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Office hours MonWed 12.30-1.30 and by appointment

Sophomore Dialogue  
**Rome, Europe, and China:  
Convergence and Divergence**  
Winter Quarter 2007

First meeting: Wednesday January 10, 2.15 pm, 260-311A  
Subsequent dates, times, and location to be determined

This course introduces participants to one of the biggest questions in human history: why did Europe, after the fall of the Roman empire, experience 1,500 years of political fragmentation while China has mostly managed to maintain long-term unity since the third century BC, and why does this matter even to us today? In order to address this question, the course focuses on three elements: (1) the initial convergence of eastern and western Eurasia, with the gradual consolidation of Warring States in the Mediterranean and in China into two very large empires of roughly equal size (the Roman and Han empires); (2) the early stages of the subsequent divergence of the two trajectories of state formation between increasing fragmentation in the West in the Middle Ages leading up to the emergence of modern nation states on the one hand and periodic re-unification in the East up to the present day on the other; and (3) the probable consequences of this divergence for the development of the modern world, characterized by a period of western dominance and current globalization (for instance, was fragmentation more conducive to modern development than universal empire?).

These are all very big issues and can be touched on only very selectively. This gives the class a great deal of flexibility because it can be fine-tuned according to the specific interests and prior knowledge of the participants. This course grows out of a current research project (the Stanford Ancient and Mediterranean Empires Comparative History Project, [www.stanford.edu/scheidel/acme.htm](http://www.stanford.edu/scheidel/acme.htm)) which seeks to promote the comparative study of Rome and early China. The underlying project is very much work in progress: we are in the midst of a series of conferences, the first of a number of edited volumes is currently being prepared for publication, and in 2007/8 we will run a year-long Sawyer-Mellon seminar on the topic of the First Great Divergence between East and West in the early Middle Ages. In this context, this course allows undergraduates to acquaint themselves with, and participate in, ongoing cross-cultural research by Stanford faculty. We will read and discuss some key texts, review work in progress, and discuss the methodology and relevance of comparative historical research.

Some background knowledge of the history of early empires is desirable but not essential: preference will be given to students who attended last year's IHUM sequence on *Ancient Empires*, and this Dialogue will develop some of the central themes of that course.

### **Suggested readings**

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (Norton 1999)  
Ray Huang, *China: A Macro History* (Sharpe 1997)  
Samuel Adshead, *China in World History* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Palgrave 2000)  
Samuel Adshead, *T'ang China: The Rise of the East in World History* (Palgrave 2004)  
David Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900* (Routledge 2002)  
Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press 2005)  
Chris Wickham, *The Framing of the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford University Press 2005)  
Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton University Press 2000), and critiques  
Eric Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Cambridge University Press 2003)  
Unpublished forthcoming work by Stanford faculty

### **Course requirements**

Active participation in discussion; to be determined depending on number and interests of participants.