

Curriculum Vitae

Michael James Puett

Department of East Languages and Civilizations
Harvard University
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Employment

- 2011- Walter C. Klein Professor of Chinese History
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University
- 2002 – 2011: Professor of Chinese History
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University
- 1998 - 2002: John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Humanities
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University
- 1994 - 1998: Assistant Professor of Early Chinese History
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University

Education

- 1986-1994 University of Chicago
September, 1994: awarded Ph.D.
December, 1987: awarded M.A.
Advisor: Marshall Sahlins
- 1993-94 Department of Chinese Studies
Beijing University
Beijing, China
(Dissertation Research)

Administrative Positions at Harvard University

- 2012-2015: Chair,
Committee on the Study of Religion
- Spring, 2013: Acting Director,
Asia Center

- 2010-2011: Chair,
Committee on the Study of Religion
- Spring, 2011: Acting Chair,
Regional Studies – East Asia
- 2005-2008: Chair,
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations
- 2004-2005: Director of Graduate Studies,
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations
- 1998-2000: Director of Graduate Studies,
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations

Affiliations

Member of the following departments and committees at Harvard University:

Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations
Standing Committee for the Study of Religion
Standing Committee on History and East Asian Languages
Standing Committee on Inner Asian and Altaic Studies
Standing Committee on Folklore and Mythology
Standing Committee on Ethnicity, Migration, Rights
Standing Committee on Archaeology

Professional Activities

- 2010-2011: Chair,
Pre-1900 Joseph Levenson Prize Committee
- 2005-2008: President,
Society for the Study of Chinese Religions
- 2007-2008: Chair,
China and Inner Asia Council
Association for Asian Studies
- 2005-2008: Co-chair,
Confucian Traditions Group
American Academy of Religion

Serving on the editorial boards of:

Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies
Journal of Chinese Religions
HAU

Honors and Awards

- 2013 Harvard College Professor for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching
- 2013 Star Family Prize for Excellence in Advising
- 2008 Joseph R. Levenson Memorial Teaching Prize
- 2003 Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation Senior Scholar Grant
- 2002 Harvard University Graduate Student Council
Everett Mendelsohn Excellence in Mentoring Award
- 1996 American Council of Learned Societies
Funding to organize the workshop, "Approaches to Understanding
Sima Qian's Shiji."
- 1995 Marc Galler Prize for Best Dissertation
University of Chicago
- 1993-94 National Program for Advanced Study and Research in China
Committee on Scholarly Communication with China
- 1992-93 Center for East Asian Studies Dissertation Writing Grant
University of Chicago
- 1992 National Resource Summer Fellowship
- 1986-92 Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities
The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Visiting Appointments

- 2013- Non-resident Long-term Fellow for Programmes in
Anthropological and Historical Sciences
and the Languages and Civilizations of East Asia
Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study
Uppsala, Sweden
- 2012- Senior Adviser
Bernhard Karlgren Programme
Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study
Uppsala, Sweden
- 2012 Visiting Professor
École Normale Supérieure de Lyon
Lyon, France

- 2012 Visiting Professor
Nanyang Technological University
Singapore
- 2011 Visiting Fellow
International Research Consortium for Research in the Humanities
Fate, Freedom and Prognostication in East Asia and Europe
Erlangen, Germany
- 2009 Senior Research Fellowship
Max Planck Institute for the History of Science
Berlin, Germany
- 2008 Bernhard Karlgren Distinguished Visiting Professorship
Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study
Uppsala, Sweden

Publications

Books:

Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity. Co-authored with Robert Weller, Adam Seligman, and Bennett Simon. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.)

To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China. (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002.)

The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.)

The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China. Co-edited with Sarah A. Queen. (Leiden: Brill, 2014.)

Narrative, Authorship, and Historiography: Studies on Sima Qian's Shiji (Records of the Historian), editor. (Forthcoming from the State University of New York Press.)

Articles and Reviews:

“Ritual and Ritual Obligations: Perspectives on Normativity from Classical China.” The Journal of Value Inquiry 49.4 (2015): 543-550

“Constructions of Reality: Metaphysics in the Ritual Traditions of Classical China.” Chinese Metaphysics and its Problems. Edited by Li Chenyang and Franklin Perkins. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 120-129.

