

**HIS 295: Special Topics--Modern China
History from the Margins**

Fall Term 2022
Monday, Wednesday 2:30-3:50 PM
Rosenfeld (JRC) 203

Instructor: Jomo Smith, smithjomo@grinnell.edu

Office: HSSC N3148

Office Hours: On campus daily; feel free to schedule a time.

Communicating with the professor: Email communication works best if you simply wish to inform me of something or ask me a question. I will do my best to respond to your inquiries within 48 hours. Naturally, you can always grab me after class or visit me during office hours. Please note that answers to many questions are often in the syllabus or in previous emails from the professor.

Some have described the past as a foreign or undiscovered country, a distant land of strange names and practices that pale in comparison to our robust, information age. Instead of revering our ancestors, as traditional Chinese would regularly do, we often look upon their actions as quaint or relics of a misguided age. In contrast to that approach, this class will use the history of 18th, 19th and 20th century China as a guide for understanding China's present. Although the bulk of our time will deal with issues in the 20th century, earlier centuries provide an indispensable context for current dilemmas. We will employ a comprehensive textbook, films, works of literature and memoirs as we seek to understand China's search for a rejuvenated identity and place in the world.

While we are geographically far removed from China and its people, our task is to see Chinese history through their eyes, as much as possible. Whether those eyes belong to intellectuals, politicians, militarists, peasants, students, disaffected women, or subjugated minorities, through them all we can form a more complete picture of a modernizing and transformative China. This transformative, civilizational-state is important not only because China is always in the news, but because a country with such a vast and complicated history has many things to teach the world. My hope is that China's past will cease to be a distant and undiscovered country and that you will find lessons that have applicability in our time and, perhaps, in your own lives.

***Disclaimer:** This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the professor reserves the right to modify, supplement and make changes as the course needs arise.*

Learning Objectives

1. Develop the ability to read and write by analyzing sources and supporting one's arguments through evidence
2. Increase awareness, knowledge and sensitivity toward non-western cultures and societies

3. Demonstrate that the “past” is not static, but it is continuously being reconstructed according to present and often competing interests

Required Text

- R. Keith Schoppa, *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History, 4th Edition* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2020) **Hereafter: Schoppa**

There are many other article-length readings throughout the course, usually two per week. They will be available for you to download on Blackboard.

You are expected to complete all readings *prior to* the class session for which they are assigned. Completing your readings before class will enable you to follow my lectures and relevant films. Keeping up with your readings will ensure that you have an easier time completing assignments when they are due.

How to Read

- Survey: Reading to survey main ideas; OK to skip entire portions of text
- Understand: Reading to understand the meaning of each sentence
- Engage: Reading while also working out problems, drawing inferences, questioning, and evaluating

While reading to “engage” with the text is the slowest form of reading, it is also the manner that will provide you with the deepest level of understanding and expand your mind.

Assignments and Grading

Attendance and Participation: **20%**

Article Critique: **10%**

Reading Reflections: **30%**

Film Review: **10%**

Weekly Discussion Question: **10%**

Final Term Paper: **20%**

Total: **100%**

You are being graded on a standard spread, where an A is 94-100%.

1. In any given class, there are usually a few students who regularly participate and ask questions in class. This level of participation is often indicative of the student’s level of engagement with the course material. For students like these, who might be a hair away from a higher grade, it is my prerogative to bump them up. Thus, active classroom participation will only help your overall grade. Commenting and asking questions is also a great way to

check your comprehension of the course material. Attendance and active participation account for **20%** of your grade.

