

Philip Thai

Department of History Northeastern University
249 Meserve Hall 360 Huntington Avenue Boston, MA 02115
P +1 (617) 373-3339 F +1 (617) 373-2661
p.thai@northeastern.edu [@philip_thai](https://www.instagram.com/philip_thai)
<https://cssh.northeastern.edu/people/faculty/philip-thai/>

Academic Appointments

Northeastern University, 2013–present

Associate Professor, Department of History (2019–present)

Assistant Professor, Department of History (2013–2019)

Education

Stanford University, 2005–2013

Ph.D. in History

Committee: Matthew H. Sommer (chair), Kären Wigen, Wen-hsin Yeh

Fields: Late Imperial and Modern China, Early Modern and Modern Japan

University of California, Berkeley, 1996–2000

B.A. in History with Highest Honors, Minor in Asian Studies

Advisor: Frederic E. Wakeman Jr.

Publications

Books

In the Shadows of the Bamboo Curtain: Underground Economies across Greater China during the Cold War (manuscript in progress)

China's War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State, 1842–1965.

Columbia University Press, Study of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute (2018).

<https://cup.columbia.edu/book/a/9780231185844>

Articles and Book Chapters

“A Risky Business: The Tai Ping Insurance Company and Fire Insurance in China, 1928–1937,” *Enterprise and Society* (2020), 1–39. <https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2020.47>

“Smuggling and Legal Pluralism on the China Coast: The Rise and Demise of the Joint Investigation Rules, 1864–1934,” in Clara Wing-chung Ho, Ricardo K. S. Mak, and Yue-him Tam, eds., *Voyages, Migration, and the Maritime World: On China's Global Historical Role*: 165–85. De Gruyter (2018).

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110587685>

“Introduction,” in “Binding Maritime China: Control, Evasion, and Interloping” (special issue guest editor with Eugenio Menegon and Xing Hang), *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Cultural Review* 7.1 (2018), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ach.2018.0000>

“Old Menace in New China: Coastal Smuggling, Illicit Markets, and Symbiotic Economies in the Early People’s Republic,” *Modern Asian Studies* 51.5 (2017): 1561–97.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X16000688>

“Law, Sovereignty, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China, 1928–1937,” *Law and History Review* 34.1 (2016): 75–114. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248015000668>

Book Reviews and Review Essays

Review of *Legal Lessons: Popularizing Laws in the People’s Republic of China, 1949–1989*, by Jennifer Altehenger. *The PRC History Review* 13 (2019). http://prchistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Altehenger_review.pdf

Review of *Inheritance of Loss: The Political Economy of Redemption after Empire*, by Yukiko Koga. *Enterprise and Society* 20:4 (2019): 1103–05. <https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2018.76>

Review of *Empires of Coal: Fueling China’s Entry into the Modern World Order, 1860–1920*, by Shellen Xiao Wu. *The Economic History Review* 69:3 (2016): 1048–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ehr.12412>

“Japan in Maritime Asia: Security, Commerce, and Sovereignty,” review essay of *Defensive Positions: The Politics of Maritime Security in Tokugawa Japan*, by Noell Wilson, and *Empires on the Waterfront: Japan’s Ports and Power, 1858–1899*, by Catherine L. Phipps. *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Cultural Review* 17 (2015): 123–30. <https://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-17/hipps-wilson>

Review of *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan*, by Pär K. Cassel. *Journal of Asian Studies* 74.2 (2015): 459–60.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911815000133>

Review of *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground*, by Michael Kwass. *Enterprise and Society* 15.3 (2014): 593–95. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1467222700016001>

Review of *Paths toward the Modern Fiscal State: England, Japan, and China*, by Wenkai He. *Journal of Asian Studies* 75.4 (2013): 975–77. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911813001241>

Other Publications and Projects

“Influenza Pandemics and Global Health in the Cold War,” Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH) Pandemic Teaching Initiative Module (2020).

<https://cssh.northeastern.edu/pandemic-teaching-initiative/disease-diplomacy-and-science-in-the-cold-war-lessons-for-future-pandemics/>

“The Proven Solution to Pandemics President Trump Continues to Reject,” *The Washington Post* (2020).