- “Ghosts, Gods, and the Coming Apocalypse: Empire and Religion in Early China and Ancient Rome.” State Power in Ancient China and Rome. Edited by Walter Scheidel. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 230-259.
- “Ritual Disjunctions: Ghosts, Philosophy, and Anthropology.” The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy. Edited by Veena Das, Michael Jackson, Arthur Kleinman, Bhrigupati Singh. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 218-233.
- “Sages, Creation, and the End of History in the Huainanzi.” The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China. Edited by Sarah A. Queen and Michael Puett. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 269-290.
- “Introduction,” by Sarah A. Queen and Michael Puett. The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China. Edited by Sarah A. Queen and Michael Puett. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 1-19.
- “Classical Chinese Historical Thought.” A Companion to Global Historical Thought. Edited by Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp. 34-46.
- “Critical Approaches to Religion in China.” Critical Research on Religion. 1 (2013): 95-101.
- “Economies of Ghosts, Gods, and Goods: The History and Anthropology of Chinese Temple Networks.” Radical Egalitarianism: Local Realities, Global Relations. Edited by Michael M. J. Fischer, Felicity Aulino, Miriam Goheen and Stanley J. Tambiah. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 91-100.
- “Introduction to the English Edition.” The History of Chinese Civilization, Volume I: Earliest Times - 221 B.C.E. Edited by Yan Wenming. English text edited by David Knechtges. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 31-38.
- “Social Order or Social Chaos.” The Cambridge Companion to Religious Studies. Edited by Robert A. Orsi. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 109-129.
- “Sages, the Past, and the Dead: Death in the Huainanzi.” Mortality in Traditional Chinese Thought. Edited by Amy Olberding and Philip J. Ivanhoe. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), pp. 225-248.
- “Theodicies of Discontinuity: Domesticating Energies and Dispositions in Early China.” Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 37, Supplement 1 (December 2010): 51-66.
- “Ritualization as Domestication: Ritual Theory from Classical China.” Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual, Volume I: Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia. Edited by Axel Michaels, Anand Mishra, Lucia Dolce, Gil Raz, and Katja Triplett. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), pp. 365-376.
- “The Haunted World of Humanity: Ritual Theory from Early China.” Rethinking the Human. Edited by J. Michelle Molina and Donald K. Swearer, with Susan Lloyd McGarry. (Cambridge: Center for the Study of World Religions, 2010), pp. 95-111.
- “Becoming Laozi: Cultivating and Visualizing Spirits in Early Medieval China.” Asia Major, Third series, 23.1 (2010): 223-252.

- “Centering the Realm: Wang Mang, the Zhouli, and Early Chinese Statecraft.” Statecraft and Classical Learning: The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History. Edited by Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern. (Leiden: Brill, 2010.) Pages 129-154.
- “Sages, Gods, and History: Commentarial Strategies in Chinese Late Antiquity,” Antiquorum Philosophia 3 (2009): 71-87.
- “Combining the Ghosts and Spirits, Centering the Realm: Mortuary Ritual and Political Organization in the Ritual Compendia of Early China.” Early Chinese Religion: Shang Through Han (1250 BC-220 AD). Edited by John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski. (Leiden: Brill, 2009). Pages 695-720.
- “The Belatedness of the Present: Debates over Antiquity during the Han Dynasty.” Perceptions of Antiquity in Chinese Civilization. Edited by Dieter Kuhn and Helga Stahl. (Heidelberg: Würzburger Sinologische Schriften, 2008). Pages 177-190.
- “Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections.” Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond. Edited by Nicole Brisch. (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008.) Pages 199-212.
- “The Temptations of Sagehood, or: The Rise and Decline of Sagely Writing in Early China.” Books in Numbers. Edited by Wilt Idema. (Cambridge: Harvard-Yenching Library, 2007.) Pages 23-47.
- “Humans, Spirits, and Sages in Chinese Late Antiquity: Ge Hong’s Master Who Embraces Simplicity (Baopuzi).” Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident 29 (2007): 95-119.
- “Listening to Sages: Divination, Omens, and the Rhetoric of Antiquity in Wang Chong’s Lunheng.” Oriens Extremus 45 (2005-2006): 271-281.
- “Innovation as Ritualization: The Fractured Cosmology of Early China.” Cardozo Law Review 28.1 (October 2006): 23-36.
- “The Offering of Food and the Creation of Order: The Practice of Sacrifice in Early China.” Of Tripod and Palate: Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China. Edited by Roel Sterckx. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.) Pages 75-95.
- “Bones.” Encyclopedia of Religion, second edition. Edited by Lindsay Jones. (New York: MacMillan Reference Books, 2005.) Pages 1013-1016.
- “Forming Spirits for the Way: The Cosmology of the Xiang’er Commentary to the Laozi.” Journal of Chinese Religions 32 (2004): 1-27.
- “Following the Commands of Heaven: The Notion of Ming in Early China.” The Magnitude of Ming: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture. Edited by Christopher Lupke. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005.) Pages 49-69.
- “The Ascension of the Spirit: Toward a Cultural History of Self-Divinization Movements in Early China.” Religion and Chinese Society. Edited by John Lagerwey. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2004.) Pages 193-222.

- “The Ethics of Responding Properly: The Notion of Qing in Early Chinese Thought.” Love and Emotions in Traditional Chinese Literature. Edited by Halvor Eifring. (Leiden, Brill, 2004.) Pages 37-68.
- “Determining the Position of Heaven and Earth: Debates Over State Sacrifices in the Western Han Dynasty.” Confucian Spirituality. Edited by Tu Wei-Ming and Mary Evelyn Tucker. (New York: Crossroad Press, 2003)
- “Nothing Can Overcome Heaven!: The Notion of Spirit in the Zhuangzi.” Hiding the World in the World: Essays on Zhuangzi. Edited by Scott Cook. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003)
- “Violent Misreadings: The Hermeneutics of Cosmology in the Huainanzi.” Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities. 72 (2000): 29-47.
- “Humans and Gods: The Theme of Self-Divinization in Early China and Early Greece.” Thinking Through Comparisons: Ancient China and Ancient Greece. Edited by Stephen Durrant and Steven Shankman. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 55-74.
- “Philosophy and Literature in Early China.” The Columbia History of Chinese Literature, edited by Victor Mair. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 70-85.
- “China in Early Eurasian History: A Brief Review of Recent Scholarship on the Issue.” Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Peoples of Eastern Central Asia. Edited by Victor Mair. (Washington D.C.: Institute for the Study of Man, 1998), pp. 699-715.
- “Sages, Ministers, and Rebels: Narratives from Early China Concerning the Initial Creation of the State.” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 58.2 (December 1998): 425-479.
- “Nature and Artifice: Debates in Late Warring States China Concerning the Creation of Culture.” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 57.2 (December 1997): 471-518.
- Review of Stephen Durrant’s The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian. Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 57.1 (June 1997): 290-301.

