

Fall 2016

## HIS 403 Special Topics in History of Medicine

### Medicines, Poisons, and Foods: Material Culture of Medicine in China and Europe



Time: Thur. 9-11:40 AM

Location: Park 532

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Office hours: Wed. 3-5, or by appointment

#### Course Description:

What is a medicine? The question seems simple, yet the answer is elusive. If a medicine's function is primarily to cure, what gives it that special power? How to understand its material basis? What makes it different from a poison, or a food?

These are some of the fundamental questions to the history of medicine, and driving ones for this course. Focusing on the history of drug culture, we will explore the complexity of drug materiality by contemplating the intimate relations between medicines, poisons, and foods. We will learn how the experiences of the body shaped the conceived values of medicines. We will examine the circulation of medical knowledge across social and geographical domains. One key aspect of the course is to introduce a comparative perspective to the study of medical history. By studying above topics in both Chinese and European contexts, we will identify surprising parallels, striking differences, and hidden connections between the two traditions. We will also see the formation and evolution of pharmacological ideas and practices within each tradition. And finally, we will ponder how medical knowledge in the past illuminates our notions and habits of ingesting and experiencing medicines here and now.

## Fall 2016

### Learning Outcomes:

The course aims to not just offer students the basic knowledge of the history of pharmacology, broadly defined, in China and Europe, but more importantly, help students develop important skills of conducting historical research and making exciting discoveries. The latter is manifested in three aspects. First, historical study is all about sources. Here you will learn how to read primary and secondary sources critically, identify meaningful connections between them, and express your ideas in class. Second, you will learn how to produce research papers by effective collection of sources, logical thinking, and compelling writing. Third, you will develop the skills of oral communication, by both participating in class discussion and presenting your research in a coherent and accessible manner.

### Requirements:

This is a weekly seminar course, and your attentive reading of the assignments and active participation in discussion are essential to your learning. In each week, one of you will be the discussion leader. You will give a short presentation (~15 minutes) on the theme of the week based on the assigned readings, summarizing the key arguments, and offering your critical thoughts on them. You are welcome to use a text, an object, an image, or a short video clip—either from the readings or from other sources related to the topic—as the springboard to lead the discussion. In addition, the course will open a discussion board on the Blackboard where you are encouraged to offer your reflections on the readings and share additional materials you find that could facilitate the discussion in class.

There are three short writing assignments (800-1000 words for each):

- Paper 1 is based on a piece of reading from Prelude. You will summarize it and offer your understanding of the piece that connects to the general theme of the course.
- Paper 2 is a primary source analysis. You will select a primary source from Part I, examine it in its historical context, and show its significance in medical history.
- Paper 3 is based on two readings from Part II that examine a topic in China and Europe respectively. You will analyze these readings and offer your comparative insight.

One key goal of the course is to promote active and collaborative learning as well as sharpen skills of presentation. In the “Thing Project,” you will be paired up and collectively work on a research project that centers around a thing in a broad sense—a historical substance, a museum object, a text, an image, etc. This material-oriented exercise seeks to formulate exciting questions and open new horizons in your historical analysis. You will present your discoveries in the last session of the course (Dec. 8) with the aid of PowerPoint or Keynote, and write a paper (about 2,000 words) based on your research.

### Course policies:

- Prepare well before you come to the class. Finish all required readings before class.
- Please submit your assignments on time. Late submission will incur a penalty of one-third a letter grade per day of lateness.
- 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 UB’s policies on plagiarism, please consult me or refer to <http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.html>

## Fall 2016

### Assessment:

- Discussion leading: 10%
- Three short papers: 10% each (due on Sept. 22, Oct. 13, and Nov. 3 respectively)
- Thing Project presentation (team work): 10% (presented on Dec. 8)
- Final paper: 20% (due on Dec. 15)
- Participation: 30%

### Books on course reserve:

- For a general survey of Chinese history:  
*The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, Patricia Ebrey, 1996
- For a general survey of the history of Chinese medicine:  
*Medicine in China, A History of Ideas*, Paul Unschuld, 1985

### Schedule:

Note: All readings are available on the course Blackboard. [P] refers to primary sources in English translation.

