

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Subject Description Form

Please read the notes at the end of the table carefully before completing the form.

Subject Code	CLC2AN01N
Subject Title	History and Culture of Chinese Characters: A Perspective from World Writing Systems 漢字的歷史與文化：世界文字視角
Credit Value	3
Level	2
Pre-requisite/ Co-requisite/ Exclusion	None
Objectives	This subject aims to provide learners with an overview of the historical and cultural aspects of Chinese characters which represent a unique writing with reference to world writing systems. Through understanding of their origins, developments, variations and changes in forms, unification and simplification, it is expected that students' knowledge in the Chinese Characters can be enhanced and they can make better judgments and more appropriate applications of such knowledge in exploring thousands of characters used in their daily life. Students will also be challenged with questions such as the comparison between different forms of Chinese characters in ancient dynasties, debate involved in simplification, revolution, and Romanization of the Chinese characters etc., which would require their critical analysis of issues from historical, social and cultural perspectives.
Intended Learning Outcomes (Note 1)	Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to: a. have an enhanced understanding of the historical and cultural perspective of Chinese characters in relation to world writing systems; b. cultivate a critical thinking on Chinese characters' meanings and developments; c. appreciate Chinese history and culture for cultivating a sense of belonging towards the country and a sense of national identity; d. have a better understanding of the Chinese characters today and in the future; e. apply the knowledge in understanding daily life Chinese characters in a deeper sense.

Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus (Note 2)	• <u>Chinese characters among world writing systems: An Overview</u> A brief introduction to the history of world writing and its ancient origins such as Egyptian hieroglyphs, Sumerian cuneiform, etc. Compare the differences among the most widely used writing systems in the modern world including Latin alphabet, Cyrillic alphabet, Arabic alphabet and Chinese characters, highlighting the facts that Chinese characters are the existing writing system with the oldest origin, and the key features including logogram, heteronym, and homophone. Factors for its longevity will also be discussed. • <u>The Evolution and Structure of Chinese Characters.</u> Introduce the origin and “characterization” of Chinese characters, and how they developed from symbols to characters. Criticize the different stories on Chinese characters. Explore how Chinese characters evolved from oracle bone script, bronze inscriptions, seal script, clerical script to the present form, and the role of historical, cultural, and political factors in this process. Scrutinize different theories about the structure of Chinese characters. • <u>Cultural Influences: Chinese Characters in the world.</u> Evaluate the impact of Chinese characters to other scripts through times, especially its dissemination in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, ethnic minorities and those occurred in the history including Khitan, Jurchen and Tangut scripts. • <u>Arts and Culture: Seal Carving</u> Appreciate and analyze a series of featured seal carvings, find out the cultural significance of Chinese characters. • <u>Literature and Culture: Calligraphy</u> Appreciate and analyze a series of featured calligraphies, e.g. works of <i>Wang Xizhi</i> 王羲之, <i>Ouyang Xun</i> 歐陽詢, <i>Yan Zhenqing</i> 顏真卿, and <i>Su Shi</i> 蘇軾. Find out the cultural significance of Chinese characters. • <u>Simplified or Traditional: Contemporary Chinese characters</u> Review the evolution and reform of Chinese characters in 20th century, compare the differences between simplified and traditional Chinese characters. Debate on the necessity of simplification. • <u>The future of Chinese Characters.</u> The feasibility of Romanization under globalization will be discussed. Challenges that Chinese characters should overcome under the digital world will also be discussed.
Teaching/Learning Methodology (Note 3)	Flipped classroom and inquiry-based learning approach will be adopted: - Pre-class activities that introduce students to a topic through self-learning materials, such as reading assignments; - A mechanism to check students' understanding of pre-class learning materials, such as tutorial worksheets, Q&A sessions, and discussion boards (Blackboard or Padlet); - In-class active learning activities that focus on application or deeper learning, such as preparing group presentations and tutorial worksheets. - In-class learning activities focus on cultivating inquiry-based learning skills, such as debates, discussions, text analysis, creative design of Chinese characters, and deciphering ancient scripts. Assignments are closely related to the analysis and use of Chinese characters and thus students are strongly encouraged to explore Chinese characters' historical and cultural context in their daily life.

Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes

(Note 4)

Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)				
		a	b	c	d	e
1.exercises/assignments	30%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. pre-class activities and tutorial performance	10%	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3. group presentation	20%	✓	✓	✓		✓
4. Short articles	40%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total	100 %					

Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:

This subject aims to provide learners with an overview of the historical and cultural aspects of Chinese characters. Topics covered vary from origin of Chinese characters, development in different dynasties, variations in different countries, unification and standardization, seal carving, calligraphy, simplification, influences, and challenges.

