

**Anne Behnke Kinney**

Professor of Chinese

Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1986



People always ask me what prompted me to study early Chinese civilization. That's a good question but hard to answer with any certainty. My mother thinks it is because she attended a performance of Mahler's settings of Chinese poetry--*Das Lied von der Erde*—while I was still *in utero*. I tell her it is because I was imprinted with the Chinese Willow pattern dishes that we ate from every day. It probably had more to do with George Harrison, but there is that fourth-grade paper I produced on the Chinese writing system my mother likes to drag out occasionally. Unfortunately my calligraphy has not improved much since then.

Whatever may have started that interest was sustained by my more-than-three decade love affair with the *Shiji* and the *Zuo zhuan*—two of the most revered historical texts in the Chinese tradition. In some ways, the word “revered,” with its stodgy connotations, does these two texts a terrible disservice because they contain some of the most dazzling narratives and are peopled with some of the most vivid, quirky and heroic personalities in world literature. Apart from the great pleasure of readings these works, why study texts so seemingly disconnected from our own place and time? Serious study of any civilization will increase our understanding of the history of humanity at large and we can't fail to take into account a civilization as rich and enduring as China's.

**Specializations**

I am interested in the literature, thought and social history of early China. I have done extensive research on the history of childhood in early China and currently I am exploring the various roles of women as conceived in the early Confucian tradition. At the same time I direct a large-scale digital humanities project to develop electronic research tools for studying how women's roles and their literary representations evolved over the course of early Chinese history.

**Courses**

CHIN 583 Introduction to Classical Chinese: Prose  
CHIN 584 Introduction to Classical Chinese: Poetry

### **Selected Publications**

- 2005 *The Establishment of the Han Empire and Imperial China*. (Co-author)  
Westport: Greenwood Press
- 2004 *Representations of Children and Youth in Early Chinese Literature*.  
(Author) Stanford: Stanford University.
- 2002 *Traditions of Exemplary Women*  
<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/xwomen/>
- 1995 *Chinese Views of Childhood*. (Editor and Contributor) Honolulu:  
University of Hawai'i Press.
- 1990 *The Art of the Han Essay: Wang Fu's Ch'ien-fu lun*. (Author and  
Translator) Tempe: Arizona State University Press