Conferences Organized

- “The Age of Transregional Reorientations: Rethinking Global History, Tenth to Thirteenth Century.” Co-organized with Björn Wittrock. Swedish Collegium of Advanced Study. Uppsala, Sweden. May 2015.
- “The Construal of National Identity through the Concept of the State – in China and Elsewhere.” Co-organized with Christoph Harbsmeier. Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Uppsala. June 2011.
- “Scholars, Craftsmen and Technology: Defining Experts and Expertise in Chinese Culture.” Co-organized with Dagmar Schäfer. Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin. March 2009.

“Liu An’s Vision of Empire: New Perspectives on the Huainanzi.” Co-organized with Sarah Queen. Harvard University, May 2008.

“‘Religion’ in China: Rethinking Indigenous and Imported Categories of Thought.” Co-organized with Robert Weller and Adam Chau. Harvard University, May 2005.

“A Workshop on the Eastern Jin.” Co-organized with Tian Xiaofei. Harvard University, May 2005.

“Approaches to Understanding the Han Dynasty.” Harvard University, May 2002.

“Religion and Authority in Early China.” Harvard University, April 1999.

“Approaches to Understanding Sima Qian’s Shiji.” Harvard University, October 1996.

Lectures and Conference Papers

“Humans, Gods, and Emperors: Statecraft and Ritual in Han China.” University of Tennessee, Knoxville. October 2015.

“Ritual Constructions of Memory.” Memory and Text in Premodern East Asia: Concepts, Theories, and Methods. Ohio State University. October 2015.

“The Classics in China: Reading from a Global Perspective.” Roberts Lecture. Dickinson College. September 2015.

“The Practice of Sagehood: How to Read a Classic in China.” Roberts Lecture. Dickinson College. September 2015.

“Disjunctions, Substitutions, and Artifice: Divinities, Ritual, and Ritual Theory in Classical China.” University of Rochester. September 2015.

“On the Making of Chinese Classics.” Globalizing Classics. Humboldt University. Berlin, Germany. September 2015.

“Ritual Substitutions: Theories of Ritual from Classical China.” Charles University. Prague, Czech Republic. June 2015.

“Political Theory from a Global and Comparative Perspective.” Human Rights: Constitutive Movements, Intellectual Practices and Shifting Global Contexts. Swedish Collegium of Advanced Study. Stockholm, Sweden. May 2015.

“Re-thinking the Middle Period in Eurasian History.” The Age of Transregional Reorientations: Rethinking Global History, Tenth to Thirteenth Century. Swedish Collegium of Advanced Study. Uppsala, Sweden. May 2015.

“The Meanings and Practice of Sacrifice in Early Greece and China.” Fate, Freedom and Prediction: Reflections on Comparative Method in Early China and the Ancient Mediterranean. International Consortium for Research in the Humanities, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg. May 2015.

- “The Art of Quoting and Telling: Interpretation, Knowledge, and the Development of Commentarial Practice in Early China.” Kentucky Foreign Language Conference. University of Kentucky, Lexington. April 2015.
- “Creating Worlds: Imagination, Interpretation, and Knowledge in the Early Chinese Literary Tradition.” University of California, Davis. April 2015.
- “Empire and its Discontents.” Global Asias. Pennsylvania State University. April 2015.
- “Ritual and Wisdom: Theories from China.” Capturing the Ineffable: Wisdom in Perspective: An Interdisciplinary Workshop. University of Pittsburgh. March 2015.
- “Why Classical Chinese Philosophy Still Matters.” University of Texas at Dallas. February 2015.
- “Ritual Substitutions: Theories of Ritual from Classical China.” University of Michigan. December 2014.
- “Text and Commentary: Ancient Period.” Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature 1000 BCE – 900 CE. Harvard University. December 2014.
- “On World Philosophy.” Hay Festival Dhaka. Bangladesh. November 2014.
- “The Hermeneutics of Cosmology: Ritual and Belief in Classical China.” Between the Visible and the Invisible. University of California, Berkeley. November 2014.
- “We Are Naturally Like This: Ritual and Ideology in the Ancient World.” The Legitimation of Autocracy in the Ancient World. NYU Abu Dhabi Institute. November 2014.
- “Understanding the ‘Rise of China’ from the Perspective of World History.” Wooster College. September 2014.
- “Networks of Trade, Past and Present.” Guangdong University. August 2014.
- “Visions of the Self, Inside and Outside of Ritual Space.” The Self in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Conceptions and Practices in China and the West. Central European University. May 2014.
- “Ritual Disjunctions: Theories of Ritual from China and Elsewhere.” Institute for Advanced Study, Central European University. May 2014.
- “Why Classical Chinese Philosophy Still Matters.” Emory University. March 2014.
- “Ritual Disjunctions: Theories of Ritual from China and Elsewhere.” Duke University. March 2014.
- “Enduring Empire: The Political Vision of the Huainanzi.” Traditional Non-Confucian Perspectives on Social and Political Organization and Order. City University of Hong Kong. March 2014.
- “Ritual and Politics in China.” Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. January 2014.
- “The Hermeneutics of Recovery: Leo Strauss, Carl Schmitt, and the Reception of the Western Classics in China.” Society for Classical Studies. January 2014.