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/05/19/prove-solution-pandemics-that-president-trump-continues-reject/>

“Comment les droits de douane ont aidé à construire la Chine moderne” (How tariffs helped build modern China), *Le Grand Continent* (2020). <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2020/01/16/comment-les-droits-de-douane-ont-aide-a-construire-la-chine-moderne/>

“Xiandai Zhongguo jisi shi shuxie de licheng, wenti yu keneng” 现代中国缉私史书写的历程、问题与可能 (The course, problems, and possibilities of writing the history of anti-smuggling in modern China), *Guangzhou Daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 广州大学学报 (社会科学版) (Journal of Guangzhou University (social science edition)) 18.6 (2019): 108–12.

http://xb-sk.gzhu.edu.cn/CN/volumn/volumn_1199.shtml

“Tariffs and Unintended Consequences: The Case of China’s War on Smuggling,” Columbia University Press Blog (2018). <http://www.cupblog.org/2018/07/19/tariffs-and-unintended-consequences-the-case-of-chinas-war-on-smuggling/>

“Falü, zhuquan yu Zhongguo yanhai jisi zhi zhan” 法律、主权与中国沿海的缉私之战 (Law, Sovereignty, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China), *Falü shi yiping* 法律史译评 (Legal history studies) 5 (2017): 333–62.

“Overseas Chinese, Coastal Smuggling, and Legal Pluralism in the People’s Republic of China,” H-Net World Legal History Blog (2016). <https://networks.h-net.org/node/16794/blog/world-legal-history-blog/142600/overseas-chinese-coastal-smuggling-and-legal>

Fellowships and Awards

Post-doctoral

American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Frederick Burkhardt Fellowship, for residence at Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, 2022–23

American Philosophical Society (APS), Franklin Research Grant, 2019

National Central Library (Taiwan) Center for Chinese Studies (CCS) Research Grant, 2019

Northeastern University Humanities Center Faculty Fellowship, 2018–19

Association for Asian Studies (AAS) First Book Subvention Award, 2017

Northeastern University Richard and Arlene Offenberg History Faculty Fund, 2017

Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH) Dean’s Research Development Initiative Award, 2016

Northeastern University Asian Studies Research Award, 2016

Henry Luce Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) China Studies Postdoctoral Fellowship, 2015–16

J. Willard Hurst Summer Institute in Legal History Institute Fellow, 2015

Yale University Council on East Asian Studies (CEAS) Postdoctoral Fellowship, 2015–16 (declined)

Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Fellowship, 2015 (declined)

Northeastern University Asian Studies Curriculum Award, 2015

National Central Library (Taiwan) Center for Chinese Studies (CCS) Research Grant, 2014

Law and Society Association (LSA) Career Workshop Grant, 2014

Northeastern University Humanities Center Program Award, 2014

Pre-doctoral

Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Doctoral Fellowship, 2012–13

Freeman Spogli Institute (FSI) China Studies Dissertation Grant, 2012–13

Stanford University Department of History Weter Fellowship, 2012

Freeman Spogli Institute (FSI) China Studies Dissertation Grant, 2011–12

Stanford University Department of History Distinguished Scholar, 2009–10

Stanford University Department of History Graduate Student Fellowship, 2006–11

Business History Conference (BHC) Oxford Journals Doctoral Colloquium in Business History Grant, 2011

Social Science Research Council (SSRC) International Dissertation Research Fellowship (IDRF), 2010

Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad (DDRA) Fellowship, 2009–10

Stanford University Graduate School of Humanities and Sciences Graduate Research Opportunity (GRO) Fellowship, 2009

Blakemore-Freeman Fellowship for Advanced Asian Language Study, 2006–07

University of California Berkeley Department of History Highest Honors, 2000

Berkeley Undergraduate Journal Best Paper Prize for “The Quiet Revolution and the ICAC: The Search for Legitimacy in Hong Kong in the 60s and 70s,” 2000

University of California President’s Undergraduate Research Fellowship, 1999–2000

Interviews

Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard on China Podcast (2021).

<https://soundcloud.com/fairbank-center/chinas-war-on-smuggling-with-philip-thai>

American Society for Legal History, Legal History Podcast (2020).

<https://legalhistorypodcast.podbean.com/e/episode-22-philip-thai/>

Northeastern University Library, What’s New Podcast (2020). <https://whatsnewpodcast.org/how-tariffs-made-modern-china/>

New Books Network (NBn), East Asian Studies Podcast (2018). <https://newbooksnetwork.com/philip-thai-chinas-war-on-smuggling-law-economic-life-and-the-making-of-the-modern-state-1842-1965-columbia-up-2018/>

Columbia University, Weatherhead East Asian Institute (WEAI) Q&A (2018).

<http://weai.columbia.edu/weai-author-qa-philip-thai-chinas-war-on-smuggling/>

Northeastern University, Breaking History Podcast (2016).

