

■ **ARHS 530: Art and Politics in China**

Elizabeth Kindall

Tuesdays, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

"There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics." Mao Zedong

From the oracle bones of the thirteenth century BCE Shang dynasty to the twenty-first century Beijing Olympics of the People's Republic of China, the political beliefs, struggles, and motivations of the people of China have been evident in their material culture. This course will focus upon select examples of politically motivated art and artistic manifestations of politics in traditional and modern Chinese history.

Some of the questions we will pose include: How do the bronze, jade, and ceramic tomb goods of the early royal burials of the Shang, Zhou, and Qin dynasties express the political present and heavily officiated afterworld? What do the regional political statements evinced by the bronze sculpture of Sichuan and Yunnan suggest about the 'center' versus 'peripheral' status of minority peoples in the Han dynasty? Do the recently rediscovered inscriptions and programs at the Buddhist cave-shrines of Longmen and Dunhuang align with previous interpretations of their religio-political goals in the Tang dynasty? How did the production, presentation, and style of Song dynasty court academy painting function politically? Why did the Song and Yuan literati express their political dissent in painting? How was style 'politicized' in the Ming and Qing dynasties? Is the artistic tradition of the Communist Party relevant in modern China?

In these case studies, we will compare early Chinese Marxist and post-war western discussions of these issues with their most recent counterparts. Students are not expected to have a background in Chinese studies. All readings will be in English.

This course fulfills the Non-Western Art core requirement.

Background Reading:

Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).