COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

China’s 20th-century revolutions provide historians with an introduction to how modern nation-states have been formed amidst the encounter between industrial modernity and pre-industrial agrarian empires. In this class we will engage in close reading of primary sources to understand how the revolutionary process took place from the perspective of contemporary participants and observers, using what we learn from these documents to assess the conclusions of other historians. In addition, we will compare successive generations of scholarship to examine how the writing of history about China’s revolutions—that is to say, the historiography of modern China—has changed over time.

Some of the key themes addressed in this course will include:
- The forces which pushed forward China’s revolutionary process;
- How successive visions of revolution were implemented, politically, economically, culturally, and socially;
- The limitations which revolution encountered, and the inequalities which persisted in spite of (or, in some cases, as a result of) the particular forms of revolutionary state-making espoused by China’s modern leaders;
- Other, related aspects of China’s modern history which have received significant attention from contemporary historians.

Ultimately, the goal of this course is not solely to impart knowledge concerning China’s revolutions (what educators would call a “content” goal) but also build skills in the following areas as part of a larger, evidence-driven agenda:
- Understanding and testing of big themes, often derived from social science and historiographical literature (e.g. revolution, state-society relations, imperialism, etc.), within a specific global and/or historical context;
- Effective reading and writing which allows you to engage constructively and critically with existing interpretations in a scholarly field;
- The ability to situate historical arguments, and evidence, within a broader spatial framework;
- Understanding of political events and micro-processes in relationship to long-term demographic and secular trends;
- Sensing where the fallacies of historical argument may lie;
- Confidence participating in an intellectually open-ended and inquiry-based environment.
Our general strategy will thus be to integrate all aspects of the course into the classroom through discussion, peer workshopping of writing, and other in-class exercises. This approach requires significant out-of-class preparation, and as a result participation and engagement will be significant components of how your performance in the course is evaluated.

COURSE TEXTS


Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, China, and Russia* (Cambridge University Press, 1979)

In addition, many readings intended to complement these texts will be posted on PWeb. You are expected to have access to these readings during each class session for which they will be covered.

**NOTE:** All readings and assignments indicated on the syllabus are to be completed by the class meeting indicated. An emailed reading guide for each week will be circulated in advance (usually by the end of the previous Thursday) to aid you in negotiating the reading and other upcoming assignments; provide additional resources; and clarify points made during previous class meetings. In general:

I. For **primary sources** (texts produced during the period under investigation, i.e. pieces of the historical record):
   1) What was the writer’s intent in creating that text?
   2) Who or what is the subject of the piece? Whom does the author claim to represent or speak for?
   3) Who was the intended audience? How does the author attempt to connect with that audience?
   4) What kind of story is the author trying to tell, and how does he/she structure that narrative? What argument does the author seek to advance? Which passage best exemplifies the underlying point of the piece?
   5) What rationale or evidence does the author employ to make his/her case? Which elements of the story are factual, and which are subject to interpretation?
   6) What was the larger historical context in which the author was working?
   7) What kind of background or bias shaped the author’s message?  
   *(Note: if any of above questions cannot be answered by the text itself, or if any textual references are unclear, do a little online digging!)*

II. For **secondary sources** (historians’ analyses of the past):
   1) What question is the writer posing?
   2) How does the author answer that question? Which sentence(s) best state the writer’s overall argument?
3) What other interpretation(s) does the author appear to be arguing against?
4) How does the author develop the argument throughout the piece? What are the sub-arguments that bolster the main argument? What kind of story is the author trying to tell?

5) How does the author use evidence to prove the argument? (Note: you need to read footnotes in order to answer that question!)

You may be called upon to provide answers to any/all questions that apply on a given day, and to support your answers with specific points in the text.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week One

[No class meeting scheduled]

1. China’s Revolutions: The Fairbank-ian Perspective

Week Two: The Old Order; Theories of Revolution

MONDAY, AUG. 31

[Handout, “An Introduction to China’s Modern History”]

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 2

- Fairbank, The Great Chinese Revolution, 1-45

[Geography exercise]

Week Three: The Transformation of Late Imperial China

MONDAY, SEPT. 7

- Fairbank, The Great Chinese Revolution, 46-121

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 9

- Fairbank, The Great Chinese Revolution, 125-163
- Liang Qichao, “The Renovation of the People” (1902), in Teng and Fairbank, China’s Response to the West, pp. 220-223 [PWeb]
- [Press Coverage of the Wuchang Uprising] (1911); “The Nineteen Articles” (November 3, 1911); “Edict of Abdication” (February 12, 1912), in Cheng and Lestz, The Search for Modern China, pp. 206-213 [PWeb].