<https://breakinghistorypodcast.com/2016/10/16/episode-7-history-of-smuggling-in-china-with-philip-thai/>

Select Presentations

Invited Lectures

“Vice City: Hong Kong in the Anglo-American War on Drugs, 1970–1979,” Chinese Business History Webinar, Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HKIHSS), 2021

“China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State,” Summer Book Talk Series, International Society for Chinese Law and History (ISCLH), 2020

“Tariffs, Statecraft, and Smuggling on the China Coast, 1842–1943,” Asian Studies Program and Department of History, Boston College, 2020

“China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State,” The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington, 2019

“China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State,” Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2019

“Xin Zhongguo de yanhai zousi, feifa shichang yu gongsheng jingji (1950–1965)” 新中國的沿海走私、非法市場與共生經濟 (Coastal smuggling, illicit markets, and symbiotic economies in new China), National Central Library (Taiwan), 2019 (in Chinese)

“China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State,” Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS), Stanford University, 2019

“China’s War on Smuggling in Historical Perspective,” Department of History, Brandeis University, 2019

- “Trans-Asian Encounters and China’s War on Smuggling,” Harvard University Asia Center, 2018
- “Legal Shades of Gray: Coastal Trafficking, Underground Markets, and Symbiotic Economies in Socialist China,” Legal History Colloquium, Vanderbilt University, 2016
- “Old Menace in New China: Coastal Smuggling and Illicit Markets under Early Communist Rule,” Institute for Chinese Studies, Ohio State University (OSU), 2015
- “Illicit Economies on the Chinese Coast: An Historical Perspective,” D’Amore-McKim School of Business, Northeastern University, 2014
- “Falü, guojia jianshe yu Zhongguo yanhai jisi zhi zhan” 法律、國家建設與中國沿海緝私之戰, (Law, state-building, and the war on smuggling in coastal China”), National Central Library (Taiwan), 2014 (in Chinese)
- “The War on Smuggling in Coastal China: Law, Policing, and State-Building,” Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University, 2013

Conferences

- “New Directions in Chinese Business History and Economic Life,” American Historical Association (AHR) Annual Conference, 2021 (conference canceled)
- “Vice City: Hong Kong in the Anglo-American War on Drugs, 1970–1979,” Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) Annual Conference, 2020 (conference canceled)
- “Author-Meets-Readers: Philip Thai’s *China’s War on Smuggling: Law, Economic Life, and the Making of the Modern State, 1842–1965*,” American Society for Legal History (ASLH) Annual Conference, 2019
- “Fire Sale: Retailing, Marketing, and Conceptualizing Property Insurance in Modern China,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference, 2018
- “Risky Business: Insurance and the Emergence of Financial Capitalism in Modern China,” American Society for Legal History (ASLH) Annual Conference, 2017
- Roundtable on *Futility of Law and Development: China and the Dangers of Exporting American Law*, International Society for Chinese Legal History (ISCLH) Conference, 2017
- “Gendered Dimensions of Smuggling on the China Coast, 1928–1937,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference, 2017
- Roundtable on “Economic Life in Chinese History: New Research Directions,” New England Region Association for Asian Studies (NEAAS) Annual Conference, 2017
- “Smuggling and Legal Pluralism on the China Coast: The Rise and Demise of the Joint Investigation Rules,” American Society for Legal History (ASLH) Annual Conference, 2016
- “Old Menace in New China: Coastal Smuggling and Illicit Markets in the Early People’s Republic,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference, 2016
- “Smuggling and Legal Pluralism on the China Coast: The Rise and Demise of the Joint Investigation Rules,” “Voyages, Migration and the Maritime Silk Road: An International Symposium on China’s Role in Global History,” Hong Kong Baptist University, 2015
- “Smuggler, Peddler, Patriot, Spy: Illicit Coastal Trade in the Early People’s Republic,” “Doing Business across Borders,” Hagley Museum and Library, 2015
- “‘One Complementing the Other’: Legal Reforms, Illicit Businesses, and the War on Smuggling,” “Globalism and the Law in Historical Perspective,” Legal History Consortium Conference, Indiana University Maurer School of Law, 2015

“Binding Maritime China: Control, Evasion, and Interloping,” Co-organized with Boston University and Brandeis University, 2015

“Smuggling and Interdiction along Coastal China,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference, 2013

“Legal Sovereignty and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China,” American Historical Association (AHA) Annual Conference, 2013

“Law, Business, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China,” Business History Conference (BHC), 2012

“Law, State-Building, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference, 2012

Workshops

“Formal Barriers, Informal Commerce: Economic Connections in Greater China during the Cold War,” International Society for Chinese Legal History (ISCLH) Research Workshop, Yale Law School, 2018

“Anti-Smuggling Campaigns and the Expansion of State Authority on the China Coast,” “Maritime Asia: Securitization of the China Seas in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” Institute of East Asian Studies (IEAS), University of California, Berkeley, 2018

