

A blue and white ceramic pattern featuring a dragon and lotus flowers. The dragon is depicted in a dynamic, coiled pose, surrounded by stylized lotus leaves and flowers. The pattern is set against a light background, typical of traditional Chinese porcelain.

DRAGON AND LOTUS

Chinese Visual and Material Culture

ASTA4600, SPRING 2020

Tu/Th 2:00-3:15pm

Visual and material culture played a pivotal role in the development of Chinese history. It not only translated social relations, political agenda, and religious belief into pictorial and tangible forms, but also actively shaped and even defined the Chinese culture. This course, focusing the visual and material culture of China from the prehistoric to the medieval period, is to interrogate the dynamics between art, politics, and rituals. Each week we will examine selected masterpieces in decorated pottery, engraved jade, cast bronze, stone sculpture, woven textile, gold and silver. We will investigate the production, circulation, transmission, and reception of the artworks to reconstruct the social life of things against its historical background. Lastly, we will highlight three of the most prominent motifs in Chinese art—animals, flowers, and human forms—as case studies to illustrate how similar patterns were interpreted via different mediums, used in different contexts, and articulated different social relations throughout the Chinese history.

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