## PRELUDE

**Week 1** (Sept. 1): General introduction

**Week 2** (Sept. 8): What is a thing? Philosophical reflections

- Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?* 1967, pp1-54
- Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, 1987, Ch. 10, pp232-309

**Week 3** (Sept. 15): “Material Turn”: Historical reflections

- Igor Kopytoff, “The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process,” in Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, 1988, pp64-91
- Leora Auslander, “Beyond Words,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 4 (Oct. 2005), pp1015-1045
- Lorraine Daston, “The Coming into Being of Scientific Objects,” in *Biographies of Scientific Objects*, ed. Lorraine Daston, 2000, pp1-14

## PART I: Ambiguity of Things

**Week 4** (Sept. 22): Implications of *Pharmakon*

[Paper 1 due]

- Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, 1981, part I, pp63-119
- Paul Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Pharmaceutics*, 1986, pp1-28 (including [P])
- John Riddle, *Dioscorides on Pharmacy and Medicine*, 1985, “Introduction” & Ch. 2, “One Plant, One Chapter,” pp25-44, pp64-93

## Fall 2016

### Week 5 (Sept. 29): Power of Poisons

- John Parascandola, *King of Poisons: A History of Arsenic*, Ch. 5, “What Kills Can Cure: Arsenic in Medicine,” 2012, pp145-171
- Frédéric Obringer, “A Song innovation in pharmacotherapy: some remarks on the use of white arsenic and flowers of arsenic,” in *Innovation in Chinese Medicine*, ed. Elizabeth Hsu, 2001, pp192-213
- [P] Selections from *Bencao gangmu* (Compendium of *Materia Medica*) by Li Shizhen, trans. Paul Unschuld, in his *Medicine in China: A History of Pharmaceutics*, 1986, pp145-160
- [P] Selections from *De Materia Medica*, from “Corn poppy” to “Meadow saffron,” trans. Lily Beck, 2005, pp273-284

### Week 6 (Oct. 6): Foods for Thought

- Vivienne Lo, “Pleasure, Prohibition and Pain: Food and Medicine in China,” in *Of Tripod and Palate*, ed. Roel Sterckx, 2005, pp163-186
- David Gentilcore, *Pomodoro!: A History of the Tomato in Italy*, 2010, Ch. 1, “Strange and Horrible Things,” pp1-26
- Judith Farquhar, *Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-socialist China*, 2002, Ch. 1, “Medicinal Meals,” pp47-77
- [P] Selections from *Yinshan zhengyao* (Correct and Important Principles of Nutrition) by Hu Sihui, 14<sup>th</sup> century, trans. Paul Unschuld, in his *Medicine in China: A History of Pharmaceutics*, 1986, pp213-220

## PART II: Medicines and the Body

### Week 7 (Oct. 13): The body experienced

[Paper 2 due]

- Caroline Walker Bynum, “Fast, Feast, and Flesh: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women,” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan & Penny van Esterik, 2010, pp121-140
- Shigehisa Kuriyama, “The Forgotten Fear of Excrement,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38.3, 2008: pp413-442
- Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 1993, Ch. 6, “The Inner Landscape,” pp100-112
- [P] Selections from *Huangdi neijing suwen* (The Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic, Basic Questions) in Livia Kohn, *The Taoist Experience: An Anthology*, 1993, pp163-8

