

Rosenberg Library Announces Museum Book Club Spring Selection

Rosenberg Library is pleased to announce its selection for the Spring 2016 Museum Club series: *When America First Met China - An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* by Eric Jay Dolin. Both informative and entertaining, the book explores the historical origins of the often turbulent trade relationship between America and China.

The first meeting of the Spring Museum Book Club will take place on Wednesday, March 30 from 12 noon – 1:00 p.m. A second session will be held on Thursday, May 12 from 12 noon – 1:00 p.m. The Museum Book Club will meet in the McCullough Room located on the library's 2nd floor. Light refreshments are provided at all sessions.

ABOUT THE BOOK

In 1784, the *Empress of China* became the first ship to sail from America — a newly formed nation — to the ancient empire of China. The Chinese were eager to receive silver, furs, sandalwood, and other goods transported by American merchants. At the same time, Americans sought silk, porcelain, and above all else, tea. Dolin provides colorful descriptions of the politicians, merchants, and sea captains who forged these critical trade alliances.

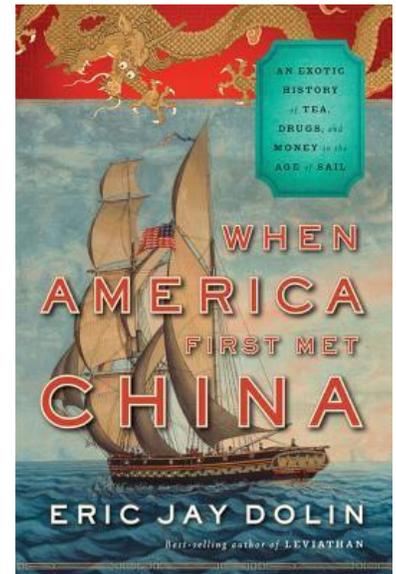
Dolin also explores the devastating effect that trade had on the environment and the ecological devastation that occurred from over-hunting marine animals and from obliterating forests. The toll on human life was also catastrophic. Thousands of Chinese people were exported to the Caribbean where they were exploited as enslaved laborers in the sugarcane fields. Further, the vast quantities of opium which were imported by both nations led to widespread drug abuse and addiction.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eric Dolin grew up near the New England coast and has had a lifelong fascination with the sea. He holds an M.A. in Environmental Management from Yale University and a Ph.D. in Environmental Policy and Planning from MIT.

Dolin has published numerous articles in magazines and professional journals and has written several bestselling books related to maritime and environmental history.

He lives with his family in Marblehead, Massachusetts. Other award-winning books by Dolin include *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America* and *Leviathan: A History of Whaling in America*. He is currently writing *Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse*.



Cover image of *When America First Met China* by Eric Jay Dolin.

FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Rosenberg Library's historical collections include a variety of items related to 19th century trade between America and China. During the Museum Book Club program, library staff will share an assortment of items brought from China to America by sailing ship during the 1800s. These include soapstone carvings, sandalwood fans, and silk paintings. Other interesting pieces are lacquered boxes featuring Chinese designs and back scratchers made of bamboo and ivory.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM BOOK CLUB

Rosenberg Library's Museum Book Club offers participants the chance to experience art and literature in a more interactive way. Members have the opportunity to view rarely exhibited art and historical artifacts from the library's permanent collection as they discuss related books.

Registration is required for all Museum Book Club meetings. Established book clubs are encouraged to participate. Groups of over 10 people are asked to call the Reference Desk in advance to arrange accommodations.

When America First Met China is available at Rosenberg Library in [hard copy](#) or as a Cloud Library by bibliotheca [e-book](#).