- “Ritual Disjunctions: Theories of Ritual from Classical China,” Ruhr-Universität Bochum. December 2013.
- “Ritual, Harmony, and the Public in Premodern and Contemporary China: A Historical Perspective.” Disorder, Action and the Public in China. Lausanne, Switzerland. December 2013.
- “Thinking about Old Norse Mythology from a Comparative Perspective.” Old Norse Mythology in its Comparative Contexts. Harvard University. October 2013.
- "Ritual Disjunctions: Theories of Ritual from China and Elsewhere" Ways of Knowing: Graduate Student Conference on Religion. Harvard University. October 2013.
- “Why Does Ritual Matter?: Theories from Classical China” University at Buffalo, SUNY. October 2013.
- “Divergence as a Category of Comparative History: the Case of China in Eurasian History.” New Perspectives on Comparative Medieval History: China and Europe. Oxford University. September 2013.
- “Making Manifest the Hidden Knowledge of the Past: The Rhetorical Strategies of the Huainanzi.” Masters of Disguise?: Conceptions and Misconceptions of ‘Rhetoric’ in Chinese Antiquity. Einsiedeln, Switzerland. September 2013.
- “Chinese Political Theory.” Asan Institute. Seoul, Korea. July 2013.
- “The Equality of Death, the Hierarchy of Ancestors: Relationships and their Limits in the Religions of China.” Health, Mortality, and Inequality. Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. Helsinki, Finland. June 2013.
- “Myths of Violence in China.” Representing Violence: History, Politics and Theory. Lichtenberg-Kolleg, University of Göttingen. June 2013.
- “China and Social Theory.” Plenary Speaker, 41st World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology (IIS). Uppsala, Sweden. June 2013.
- “The Philosophy of the Zhongshuo.” Neo-Confucianism in the Making: Wang Tong’s Zhongshuo. Swedish Collegium of Advanced Study. Uppsala, Sweden. May 2013.
- Keynote lecture, EURIAS Annual Meeting. Swedish Collegium of Advanced Study. Uppsala, Sweden. April 2013.
- “Han Imperialism.” Maritime Frontiers in Asia. Pennsylvania State University. April 2013.
- “Constructions of Reality: Ritual and Metaphysics in the Liji.” Conceptions of Reality: Metaphysics and Its Alternatives in Chinese Thought. Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. March 2013.
- “Indigenous Theories of Discontinuity and Continuity in Classical China.” Linking Ancient and Contemporary: Continuities and Discontinuities in the Chinese History of Literature and Thought. Ca'Foscari University, Venice. March 2013.

- “Why Does Ritual Matter?: Theories from Classical China.” Keynote Speech, Colorado University-Boulder Asian Studies Graduate Association (CUBASGA) Conference 2013.
- “Disjunctions, Substitutions, and the Artifice of Ritual: Theories of Sacrifice in Classical China.” Rutgers University. February 2013.
- “Ritual and Human Flourishing.” Ethical Inquiry Series. Brown University. February 2013.
- “Disjunctions, Substitutions, and Artifice: Why Ritual Matters.” Ethical Inquiry Series. Brown University. February 2013.
- “Ernst Cassirer and Intellectual History.” Ernst Cassirer Symposium. Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Uppsala, Sweden. January 2013.
- “Early Globalities.” University of Minnesota. December 2012.
- “Impersonation Rituals in Early China.” Voicing Authority: Impersonation and Ventriloquism in Chinese Rhetorical and Musical Traditions. University of California, Berkeley. December 2012.
- “Gods, Humans, and Rulers: Religion and Empire in Early China.” Institute for the Study of the Ancient World. New York University. November 2012.
- “The Problem of Ritual: Presentations of Confucius in Early China.” University of Wisconsin. October 2012.
- “Working with the Past: Reading, Interpretation, and Commentary in Chinese Late Antiquity.” University of Wisconsin. October 2012.
- “Sima Qian and Ban Gu.” University of Munich. July 2012.
- “The Art and Sport of Charioteering in Ancient China.” Olympic Academy, Olympia, Greece. July 2012.
- “Dispositions, Rituals, and Norms: Perspectives from Classical China.” Feeling an Obligation: Exploring Evaluative and Normative Constraints of Human Agency in a Historical and Ethnographical Perspective. Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study. June 2012.
- “Humans, Gods, and Emperors: Visions of Rulership in Han China.” Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China. Israel Institute for Advanced Study. May 2012.
- “Rethinking Ancient History from the Perspective of China.” Columbia University. April 2012.
- “Understanding Early Medieval China in a Eurasian Context.” Comparative Medieval History. University of Illinois. April 2012.
- “Sages, Interpretation, and Sources of Knowledge: Commentarial Practice in Early Medieval China.” Collège de France. April 2012.
- “Sages and History in the Huainanzi.” INALCO. Paris, France. March 2012.