### Week 8 (Oct. 20): Alchemy and self-transformation

- Joseph Needham & Ho Peng-Yoke, “Elixir Poisoning in Medieval China,” *Janus*, 48, 1959: pp221-251
- Bruce Moran, *Distilling Knowledge: Alchemy, Chemistry, and the Scientific Revolution*, 2005, Ch. 3, “Paracelsus and the ‘Paracelsians,’” pp67-98
- [P] Selections from *Baopuzi neipian* (Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity, Inner Chapters) by Ge Hong, 4<sup>th</sup> century, in Livia Kohn, *The Taoist Experience: An Anthology*, 1993, pp305-313
- [P] Selections from Paracelsus’s alchemical writings in *Paracelsus Alchemy*, 2012

## Fall 2016

### Week 9 (Oct. 27): On taste and smell

- Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*, 1992, Ch. 4, "Tobacco: The Dry Inebriant," pp96-146
- Carol Benedict, *Golden-Silk Smoke: A History of Tobacco in China, 1550-2010*, 2011, Ch. 4, pp88-109
- India Mandelkern, "Taste-Based Medicine," *Gastronomica*, 2015, pp8-21
- Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination*, 2008, Ch. 3, pp76-103

## PART III: Medicines in Circulation

### Week 10 (Nov. 3): Medicines in local practice

[Paper 3 due]

- Katharine Park, "Country Medicine in the City Marketplace: Snakehandlers as Itinerant Healers," *Renaissance Studies*, 15.2, 2001: pp104-120
- Carla Nappi, "Surface Tension: Objectifying Ginseng in Chinese Early Modernity," in *Early Modern Things: Objects in Motion, 1500-1800*, ed. Paula Findlen, 2013, pp31-52
- Martin Booth, *Opium, A History*, 1999, Ch. 1 & 5
- Zheng Yangwen, *The Social Life of Opium in China*, 2005, Ch. 3 & 4, pp41-70

### Week 11 (Nov. 10): Women's medicines

- Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection*, 2010, Ch. II, pp77-120
- Alisha Rankin, *Panacea's Daughters: Noblenwomen as Healers in Early Modern Germany*, 2013, Ch. 3
- Yi-Li Wu, "Ghost Fetuses, False Pregnancies, and the Parameters of Medical Uncertainty in Classical Chinese Gynecology," *Nan Nu*, 4.2, 2002: pp170-206
- Susan L. Burns, "Marketing 'Women's Medicines': Gender, OTC Herbal Medicines and Medical Culture in Modern Japan," *Asian Medicine*, 5(2009): pp146-172

### Week 12 (Nov. 17): Global circulation of medicines

- Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination*, 2008, Ch. 2, pp50-75
- Erika Monahan, "Locating Rhubarb: Early Modernity's Relevant Obscurity," in *Early Modern Things: Objects in Motion, 1500-1800*, ed. Paula Findlen, 2013, pp227-251
- Shigehisa Kuriyama, "The Geography of Ginseng and the Strange Alchemy of Needs," in Yota Batsaki ed. *The Botany of Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century*, in press, pp61-72
- Carla Nappi, "Bolatu's Pharmacy: Theriac in Early Modern China," *Early Science and Medicine*, 14 (2009), pp737-764

Happy Thanksgiving!

## CODA

### Week 13 (Dec. 1): Rethinking medicines in our own world

- Arthur Shapiro & Elaine Shapiro, "The Placebo: Is it Much Ado about Nothing," in *The Placebo Effect: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*, ed. Anne Harrington, 1999, pp12-36
- E.N. Anderson Jr., "Why is Humoral medicine so popular?" *Social Science & Medicine*, 25.4, 1987: pp331-7

**Fall 2016**

- “How a bee sting saved my life: poison as medicine” in *Mosaic: The Science of Life*, Mar. 14, 2015
- Marta Hanson, “Is the 2015 Nobel Prize a turning point for traditional Chinese medicine?” *The Conversation*, Oct. 5, 2015
- “Q. and A.: Paul U. Unschuld on Reconciling Chinese and Western Medicine” in *New York Times*, Oct. 13, 2015

**Week 14** (Dec. 8): Project presentation

**Final paper due by 4:30 PM, Dec. 15**