

## Encounters: A Vehicle for Training the Imagination

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What is a historical encounter?

- a role play/simulation immersing students in a period/problem
- an activity which helps to train the historical imagination
- an opportunity to synthesize information, develop empathy

instructional objectives

- developing dispositions associated with effective thinking
  - interest in the sources of attitudes, beliefs, values, and actions
  - sensitivity to problems and issues becoming comfortable with novelty
- developing habits and skills associated with producing and evaluating ideas
  - define problems and issues
  - ability to shift perspectives
  - ability to locate, assimilate, and synthesize information
  - ability to articulate a position/interact with others
  - expressing different views
  - offering evidence/judging evidence
  - ability to distinguish between positions
  - skill in recognizing and evaluating unstated assumptions

applicability to other courses

engineering encounters

- more difficult than lecturing, requires becoming a coach
- early integration into the course
- providing sufficient background and resources
- modelling immersion

reviewing and evaluating encounters

- balancing encouragement and insistence on intellectual rigor
- focus on the quality of the contribution and on the quality of attention given the contributions of others
- incorporate encounters into research and writing assignments

My syllabi usually contain a version of this paragraph introducing the encounter component of the course: Encounters permit you the opportunity to embrace the period and people we are studying. You employ the insights you've drawn from the lectures, reading, discussions, and films to "get into" your assigned character. Our goal is to explore the social and cultural norms and the political and economic structures which guided thought and behavior. You should seek to express, as fully and accurately as possible, the ideas and feelings of your character. You'll also need to be familiar with background and ideas of other characters in the encounter and will need to respond appropriately to their comments and questions. Use the materials in your readings and from the volumes suggested in the syllabus to prepare for these historical workouts. You are evaluated on how convincing you are in your role.

## **Encounter: Can We Save the Empire? Should We Save the Empire?**

The Qing Empire and its peoples face critical choices. Foreign powers have invaded, forcing us to permit them to live amongst us along our coast, promoting their beliefs, sullyng our empire. Rebellions have raged in different places, driven by different forces but always challenging Qing rule and producing instability. How are we to cope? What can and should be done?

For the purposes of this discussion, we'll compress the period 1860-1910 and bring together groups that arose in different places and situations to discuss how to deal with the external and internal threats. What are the most pressing issues? How can they be dealt with? What changes are needed to ensure survival?

Ci Xi, the Empress Dowager (Tz'u Hsi 慈禧, 1835-1908) will preside over the discussion. Three groups will participate, each with their own assessment of our challenges and how best to cope with them.

Leaders of the groups:

Li Hongzhang (Li Hung-chang 李鴻章, 1823-1901)

Kang Youwei (K'ang Yu-wei 康有為, 1858-1927)

Qiu Jin (Ch'iu Chin 秋瑾, 1875-1907)

Members of the groups should examine the ideas and actions of the “self-strengtheners,” “reformers,” and “rebels.” Each person needs to invent her own past and social place and to argue from those experiences and positions. Some may wish to channel other prominent figures from the three camps (e.g., Zeng Guofan, Yung Wing (Rong Hong), Zuo Zongtang, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, Sun Yat-sen, Huang Xing, and Song Jiaoren).

**Recommended Resources** Some are provided in the discussion forum. Some of the materials below are full journal articles (>20 pages each). You aren't expected to read the entire articles, but they can give you greater depth on some of the revolutionaries and reformers. You might just take a few minutes to look at them and pull out what you can.

(read about the ideas espoused by the three contending groups, remember that it is vital to understand your opponents if you are to challenge them effectively)

Ebrey, Patricia Buckley, ed. *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook, Second Edition*. New York: The Free Press, 1993.

De Bary, William Theodore and Richard Lufrano, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume 2: From 1600 through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Second Edition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Chen, Janet, Pei-kai Cheng, Michael Lestz and Jonathan Spence, eds. *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection, Third Edition*. New York: Norton, 2013.