“Things Fall Apart? State Re-Building and New Geographies of Coastal Smuggling in Civil War China,” “New Perspectives on the Chinese Civil War,” Council on East Asian Studies (CEAS), Yale University, 2016

“Unscrupulous Merchants, Illicit Joint Ventures, and the Business of Smuggling,” “Rethinking Business History in Modern China, 1839–1937,” Institute of Chinese Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, 2014

“Smuggling is a Business’: Regulations, Sovereignty, and Markets,” “Rethinking the Market in Modern China,” Joint Center for History and Economics, Harvard University, 2014

“Law, State-Building, and the War on Smuggling in Coastal China,” “International Workshop on Chinese Legal History, Culture, and Modernity,” Columbia University, 2012

Discussant and Chair

Chair, “Legal and Intellectual Constructs of Empire,” “Law and Empire in the Sino-Asian Context” Workshop, Co-hosted by American Society for Legal History (ASLH), International Society for Chinese Law and History (ISCLH), and Harvard Law School Program in East Asian Studies, 2019

Discussant and Chair, “Smuggling, Violence, and State in East Asian Maritime World,” Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference, 2019

Discussant and Chair, “Reading Legal Texts in Chinese History: Sources, Materiality, and Authority,” American Society for Legal History (ASLH) Annual Conference, 2018

Chair, “The Chinese Question: Gold Rushes and Global Politics,” talk by Mae Ngai (Columbia University), Harvard University Asia Center, 2017

Chair, “Revolution at the Canteen: Food and Labor Politics in Industrial China, 1910s–1950s,” talk by Seung-joon Lee (National University of Singapore), Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2014

Discussant and Chair, “Riots, Rights, and Radicals: Social Movements and Memory,” Northeastern University World History Conference, 2014

Discussant and Chair, “Comparative Studies of Tax Policy Regimes,” Social Science History Association (SSHA) Annual Conference, 2013

Courses Taught

ASNS/HIST 1150: East Asian Studies
 CLTR/HIST 1500: Modern Chinese History and Culture
 HIST 2308: Law, Justice, and Society in Modern China
 HIST 2360: History of Capitalism in East Asia
 HIST 3330: The Global Cold War

Academic Service

Modern China Book Review Editor, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 2020–present
 Member, Finance Committee, American Society for Legal History (ASLH), 2019–present
 Member, Executive Committee, Northeastern University Asian Studies Program, 2014–present
 Chair, Development Committee, International Society for Chinese Law and History (ISCLH), 2014–present
 Member, Northeastern University Department of History Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, 2014, 2017–present
 Member, Northeastern University Department of History Graduate Admissions Committee, 2016–2019
 Member, Northeastern University Department of History Faculty Advisory Committee on Salaries (FACS), 2015
 Coordinator, Stanford University Japanese Imperial Maps as Sources for East Asian History Conference, 2011
 Member, Stanford University East Asian History Graduate Admissions Committee, 2011 and 2009
 Lead Organizer, University of California-Stanford University Chinese History Conference, 2006

Reviewer

Law and History Review, *Modern Asian Studies*, *Modern China*, Columbia University Weatherhead East Asian Institute, University of Hawai'i Press

Other Education

Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), 2009
 Yale-China Chinese Language Center (CLC)
 Tsinghua University, Beijing, China, 2006–07
 Inter-University Program (IUP) for Advanced Chinese Language Studies
 University of California, Berkeley Extension, 2001–02
 Certification in Corporate Finance with Distinction
 Peking University, Beijing, China, 1998–99
 University of California Education Abroad Program (EAP)

Languages

Mandarin: Advanced fluency
 Cantonese: Native speaker
 Japanese: Reading knowledge

Technical Skills

Geographic Information System (GIS), SPSS, and Excel (advanced statistical functions)
Oracle Certified Programmer for the Java 2 Platform
Passed Level I Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Exam

Professional Affiliations

American Historical Association (AHA)
American Society for Legal History (ASLH)
Association for Asian Studies (AAS)
Business History Conference (BHC)
Economic History Society (EHS)
Harvard University Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies Associate in Research
Historical Society for Twentieth-Century China (HSTCC)
International Society for Chinese Law and History (ISCLH)
Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR)

References

Matthew H. Sommer

Professor

Department of History

Stanford University

(650) 723-4452

msommer@stanford.edu

Kären Wigen

Frances and Charles Field Professor

Department of History

Stanford University

(650) 725-5282

kwigen@stanford.edu

Wen-hsin Yeh

Richard H. and Laurie C. Morrison Professor

Department of History

University of California, Berkeley

(510) 642-2437

sha@berkeley.edu

Thomas Havens

Professor

Department of History

Northeastern University

(617) 373-8178

t.havens@northeastern.edu