COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course examines the history and culture of traditional China, from the beginning of recorded history, ca. 2000 BCE, through the early modern period, ca. 1600 CE. The class will address important topics such as the late Neolithic and Bronze Age foundations of Chinese civilization; Confucian, Daoist, and alternative schools of thought; the question of when China became "Chinese;" unification and creation of empire; the construction of imperial orthodoxy; the introduction and spread of Buddhism; the splendor and social tensions of commercialized urban centers; the development of the examination system as a method of bureaucratic recruitment; the increasing constriction of women’s social lives; the political and social significance of the Tang-Song “transition” (8th-12th c. CE); Pax Mongolica; cultural and trade relations across Eurasia; technological improvements and late imperial commercialization; Ming elite culture of consumption; and some of the continuities and transformations that mark modern China. Throughout the course we will trace the contributions of China’s on-going cultural, trade, and military interactions with its neighbors in defining an evolving sense of “Chinese” identity. History 281 is primarily a lecture course, but class discussion will be an integral part of the class.

AREA OF CONCENTRATION: Asia/Middle East

TEACHING METHOD: Lecture and discussion sections

EVALUATION METHOD: Analytical essay; mid-term and final exams; participation

GRADING BASIS: Student option

TENTATIVE READING LIST:
William T. de Bary, Sources of Chinese Tradition, 9780231109390.
Other course readings will be available on Canvas.

NOTES: Attendance at first class is mandatory

INSTRUCTOR PROFILE: Peter J. Carroll (PhD Yale, 1998) specializes in the social and cultural history of 19th and 20th century China. His research interests include urban history, Chinese modernism, popular and material culture, gender/sexuality, and nationalism. A two-time Fulbright recipient, he has also held fellowships with the Project on Cities and Urban Knowledges, International Center for Advanced Studies, New York University; the Library of Congress’s John W. Kluge Center; and the Centers for Chinese Studies at the National Central Library, Taipei, Taiwan, and at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition, he has been a visiting scholar at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica. He is the author of Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895-1937 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), which was awarded the Best Book (Non-North American) 2007 prize by the Urban History Association, and several scholarly articles. He is currently working on a book project on suicide and ideas of modern society in China during the first half of the 20th century.