Five Sites for Lesson Plans and Teaching Materials on China

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Many of us who write for China Beat are also teachers. There are multiple web resources that we use, recommend, and, in some cases, have even contributed to. If you teach about China, or are interested in learning more about how Chinese history is being taught in the United States, take a look at these innovative websites and programs.

1. Asia for Educators: Based at Columbia University, this website provides a variety of background information for educators on Asia history topics like the Song Dynasty, China and Europe comparisons, Chinese religion, and the Mongols. The website includes images, literature selections, some clips of college professors discussing the topics (you need RealPlayer to view the videos), and links to lesson plans, teaching guides, and other resources. The Asia in the Curriculum bulletin board is also run by this organization.

2. The Asia Society: The New York-based Asia Society works to promote understanding and interactions between American and Asian institutions. Their “Ask Asia” website includes activities for kids as well as lesson plans for teachers at K-12 levels. Those who are looking for ways to integrate Chinese history into their world history curriculums are particularly encouraged to check out the Society’s Silk Road Encounters site. (For more on the Silk Road, see also the China Institute’s From Silk to Oil, downloadable online, and the interactive maps at the University of Washington’s Silk Road site.)

3. Expanding East Asian Studies: Also based at Columbia University, the ExEAS site includes detailed lesson plans, syllabi, and teaching guides on a wide range of East Asian history and literary topics. Mainly targeted toward the college-level, some of the material and activities could be adapted for high school classrooms.

4. Morning Sun: This is a phenomenal website for resources on the Cultural Revolution. Though the website does not contain set lesson plans, it does include translated materials from the 1960s, clips of movies and revolutionary operas, radio broadcasts, song clips, and many photos. (For another website that relies heavily on images for teaching, see Visualizing Cultures, MIT’s Visualizing Cultures project, run by Japanese historian John Dower and linguist Shigeru Miyagawa. Though mainly focused on Japan, one of the lessons is on the Sino-Japanese war.)

5. Visual Sourcebook of Chinese History: Historian Patricia Ebrey prepared this site which, like Visualizing Cultures, relies on images to cover social history topics like clothing, religion, homes, and gardens ranging in time from ancient China to the twentieth century.

6. And, as a bonus, a world history site, World History for Us All: Developed at San Diego State University to engage “big history” and provide resources to K-12 teachers of world history, this site features lessons on historical topics ranging from Out-of-Africa to globalization.

Coming next week: five stand-out Chinese language and literature websites.