- “Sages, Interpretation, and Sources of Knowledge: Commentarial Practice in Chinese Late Antiquity.” Nanyang Technological University. February 2012.
- “Ritual Disjunctions: Theories of Ritual from Classical China.” National University of Singapore. February 2012.
- “Justice Human, Justice Divine: The Nature and Practice of Justice in Classical China.” The Divine Courtroom. Cardozo Law School. February 2012.
- “Late Antiquity in Eurasian History.” Asia Research Institute. January 2012.
- “Understanding the ‘Rise of China’ from the Perspective of World History.” Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study. January 2012.
- “Sagehood and Argumentation in Chinese Late Antiquity.” University of Heidelberg. December 2011.
- “Sima Qian, Confucius, and the Role of Sages in the Shiji.” Shiji and Beyond – Second International Conference on Shiji. Charles University, Prague. December 2011.
- “Ritual and Ritual Obligations.” Feeling an Obligation – Exploring Evaluative and Normative Constraints of Human Agency in a Historical and Ethnographical Perspective. University of Oslo. November 2011.
- “The Concepts of Sagehood and Immortality in Ancient China,” and “Anthropology and Conceptual History.” Old Chinese Grammar. University of Oxford. July 2011.
- “Networks of Circulation in the Early Chinese Empires.” Imperial Objects in Circulation. Comparative Cultures Seminar, Center for Hellenic Studies, Greece. June 2011.
- “Empire, History, and Problem of Modernity.” Chinese Social and Political Conceptual History in a Global Perspective. Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study. June 2011.
- “Imaging, Imagining, and Incorporating the Foreign: Rituals of Inclusion and Transformation in Early China.” University of Munich. June 2011.
- “Authorship and Interpretation: The Hermeneutics of Cosmology in Early Chinese Commentarial Practice.” Fate, Freedom, and Creation in Early China. University of Erlangen-Nurnberg. May 2011.
- “Ancestors, Fathers, and Sons: Ritual Theory and Philosophy in Early China.” Midwest Conference on Chinese Thought, Keynote Address. May 2011.
- “Ghosts and Gods, Humans and Divinities: The Formation and Transformation of Objects and Agencies in Early Chinese Sacrificial Practice.” The Materiality of the Divine. Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University. April 2011.
- “Relationships of Plurality.” Anthropology and Philosophy: Affinities and Antagonisms. Harvard University. April 2011.

- “Empires and Networks: Mechanisms of Integration in East Asia.” Beliefs, Markets and Empires: Understanding Mechanisms of Integration in Early Societies. New York University, Abu Dhabi. March 2011.
- “Religion, Culture, and the Everyday: Ritual Theory from China and Beyond.” University of the South. February 2011.
- “Philosophies of Discontinuity: Theories of Action and Interpretation in Classical China.” University of Tokyo (Komaba). January 2011.
- “Human and Divine Kingship in Classical China” University of Tokyo (Hongo). January 2011.
- “Ritual and Innovation: Classical Chinese Theories of Leadership.” University of Tokyo (Hongo). January 2011.
- “The Significance of Lun.” The Art of Discourse (Lun) in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Philosophy. Nanyang Technological Institute, Singapore. December 2010.
- “Anxieties of Interpretation: Reading, Hermeneutics, and Knowledge in Early China.” Vanderbilt University. September 2010.
- “Suffering and Divided Experience in Early China.” Social Suffering: The Culture of Compassion and the Divided Moral Experience in China. Harvard University. May 2010.
- Panelist, “Relationships in Religion: A Workshop.” Northwestern University. March, 2010.
- “The Practice of Sagehood: The Writing and Reading of Religious Texts in Early China.” Georgetown University. March 2010.
- “Religious Traditions and Economic Practices in China.” Business Across Religious Traditions Seminar. New York. December 2009.
- “China in the Ancient World: Comparative Reflections.” Conference on Teaching the Ancient World. Abu Dhabi. November 2009.
- “The Discontinuity of Human Action: Narrative and Interpretation in Early China.” Institute for Philosophy and Religion, Boston University. October 2009.
- “Connecting the World: Ritual Theory from Early China.” Southeast Early China Roundtable. University of Georgia. October 2009.
- “Anxieties of Interpretation: Reading, Hermeneutics, and Knowledge in Early China.” Columbia University. October 2009.
- “The Anxiety of Mediation: Ritual Constructions of Peace in Early China.” Conference on Culture, Conflict, and Mediation. Yale University. September 2009.
- “On the Formation of the Five Canons.” First Committee Meeting on the Study and Translation of the Wujing. Beijing. July 2009.
- “Theories of Hermeneutics and Interpretation in Early China.” University of Pennsylvania. May, 2009.

- “Anxieties of Interpretation: Reading, Hermeneutics, and Knowledge in Early China.” Stanford University. April, 2009.
- “Future Directions in Chinese Studies.” Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation’s 20th Anniversary Celebration, The Library of Congress. March 2009.
- “Changing Conceptions of Knowledge and Expertise in Early Medieval China.” Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin. March 2009.
- “The Theory and Practice of Sacrifice in Early China.” Oxford University. February, 2009.
- “Connecting the World: Ritual Theory from Early China.” University of Edinburgh. January 2009.
- “Connecting the World: Ritual Theory from Early China.” Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study. December 2008.
- “Sages, Dispositions, and the Creation of Order.” University of British Columbia Conference on Daoist Studies 2008. October 2008.
- “The Antiquity of Modernity in China.” International Conference on Presenting China: Theory and Pedagogy. Washington University. October 2008.
- “Connecting the World: Ritual Theory from Early China.” Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual. University of Heidelberg. October 2008.
- “The Problem of Origins: The Concept of Yuan in Early Chinese Religious Practice.” The 12th International Conference on the History of Science in East Asia. Johns Hopkins University. July 2008.
- “Sages and History in the Huainanzi.” Liu An’s Vision of Empire: New Perspectives on the Huainanzi. Harvard University. May 2008.
- “The Fractured World of Humanity: Ritual Theory from Classical China.” Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University. May 2008.
- “Linking History and Anthropology: Understanding Temple Networks in China.” Workshop on Contemporary Temple Networks in Taiwan and China. Harvard University. April 2008.
- “Religious Aspects of Emperors in Ancient China and Rome.” State Power and Social Control in Ancient China and Rome. Stanford University. March 2008.
- “Cosmology and Imperial Vision.” Early Medieval China Workshop. Columbia University. November 2007.
- “Economies of Gods, Goods, and Demons: The Religious and Political Significance of the Temple Networks of Southern China.” American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Panel in honor of Stanley Tambiah. November 2007.
- “Manifesting Sagely Knowledge: Commentarial Strategies in Chinese Late Antiquity” The Rhetoric of Hiddenness in Traditional Chinese Culture. University of California at Berkeley. September 2007.

