

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	CLC2M01M
Subject Title	History and Culture in Chinese Characters 漢字中的歷史與文化
Credit Value	3
Level	2
Pre-requisite/ Co-requisite/ Exclusion	<p>Pre-requisite:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students who have completed CLC2151 Chinese III (for non-Chinese speaking students); or 2. Non-Chinese speaking students with fundamental knowledge in Chinese characters as determined by their entry assessment. <p>Exclusion: CLC2M01P History and Culture in Chinese Characters and CLC2CM01 History and Culture in Chinese Characters</p>
Objectives	<p>This subject aims to provide learners with an overview of the historical and cultural aspects of Chinese characters which represent a unique writing system different from most existing ones. 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 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.</p>
Intended Learning Outcomes <i>(Note 1)</i>	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. have an enhanced understanding of the historical and cultural perspective of Chinese characters which will in turn enhance their understanding of the Chinese history and culture; b. cultivate 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;

<p>Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus</p> <p>(Note 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Chinese characters among world writing systems: An Overview</u> A brief introduction to different writing systems in the world. Compare their differences. Highlight the facts that Chinese characters are the existing writing system with the oldest origin, and that the key features include logogram, heteronym, and homophone. Factors for its longevity will also be discussed. • <u>Legend or Truth: Chinese characters in the Xia and Shang dynasties.</u> Introduce the origin and “characterization” of Chinese characters, and how they developed from symbols to characters. Criticize the different stories on Chinese characters. • <u>War, Sacrifice, and Divine: Chinese characters in the Shang and Zhou dynasties.</u> Explore the cultural aspect of Chinese characters, how they connected with war, sacrifice, and divine in early China. Oracle bones and bronze inscriptions will be scrutinized. • <u>Countries and Clans: Chinese characters in the Warring States Period.</u> Investigate the different forms of Chinese characters in Warring States, and how they reflected <i>Qi</i> 齊, <i>Yan</i> 燕, <i>Jin</i> 晉, <i>Chu</i> 楚, and <i>Qin</i> 秦 people’s thoughts. • <u>Unification and Standardization: Chinese characters in the Qin and Han dynasties.</u> Examine the political significance of unification and standardization in medieval China, and how they laid the foundation for today’s Chinese characters. • <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 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. Different forms of literature that make use of the special features of Chinese characters will be introduced, for example, palindrome poetry and couplets. • <u>Simplified or Traditional: Contemporary Chinese characters</u> Review the evolution and reform of Chinese characters in the 20th century, compare the differences between simplified and traditional Chinese characters. Debate on the necessity of simplification. • <u>Cultural Influences: Chinese Characters in the world.</u> Evaluate the impact of Chinese characters throughout times, especially its dissemination in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, ethnic minorities and other countries. • <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.
<p>Teaching/Learning Methodology</p> <p>(Note 3)</p>	<p>Inquiry-based learning approach will be adopted. Besides face-to-face lectures and tutorials, discussions via Blackboard or Padlet and web-based study materials will be used. 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.</p>

**Assessment Methods
in Alignment with
Intended Learning
Outcomes**

(Note 4)

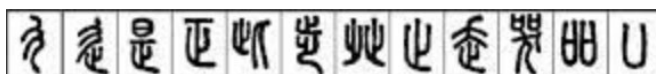
Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)				
		a	b	c	d	e
1. exercises/assignments	25%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. tutorial discussion	25%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. project/essay	50%	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total	100%					

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: 540 small seal 小篆 radicals from ancient dictionary Shuowenjiezi 說文解字.



2. Discussion on why and how oracle bone inscriptions 甲骨文 changed to Kaishu 楷書.
3. Understand 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.

Towards the end of the study period, students will be required to conduct a project on exploring the historical and/or cultural issues of Chinese characters, or to write a 1500-word essay containing an in-depth discussion of the historical and cultural aspects of selected Chinese characters, for example, students' own Chinese names. This final piece of 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.

All the assessments will use a letter-grading system.

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.
	▪ Reading	30 Hrs.
	Total student study effort	109 Hrs.
Reading List and References	References: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boltz, William G. Early Chinese Writing. <i>World Archaeology</i>. 17 (3): 420–436, 1986. 2. Boltz, William G. <i>The origin and early development of the Chinese writing system</i>. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1994. 3. Keightley, David. <i>Sources of Shang history: the oracle-bone inscriptions of bronze-age China</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. 4. Keightley, David. Art, Ancestors, and the Origins of Writing in China. <i>Representations</i>. 56 (56): 68–95, 1996. 5. Lindqvist, Cecilia. <i>China, empire of the written symbol</i>. Hammersmith, London: Harvill, 1991. 6. Loewe, Michael. <i>Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographic Guide</i>. Society for the Study of Early China, 1993. 7. Qiu, Xigui. <i>Chinese writing</i>. Translated by Gilbert L. Mattos; Jerry Norman. Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2000. 8. Shaughnessy, Edward, L. <i>A Brief History of Ancient China</i>. Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 9. Wu, Jianhsin. <i>The Way of Chinese Characters</i>. 2nd Edition. Cheng & Tsui, 2015. 10. Zhou, Youguang. <i>The Historical Evolution of Chinese Languages and Scripts</i>. Translated by Zhang Liqing. Columbus: National East Asian Languages Resource Center, Ohio State University, 2003. 11. 《漢典》 ZDIC https://www.zdic.net/ 12. 《漢語多功能字庫》 Multi-function Chinese character database https://humanum.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/Lexis/lexi-mf/ 13. 《書法字典》 Shufazidian http://www.shufazidian.com/ 14. 《小學堂》 Xiaoxuetang http://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/ 15. 《異體字字典》 Dictionary of Chinese character variants http://dict.variants.moe.edu.tw/variants/rbt/home.do 	

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) 8.2020