[Discussion of Fairbank paper assignment]
Week Four:
MONDAY, SEPT. 14
- Excerpts from: Sun Yat-sen, [Theory of Knowledge and Action] (1919) and [Adoption of the Russian Party System] (1923); Liang Qichao, [Review of China’s Progress, 1873-1919] (1922), in Teng and Fairbank, *China’s Response to the West*, pp. 258-274 [PWeb]
- “Manifesto of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang” (January 30, 1924); excerpts from Dai Qitao, *The National Revolution and the Chinese Kuomintang* (1925) and *The Road for Youth* (1928), in Gentzler, *Changing China*, pp. 193-205 [PWeb]

[Film and discussion, *China: A Century in Revolution*]

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 16

[Film and discussion, *China: A Century in Revolution*]

Week Five:
MONDAY, SEPT. 21
- “Mao Zedong on War and Revolution,” *Asia for Educators* website, [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1900_mao_war.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1900_mao_war.htm)

[Fairbank paper workshop]

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23
- Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 316-368

[Film and discussion, *China: A Century in Revolution*]

**Due Friday: Paper, “China’s Revolution in History and the Historical Record”

2. *The Republican Era Revisited*

Week Six: The State
MONDAY, SEPT. 28
- Dikötter, *The Age of Openness*, 1-52

**WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 30**


**Week Seven: Urban Culture**

**MONDAY, OCT. 5**

- Dikötter, *The Age of Openness*, 53-102

[Discussion of Republican China historiography paper assignment]

**WEDNESDAY, OCT. 7**


[Discussion, *Ling Long Women’s Magazine*]

**Week Eight: China and the World**

**MONDAY, OCT. 12**


[Republican China historiography paper workshop]

**WEDNESDAY, OCT. 14**


**Due Friday: “Historiography of China’s Republican Era”

**FALL BREAK, Oct. 19-23**

3. *The Communist Revolution Revisited*

**Week Nine: Early Chinese Communism**
MONDAY, OCT. 26


[Timeline of Chinese Communist revolution]

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 28


[Geography of Chinese Communist revolution]

Week Ten: Maoism and Stalinism

MONDAY, NOV. 2

- Walder, *China Under Mao*, 1-39


WEDNESDAY, NOV. 4

- Walder, *China Under Mao*, 40-81


[Discussion of Communist revolution historiography paper assignment]

Week Eleven: High Socialism – A Civilization and Its Discontents

MONDAY, NOV. 9
**Film and discussion, title TBA**

**Note: on Monday evening there will be a special event featuring writer Xu Xing which will consist of a film screening and conversation with the director.**

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 11**

- Walder, *China Under Mao*, pp. 152-199

**Week Twelve: The Cultural Revolution and After**

**MONDAY, NOV. 16**

- Walder, *China Under Mao*, pp. 200-286
- *Morning Sun* website and film, sections TBA

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 18**

- Walder, *China Under Mao*, pp. 287-344

**Due Friday: paper, “Historiography of China’s Communist Revolution”**

3. **Theorizing China’s Revolutions**

**Week Thirteen: Theories of Social Revolution**

**MONDAY, NOV. 23**

- Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, pp. 1-43
- Kathleen Hartford and Steven M. Goldstein, “Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution,” in Hartford and Goldstein, eds., *Single Sparks: China’s Rural Revolutions* (M. E. Sharpe, 1989), pp. 3-33 [PWeb]

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 25**

- Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, pp. 47-111


**Week Fourteen: Beyond Social Revolution Theory**

**MONDAY, NOV. 30**

- Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, pp. 112-118, 147-157


**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 2**

- Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, pp. 161-173, 236-293

**Week Fifteen: Presentations**

**MONDAY, DEC. 7**

[Presentations]

**Due Monday: paper draft, “Defining and Explaining ‘Revolution’ in Modern China”**

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 9**

[Presentations]

**EXAM WEEK, DEC. 14-18**

Revised paper, “Defining and Explaining ‘Revolution’ in China,” due by Friday, 5pm, 12/18/2015

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Contribution to class discussions (25%)

Although class days will also include some short lectures and group work, the vast majority of our time together will be devoted to collective discussion. History happens in dialogue; therefore, I really do evaluate class participation. If you do not participate regularly and substantively, you will receive a significantly lower grade for the course. Note that this mode of evaluation assigns more worth to the quality than the quantity of your participation each day; offering one thoughtful, helpful, and well-substantiated comment will earn you more points than dominating the discussion with unfounded or tangential observations. Absences will be excused for personal issues, health issues, or extracurricular commitments if/when accompanied by documentation from the appropriate office. Late arrivals, early departures, and leaving the room during class time are disruptive and will be duly noted when calculating your participation. To prepare for discussion, you should
engage in two levels of inquiry with the reading. The first is to understand what the texts are saying. To that end, you should come to class prepared to address the discussion questions concerning each assigned text, including marking where in the text you see these elements at work:

I do understand that speaking up in class is difficult for some people. As in honing any critical skill, contribution to group discussions requires strategy, practice, and feedback. The above requirements are designed to help you become more adept and more comfortable with posing and answering questions and responding to others’ ideas. I will provide additional written opportunities for feedback flowing from you to me as well.

What is meant by participation? Demonstration of thorough presentation for class meetings. Active participation in all group assignments. Thoughtful engagement with the ideas of classmates.

Papers (70% total)
Paper length is approximately 5-6 pages exclusive of references. You will be given opportunities to draft, workshop, and revise your work prior to submission.
- First paper, “China’s Revolution in History and the Historical Record,” 15%
- Second paper, “The Historiography of China’s Republican Era,” 15%
- Third paper, “The Historiography of China’s Communist Revolution,” 20%
- Final paper, “Defining and Explaining ‘Revolution’ in Modern China, 20%"

End-of-Semester Presentation (5%)
These short, group presentations (approximately 15-20 minutes total) will give you the opportunity to collaborate with classmates on developing your own explanation of China’s revolutionary process. What has revolution meant to participants and to historians? Do these attempts to understand and frame revolution effectively account for the wide range of observable interactions that revolution seems to entail?