- “Visualizing Spirits in Early Medieval China.” Workshop on Kinetic Vision in Six Dynasties China. Harvard University. May 2007.
- “Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections.” Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond. University of Chicago. February 2007.
- “Ritual compendia in Early China.” Rituals, Pantheons and Techniques: A History of Chinese Religion before the Tang. Paris, France. December 2006.
- “Wang Mang and Early Chinese Statecraft Based on the Zhouli.” Premodern East Asian Statecraft in Comparative Context: The Rituals of Zhou in Chinese and East Asian History. Princeton University. December 2006.
- “Notions of Freedom in Chinese Thought.” Yip So Man Wat lecture- University of British Columbia. November 2006.
- “Salvation in Early China.” American Academy of Religion, Annual Meeting. November 2006.
- “Heaven, Earth, and Sages in Chinese Late Antiquity.” Invited Lecture. Yale University. September 2006.
- “The Concept of Innovation in Early China.” Crossroads: Writing Conceptual History Beyond the Nation-State. Uppsala, Sweden. August 2006.
- “Practices of Life and Death in Early China.” What is An Adequate Life? Workshop at Harvard University, organized by Arthur Kleinman. May 2006.
- “The Practice of Cosmology in Early China.” Plenary Session, American Oriental Society, Annual Meeting. March 2006.
- “Performing the Folklore of Genealogy: Rituals of the Chinese Nation.” Performing Folklore Workshop. Harvard University. January 2006.
- “Wang Mang and Early Chinese Statecraft Based on the Zhouli.” Zhouli Workshop. Princeton University. December 2005.
- “Ritual and Non-Ritual Exchange in Early China.” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting. November 2005.
- “Humans, Ghosts, and Spirits in Chinese Late Antiquity.” Invited Lecture. University of California at Berkeley. November 2005.
- “Poetic Allusion in Early Chinese Manuscripts.” Second Columbia Symposium on Classical Chinese and Chinese Language History. Columbia University. September 2005.
- “Heaven, Earth, and Sages: Ge Hong in Chinese Late Antiquity” Invited Lecture. Cornell University. September 2005.
- “Conversing With Sages: Text and Commentary in Chinese Late Antiquity.” International Society for the History of East Asian Science Technology and Medicine. Munich, Germany. August 2005.

- “Humans, Gods, and Political Order in Chinese Late Antiquity.” Invited Lecture. University of Heidelberg. August 2005.
- “Why Did Sages Write Texts?: Sagehood and Knowledge in the Han Dynasty.” Invited Lecture. Academia Sinica, Taiwan. June 2005.
- “The Temptations of Sagehood, the Rhetoric of Antiquity in Wang Chong’s Lun Heng.” Argument and Persuasion in Ancient Chinese Texts. Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. June 2005.
- “How to Make an Offering: The Practice of Ritual in Early China.” ‘Religion’ in China: Rethinking Indigenous and Imported Categories of Thought. Harvard University. May 2005.
- “Humans and Spirits in the Eastern Jin.” A Workshop on the Eastern Jin. Harvard University. May 2005.
- “How To Do Things with Things: Some Themes in Recently-Excavated Texts” Symposium at the Swedish Academy in Honor of Göran Malmqvist. April 2005.
- “Cosmology in Han China: The Visual Meanings of Shandong Tomb Art.” The Afterlife in Han China: A Closer Look at the Meaning of "Brilliant Artifacts." China Institute. April 2005.
- “Why Did Sages Write Texts?: Commentarial Strategies during the Wei Dynasty.” Association of Asian Studies 2005 Annual Meeting. April 2005.
- “Conversing With Sages: Text and Commentary in Third Century China.” Invited Lecture. University of Wisconsin at Madison. March 2005.
- “Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections.” Life and Death in Ancient China and Ancient Egypt. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. March 2005.
- “Prediction Amid Disaster: Divination and Cosmology in the Eastern Han.” Invited Lecture. University of California at Riverside. March 2005.
- "Gods and Ancestors in Early China." Invited Lecture. University of Florida. March 2005.
- “Gods, Ghosts, and Humans in Chinese Late Antiquity.” Invited Lecture. University of Colorado at Boulder. December 2004.
- “Are Sages a Thing of the Past?: Debates over Antiquity in the Eastern Han.” Invited Lecture. University of Toronto. November 2004.
- “The Tension Between Sagely Innovation and Traditional Authority in Early Confucianism.” Text, Tradition and Reason in Comparative Perspective. Cardozo Law School. October 2004.
- “Are Sages a Thing of the Past?: Debates over Antiquity during the Second and Third Centuries CE.” (Germany) "Perceptions of Antiquity in China’s Civilization" University of Würzburg, Germany. May 2004.
- “The Offering of Food and the Creation of Order: The Practice of Sacrifice in Early China.” Food and Religion in Traditional China. University of Cambridge. April 2004.