Exercises or small assignments will be designed to cultivate students' knowledge aesthetic on Chinese characters. The following are few examples of the topics to be covered by the assignments:

1. Handwriting: small seal 小篆 characters from an ancient manuscript.



2. Discussion on why and how the changes from oracle bone inscriptions 甲骨文 to *Kaishu* 楷書.
3. Criticize the pros and cons of character simplification motion from cultural, social and historical perspectives

Tutorials will be focused on assigned topics and articles from selected books. Pre-class activities will also include relevant multimedia learning content wherever appropriate.

Towards the end of the study period, students will be required to write short articles containing in-depth discussion of the historical and cultural aspects of selected Chinese characters. These work would require students to make use of the knowledge learnt in this subject and to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Students may use GenAI in assessment unless they have been told otherwise before the assessment. The work submitted for assessment must be students' own work. The submitted work may not be accepted for the purpose of assessment if its authenticity is questionable. Third-party materials (included AI-generated materials) used in the work must be properly referenced. Submitting third-party materials as their own work is an act of academic dishonesty and will lead to disciplinary actions.

	Departments and subject teachers have the discretion to request students to make an honour declaration for the authenticity of the work they submit for assessment.		
Student Study Effort Expected	Class contact:		
	▪ Lectures: 2 x 13	26 Hrs.	
	▪ Tutorials: 1 x 13	13 Hrs.	
	Other student study effort:		
	▪ Assignments	40 Hrs.	
	▪ Pre-class activities (including reading and viewing multimedia materials)	30 Hrs.	
	Total student study effort	109 Hrs.	
Reading List and References	Required readings and multimedia materials: 1. 裘錫圭（1988）《文字學概要》。北京：商務印書館。 2. 《中國通史》：中國發現神秘甲骨文字 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hnGkXuGTl4 3. 【藝術欣賞101】第十一集 — 中國書法多面睇 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSMqW9t-vLA 4. 【藝術欣賞101】第十二集 — 香港城市中的書法 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BdTVTLzjMk Other references: 5. 白川靜著，溫天河、蔡哲茂譯（1977）《甲骨文的世界》。臺北：巨流圖書公司。 6. 段玉裁（1981）《說文解字注》。上海：上海古籍出版社。 7. 葛亮（2022）《漢字再發現：從舊識到新知》。上海：上海書畫出版社。 8. 《漢字五千年》編委會（2013）《漢字五千年》。香港：三聯書店。 9. 黃德寬（2017）《書同文字：漢字與中國文化》。香港：中華書局。 10. 李家樹、吳長和（2005）《漢字的演變和發展趨向》。香港：香港大學出版社。 11. 林西莉（2008）《漢字王國》。北京：三聯書店。 12. 饒宗頤（1998）《符號・初文與字母：漢字樹》。香港：商務印書館。王寧（2019）《漢字與中國文化十講》。香港：三聯書店。 13. 蘇培成（2014）《現代漢字學綱要》。北京：商務印書館。 14. 周有光（1997）《世界文字發展史》，上海：上海教育出版社。		

	15. 周有光（1998）《比較文字學初探》，北京：語文出版社。 16. 竺家寧（1998）《中國的語言和文字》。臺北：臺灣書店。 17. 《漢典》： https://www.zdic.net/ 18. 《漢語多功能字庫》 https://humanum.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/Lexis/lexi- mf/ 19. 《書法字典》 http://www.shufazidian.com/ 20. 《小學堂》 http://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ 21. 《異體字字典》 http://dict.variants.moe.edu.tw/variants/rbt/home.do 22. 《古音小鏡・歷史語言學》 http://www.kaom.net/
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Note 1: Intended Learning Outcomes

Intended learning outcomes should state what students should be able to do or attain upon subject completion. Subject outcomes are expected to contribute to the attainment of the overall programme outcomes.

Note 2: Subject Synopsis/Indicative Syllabus

The syllabus should adequately address the intended learning outcomes. At the same time, overcrowding of the syllabus should be avoided.

Note 3: Teaching/Learning Methodology

This section should include a brief description of the teaching and learning methods to be employed to facilitate learning, and a justification of how the methods are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the subject.

Note 4: Assessment Method

This section should include the assessment method(s) to be used and its relative weighting, and indicate which of the subject intended learning outcomes that each method is intended to assess. It should also provide a brief explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes.

(Form AR 140) 8.