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

9. Disability Accommodation:

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might

require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

10. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/titleix/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.