- “Locating the Gods and Spirits: Visions of the Cosmos in Early China.” The Concept of Space Reflected in Chinese Paleography. Centre de Recherches Linguistiques sur l’Asie Orientale, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. March 2004.
- “The Body and the Cosmos in the Eastern Han.” Association of Asian Studies 2004. Annual Meeting. March 2004.
- “Sages and Gods in the Han Dynasty.” American Academy of Religion. November 2003.
- “Domesticating the World: Religious Practices in Early China.” Southeastern Early China Roundtable. November 2003.
- “The Uses of Writing in Early China.” Books in Numbers: A Conference in Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of Harvard-Yenching Library. October 2003.
- “Gods, Ancestors, and Humans in the Eastern Han.” Western Branch of the American Oriental Society. October 2003.
- “The Efficacy of Religious Practices in Early China.” Ritual, Identities, and Boundaries. A workshop organized by Robert Weller and Adam Seligman at the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture, Boston University. May 2003.
- “Domesticating the World: A Study of Religious Practice in Early China.” Invited Lecture. Reed College. April 2003.
- “Sacrifice and Transformation in Warring States and Han China.” American Oriental Society. April 2003.
- Discussant for the panel "Metaphor and Morals in Traditional China." Association of Asian Studies 2003 Annual Meeting. March 2003.
- “The Practice of Religion in Early China.” Invited Lecture. Tufts University. February 2003.
- “Violent Misreadings: The Hermeneutics of Cosmology in the Huainanzi.” Invited Lecture. Columbia University. September 2002.
- “Violent Misreadings: The Hermeneutics of Cosmology in the Huainanzi.” Approaches to Understanding the Han Dynasty. A conference organized by Harvard University. May 2002.
- “Why Does the Cosmos Exist?: Millenarian Movements in Early China.” Chinese Millennialism in Comparative Perspective: Political Authority and Protest. A conference hosted by Harvard University. April 2002.
- “Why Did Laozi Have a Body?: Humans and Spirits in Chinese Late Antiquity.” Invited Lecture. University of Michigan. February 2002.
- “Returning to the One: Spirits, Ancestors, and the Emergence of Cosmological Thinking in Early China.” Invited Lecture. University of Michigan. December 2001.

- “Reading Heaven and Earth: The Rise of Cosmology as a Hermeneutical Strategy in Early China.” Interpretation and Intellectual Change in China: An International Conference on the History of Chinese Hermeneutics. Hosted by Rutgers University. October 2001.
- “Placing the Spirits: The Art of Sacrifice in the Late Shang.” Association for Asian Studies, Annual Meeting. March 2001.
- “Humans, Divinities, and the Rise of Cosmological Thinking in Early China and Early Greece: A Comparative Discussion.” Invited lecture. University of California at Riverside. January 2001.
- “Why Did the Sages Write Texts?: Lu Jia on the Establishment of the Classics.” Text and Ritual in Early China: A Conference Hosted by Princeton University. October 2000.
- “Following the Commands of Heaven: The Notion of Ming in Early China.” Heaven's Will and Life's Lot: Destiny and Determinism in Chinese Culture: A Conference Hosted by Bowdoin College. May 2000.
- “Humans and Spirits in Early China.” Religion and Authority in Early China: A Conference Hosted by the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University. April 1999.
- “Debates on Cosmology and Sagehood in Early China.” Invited Lecture. Brown University. March 1999.
- “The Ethics of Responding Properly.” Association for Asian Studies, Annual Meeting. March 1999.
- “The Ethics of Responding Properly: An Analysis of the Notion of Qing.” Invited Lecture. University of Michigan. February 1999.
- “Humans and Gods in Early China.” Invited Lecture. University of Heidelberg. January 1999.
- “Innovation and Discontinuity: Sima Qian's Reconstruction of the Rise of Empire in Early China.” Invited Lecture. University of Munich. January 1999.
- “Humans, Divinities, and the Rise of Cosmological Thinking in Early China.” Invited Lecture. University of Indiana. December 1998.
- “Ordering the World: The Rise of Naturalistic Philosophy in Early China.” Convocation Address. Grinnell College. November 1998.
- “The Divinization of the Self: Debates on Cosmology and Sagehood in Early China.” Invited Lecture. University of Pennsylvania. November 1998.
- “The Notion of Qing in the Guodian ‘Xing zi ming chu.’” Workshop of the Warring States Working Group. University of Massachusetts at Amherst. October 1998.
- “Humans and Gods: The Theme of Self-Divinization in Early China and Early Greece.” Conference on “Thinking Through Comparisons: Ancient China and Ancient Greece.” University of Oregon at Eugene. May 1998.
- “To Become a God: Debates on Divinization and Cosmology in Early China.” Invited Lecture. The University of Chicago. March 1998.

