



EARLY CHINA SEMINAR LECTURE SERIES

Sponsored by
The Tang Center for Early China, Columbia University;
Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University;
The Columbia University Seminars

Picturing Political Abstractions in Han China

Martin Powers
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Time and Location:

4:30-6:30pm
April 15th, 2016 (Friday)

403 Kent Hall
Columbia University
1140 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, NY 10027



Abstract:

The bureaucratic theorists and statesmen of Han China developed some of the most sophisticated political concepts of the ancient world, such that even Enlightenment radicals found inspiration in their writings almost two-thousand years later. Viewed in global context at that time, the distinction between public and private, or the equal application of the law, were novel ideas to say the least. During the political disturbances of the late Han, amid popular unrest and student demonstrations, it was these concepts that formed the basis for political debate. Among the thousands of pictorial engravings extant from that period, not a few project the concerns of local scholars, but their understanding of social justice was built upon the political theory of earlier times. This talk examines how the abstract principles of Han political theory came to be visualized in the pictorial art of the late Han period.

Seminar Co-Chairs:

Jue Guo
Barnard College, Columbia University
Roderick Campbell
Institute for the Study of Ancient World, New York University