



# Chinese Government From the Qin to the Song

**Subject:** AP World History

**Grade Level:** 9th and 10th grade

**Unit:** Unit 1 - The Global Tapestry

**Length:** 2 days

## Lesson Introduction:

AP World History starts in the year 1200 CE, and the first learning objective is to explain how Chinese dynasties governed. This involves setting the context for the Song dynasty and their governmental structure without the time to go into great depth. Each day's lesson involves a bellringer activity designed to 1) prime the brain for the material and 2) connect historic concepts to larger - and still relevant - issues. This prepares students for the content, but also allows them to make the historical connections to current issues which aids neural connections. Each day's lesson reviews a similar concept in multiple ways. Khan Academy readings provide embedded questions within readings to reflect on understanding as they read, and self-check quizzes that follow the reading. Pear Deck interactive lecture holds student interest and forces them to reflect consistently on the information being given and aids in dual-coding. Each day's lesson also ends with an "exit slip" designed for even further reflection.

## Content Overview:

### Unit 1 Context: The World Up to 1200

Beginning roughly around 8,000 BCE, the Neolithic Revolution marked the development of agriculture for various human societies around the globe. These areas of farming developed some advantages over hunting and gathering populations. A steady supply of plentiful food meant populations increased, new technologies could arise and communities organized.

With the advent of this Neolithic Revolution, the world's first cities - and then larger civilizations - appeared. These first-wave civilizations included areas such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus, China and Mesoamerica, and were followed by second-wave civilizations in places such as Persia, Greece and Rome. Each of these civilizations were unique in their cultural and political development. By 1200, the world's prominent religions and philosophies had also already developed, spread, and influenced the areas they touched.

## Lesson Overview: Chinese Government

The first development of a central bureaucratic government in China begins with the short-lived Qin Dynasty. The following Han Dynasty in the 3rd century BCE used that **imperial bureaucracy** - along with **Confucianism** - to maintain and justify their rule. The scholar officials, chosen from the **scholar-gentry** class at the top of the Confucian social structure, helped run government. Becoming widespread in the **Song Dynasty** (960-1279), civil servants also had to pass a rigorous **civil service exam** based on Confucian teachings. This **meritocracy** allowed for an efficient government system. The **mandate of heaven** was used to justify dynastic change.



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**Key Terms:** imperial bureaucracy, Confucianism, scholar-gentry, Song Dynasty, civil service exam, meritocracy, mandate of heaven

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## Materials/Resources Needed:

- Students will need access to computers, chromebooks or other electronic devices to access the Pear Deck lecture.
- Bingo cards.

**Resources:** The [Khan Academy](#) website, the Crash Course video on YouTube on [2,000 Years of Chinese History](#), the website [myfreebingocards.com](#) to create bingo cards

**Standards:** Standard 1.1 A for AP World History

**Learning Objectives:** Explain the systems of government employed by Chinese dynasties and how they developed over time.

## Essential Questions:

- How was the Chinese government structured?
  - What impact did Confucianism play in government?
  - How did Chinese dynasties justify their power?
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## Procedure:

Day 1:

- Bellringer: Have students brainstorm in small groups the following: “What gives governments the right to rule? What methods do governments use to hold on to power?” After small group discussion, have groups share out to the whole class.
- Show students the Crash Course history video: [2,000 Years of Chinese History](#). Hand out students a set of Bingo cards containing key phrases from the video and have them search for the phrases as they listen to it.
- Exit Slip: 2 minute free recall of the video. In this, students must write anything that comes to mind about the day’s lesson for two solid minutes without stopping.
- Homework: Read the section on the [Rise of Chinese Dynasties](#) on Khan Academy. Take the two self-quizzes following the reading.



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## Day 2:

- Bellringer: On the board students will see an overarching question: What do you believe is human nature? Are people 1) generally bad or 2) generally good? One side of the room is designated to represent one of the options, and the other side the second option. To prompt discussion, the students will move to the area in the room where they most agree (“vote with their feet”). The teacher will open up a discussion with students as to why they stand where they stand. Inevitably students will argue they want to be in the middle, not good or bad. I use this to prompt even more discussion. (In my district students learned about Hobbes and Locke the previous year. I use this to tie into their previous knowledge and draw connections from this fundamental philosophical idea and how it influences beliefs on government. I then compare this to Chinese belief systems.)
- Students will need to get out their electronic device (laptop, chromebook, cell phone all work). They will be given an interactive lecture using Pear Deck on the rise of the Song Dynasty and its system of government.
- Exit Slip: 2 minute free recall of the lecture material.

Closing Activity / Reflection: Students are required to keep a binder of their work on the learning objectives throughout the year. They will have to demonstrate their completion of this handout.

Post-Assessment: Students will have a weekly quiz over the entire week’s materials.

Extension Activities: Given more time, teachers may opt to use the following worksheets in the lesson:

- Mencius’ selections [On Human Nature](#)
- Xunxi’ selections of [Human Nature is Evil](#)
- Confucian Analects [on government](#)
- Dong Zhongshu selections *FROM LUXURIANT GEMS OF THE SPRING AND AUTUMN ANNALS*: [“The Responsibilities of Rulership”](#)
- Cheng Hao’s selections on [Remonstrance Against the New Laws](#)

Lesson Plan developed by Lisa Baughman, Westerville South High School, NCTA 2021 (The Ohio State University seminar)