- “To Become a God: Debates on Divinization and Cosmology in Early China.” Invited Lecture. University of California at Berkeley. March 1998.
- “To Become a God: Debates on Divinization and Cosmology in Early China.” Invited Lecture. Stanford University. March 1998.
- “The Nature of Invention: Debates Concerning Artifice and Innovation in Late Warring States China.” Invited Lecture. Stanford University. December 1997.
- “Discontinuity and Change in Early Chinese Historiography.” Workshop on Early Chinese Historiography. The University of California at Los Angeles. December 1997.
- “Debates Concerning Artifice and Innovation in Late Warring States China.” Invited Lecture. Princeton University. November 1997.
- “Debates Concerning the Rise and Legitimation of Empire in Early China.” Invited Lecture. Wesleyan University. November 1997.
- “Philosophical Argumentation in the Huainanzi.” Global and Multicultural Dimensions of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy: 16th Annual Conference. State University of New York at Binghamton. October 1997.
- “Debates in Late Warring States China Concerning Innovation.” Workshop of the Warring States Working Group. University of Massachusetts at Amherst. October 1997.
- “Syncretism in the Early Han: The Case of the Huainanzi.” Intellectual Lineages in Ancient China: A Workshop Hosted by the Center for East Asian Studies, University of Pennsylvania. September 1997.
- “The Notion of Qing in the Huainanzi.” Emotions in Chinese Culture: A Conference Organized by the University of Oslo, Norway. September 1997.
- “The Notion of Shen (Spirit) in the Xici.” A Workshop on the Xici zhuan, University of Chicago. June 1997.
- “An Historian amongst Archaeologists, Or: The Uses and Abuses of Archaeological Material by Historians of Early China.” East Asian Archaeology Seminar, Harvard University. April 1997.
- “Huangdi and Chi You.” Workshop of the Warring States Working Group. University of Massachusetts at Amherst. April 1997.
- “Cosmology and Control: The Debate over Techniques and Formulas in Early China.” Association for Asian Studies, Annual Meeting. March 1997.
- “Perfecting Nature: Ge Hong on Artifice and Immortality.” Invited Lecture. Harvard University. November 1996.
- “History and Morality: Sima Qian's Presentation of the Rise of Empire in Early China.” Approaches to Understanding Sima Qian's Shiji: A Workshop Hosted by the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University. October 1996.

“Recent Debates over the Origins of Chinese Civilization.” Bronze Age and Iron Age Peoples of Eastern Central Asia: An International Conference Hosted by the University of Pennsylvania. April 1996.

“Recent Debates over the Origins of Chinese Civilization.” Invited Lecture. East Asian Studies Faculty Lecture Series, Harvard University. March 1996.

“The Problem of Creation in the Lüshi chunqiu.” Invited Lecture. Harvard University. March 1993.

“Causality and Creation in the Lüshi chunqiu.” Midwest Early China Conference. University of Chicago. November 1992.

“The Emergence of Philosophical Debate in Early China.” Invited Lecture. Oberlin College. October 1992.

“The Problem of Creation in Early Chinese Thought.” Moments and Momentums in Han Life: A Workshop in Honor of Michael A. N. Loewe. University of Chicago. November 1991.

Courses Taught

Ethical Reasoning 18: Classical Chinese Ethical and Political Theory

Ethical Reasoning 20: Self, Serenity, and Vulnerability: East and West (co-taught with Roberto Mangabeira Unger)

Ethical Reasoning 29: Social Theory, Philosophy, and the Humanities Now (co-taught with Roberto Mangabeira Unger)

Historical Study A-13: China: Traditions and Transformations (co-taught with Philip Kuhn)

History 2052: Rome and China (co-taught with Emma Dench)

History 2300: Methods in Intellectual History (co-taught with Peter Gordon)

Freshman Seminar 39e: Rome and China (co-taught with Emma Dench)

Anthropology 1400: Quests for Wisdom: Religious, Moral and Aesthetic Searches for the Art of Living (co-taught with Arthur Kleinman and David Carrasco)

Anthropology 2092: Early China: Archaeology and Texts (co-taught with Rowan Flad)

Humanities 11c Frameworks: The Art of Reading (co-taught with Julie Buckler)

East Asian Studies 97a: Introduction to East Asian Civilizations

East Asian Studies 98r: Junior Tutorial: China, Social Sciences

East Asian Studies 98r: Junior Tutorial: China, Humanities

Chinese History 111a: Early Chinese History

Chinese History 116a: Early Chinese Intellectual History

East Asian History 211: Historical Theory and Methods

Chinese History 232r: Topics in Han History

Chinese History 234: The Historiography of Early Chinese History

Chinese History 235r: Topics in Warring States History

Chinese History 237: Introduction to Shang and Western Zhou Inscriptional Materials

Wisdom Literature in East and West (co-taught with Glenn Most). Globalized Classics. Humboldt University. Berlin, Germany. August-September 2015.

Service

Recent Service in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University:

2012-2015: Executive Committee for Dumbarton Oaks
2012-2015: Executive Committee for the Center for Hellenic Studies
2012-2013: Humanities Center Postdoctoral Committee
2008-2015: Hoopes Prize Committee
2001-2015: Inter-University Program in Beijing (Harvard Representative)
2012-2013: Working Group on Religious Studies (chair)
2003-2015: Fairbank Center Executive Committee
2003-2008: Asia Center Executive Committee
2006-2007: FAS Educational Policy Committee
2006-2007: FAS Task Force on Teaching and Career Development
2007-2008: FAS Faculty Council
2008-2009: Religious Studies Working Group (chair)
2009-2011: Standing Committee on General Education
2009-2012: Council on Asian Studies
2009-2011: Harvard College Postgraduate Traveling Fellowships Selection Committee
2009-2012: Luce Fellowship Selection Committee
2009-2010: Humanities Center Postdoctoral Committee
2010-2011: Radcliffe Institute Exploratory Seminars Committee

Service in the Harvard Divinity School:

2007-2010: Center for the Study of World Religions Advisory Board
2006-2011: Center for the Study of World Religions Executive Council