Religious Studies 726
Topics in Chinese Religions:
Health, Healing, and Medicine in Chinese Religions
McMaster University, Term II 2019–20
[last revised: January 2, 2020]

University Hall B130
Tuesdays 10:30–12:30pm

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Office hours—Mondays, 11:30–12:30, or by appointment

Course Description
In this seminar we will examine representations of health and accounts of disease in a variety of Chinese religions. We will explore the various vectors of disease, including the so-called “winds” and various types of demonic infestation. We will identify modes of healing that employ therapies such as mineral, animal, and vegetable drugs, exorcism, talismans and spells, acupuncture, moxibustion, massage, breath control, and gymnastics. The course will focus primarily, but not exclusively, on the medieval period.

All readings for this seminar are in English.

Students will be introduced to the use of specialised research tools for the study of Chinese religions, such as dictionaries, concordances, indices and databases.

During 2020 Term II this class will run in conjunction with “Introduction to Literary Chinese” 6YO6 (day and time to be confirmed). In the Chinese class we will read primary texts related to the topics under discussion.

Course Requirements
You should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. I will assign one person to lead the discussion of each reading (NB. “discussion” does not mean “summary”). The other requirement is a 20–25 page research paper which will be due on April 21st. You must turn in a proposal and annotated bibliography for that paper on February 4th. A first draft of the paper is due on March 17th. You will give an oral presentation of your research on April 7th.

Class presentations and participation: 20%
Seminar Paper: 80%
Books and other resources

I have ordered copies of the following books from Titles and/or placed them on reserve in the library:


In addition to these books we shall also read articles and book chapters that I may distribute to you electronically, or which I may ask you to photocopy.

You should be familiar with the following important online resources:

- http://www.earlymedievalchinagroup.org/
  Note under “Resources” the maps and timeline of early medieval East Asia.
- International Dunhuang Project, Section on “Medicine on the Silk Road”
  http://idp.bl.uk/4DCGI/education/medicine/index.a4d#Introduction

**NB.** You should also know that you have unlimited access through McMaster’s libraries to important online dictionaries for East Asian and Buddhist terms: [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/)

1. Tuesday, January 7
   Introduction and Organisation

2. Tuesday, January 14
   The Basics: What’s different about Chinese concepts of health, healing, and wellness?
   *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine.*

3. Tuesday, January 21
   The Chinese Medical Body, Diagnosis, and Treatment

4. Tuesday, January 28
   History of Chinese Medicine I

5. Tuesday, February 4
   ***Proposal and annotated bibliography due***
   History of Chinese Medicine II
6. Tuesday, February 11
Health, Healing and Medicine in Chinese History, Shang to Han
Sivin, Nathan. “State, Cosmos, and Body in the Last Three Centuries B.C.” Harvard Journal
   of Asiatic Studies 55, no. 1 (June 1, 1995): 5–37.

7. Tuesday, February 18
No meeting—midterm recess

8. Tuesday, February 25
Evidence from Mawangdui

9. Tuesday, March 3
Daoism, Medicine, Healing
   Medicine in China, 101–131
   Chinese Magical Medicine, 1–57
   Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China.”

10. Tuesday, March 10
Evidence from Dunhuang
   Lo, Vivienne, and Christopher Cullen, eds. 2005. Medieval Chinese Medicine: the

11. Tuesday, March 17
***First Draft of Paper due***
Demonic attack and Gu poisoning
   Chinese Magical Medicine 58–193
   Groot, J. J. M. de. 1892. The religious system of China, its ancient forms, evolution,
   history and present aspect, manners, customs and social institutions
12. Tuesday, March 24

Buddhist Medicine


13. Tuesday, March 31

Dietetics, Drugs and Gymnastics


14. Tuesday, April 7

Research Presentations