2. I will give you all formal instructions on how to read, analyze and critique an academic journal article. I will then ask you to write a critique for an upcoming article in the syllabus. You only have to do this once in the semester. This portion of your grade amounts to **10%**.
3. Three times during the semester, you will need to submit a reflection essay on recent readings and topics that we have broached in class. These reflection pieces can be more introspective than the critique assignment above. You can also choose to submit your reflections at any point in the semester. Reading reflections account for **30%** of your overall grade.
4. There are a number of films spread throughout the course. We will watch portions of some of them in class. For your final paper, where you might wish to cite a film, I will also share scholarly review articles. A film review of one selected film accounts for **10%** of your grade.
5. While the professor will lead most classroom discussions, you can come prepared to class by composing a discussion question of your own. This discussion question should be written on paper and handed to the professor in class. Discussion questions are expected once per week. In total, they will also be worth **10%** of your overall grade. In general, we will hold lengthy discussions of the scholarly articles on Wednesdays.
6. To sum up all that we have been reading and discussing in class, students will submit a research paper at the end of the semester. Further details will be provided later, but your paper topics should connect to themes raised in the course. Total: **20%** of your grade.

Week 1

Monday, August 29: Introductions

Wednesday, August 31: China through space and time; the importance of geography and shifting borders

Suggested Film: Presents an overview of various places in China, with some history. It's the most accurate one, of reasonable length, that I could find on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeI3Ni7m46g&list=PLERBgbXWZL08j5OmoKhMjwrKiVCnQilm7&index=51&t=1115s>

Week 2

Monday, Sept 5: Identities and disaggregating China and “the Chinese”

Wednesday, Sept 7: China and it's people: a multiethnic civilization with one overwhelming majority

Questions to keep in mind: How do we construct and define race? What makes someone Chinese? Is there a difference between the Chinese “race” versus Chinese nationality? How many non-Chinese groups have ruled the Middle Kingdom?

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 1

Crossley, Pamela Kyle. “Thinking About Ethnicity in Early Modern China.” *Late Imperial China* 11, no. 1 (1990): 1–35.

Perdue, Peter C. “China and Other Colonial Empires.” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16, no. 1/2, (2009): 85–103.

Week 3

Monday, Sept 12: Whither the Manchus: Qing China at its height and the coming crisis

Wednesday, Sept 14: Clash with the West: The Opium Wars and unequal treaties

Suggested Film: The Opium War 鴉片戰爭, Directed by Xie Jin, 1997

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBayNugXIU0&list=PLERBgbXWZL08j5OmoKhMjwrKiVCnQiIm7&index=47>

Questions to keep in mind: How did the Confucian elites of the Qing dynasty view those outside their cultural sphere? How did these views impact foreign relations? Was the Opium War inevitable, and who was really at fault for the crisis?

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 2 and Ch. 3

Adelman, Jeremy, and Stephen Aron. “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History.” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 814.

Adas, Michael. “Imperialism and Colonialism in Comparative Perspective.” *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (1998): 371–88.

Week 4

Monday, Sept 19: Rebellions—“Christian”, Muslim and Millenarian; Other markers of the “Century of Humiliation”

Wednesday, Sept 21: The dynasty tries to reform itself; Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and other iconoclastic thinkers

Questions to keep in mind: What do so many rebellions in the 19th century Qing dynasty tell us about the state of the dynasty? What were the different ways that each rebellion was brought under control? How did the dynasty survive? What group of people in the Qing court were anti-reform?

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 4 and Ch. 5

Atwill, David G. "Blinkered Visions: Islamic Identity, Hui Ethnicity, and the Panthay Rebellion in Southwest China, 1856—1873." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 4 (2003): 1079-1108.

Oidtmann, Max. "Overlapping Empires: Religion, Politics, and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Qinghai." *Late Imperial China* 37, no. 2 (2016): 41–91.

Week 5

Monday, Sept 26 and Wednesday, Sept 28:: Dynastic reform defeated at home; Dynastic salvation threatened abroad

Questions to keep in mind: Why was the first Sino-Japanese War fought over influence in Korea? Why was Japan so much stronger than China at this time?

Suggested films-- To Live 活著, Director: Zhang Yimou, 1994 OR Farewell my Concubine 霸王別姬, Director: Chen Kaige, 1993

To Live:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKttEgcGZsM&list=PLERBgbXWZL08j5OmoKhMjwrKiVCnQi1m7&index=44&t=1557s>

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 6

Duara, Prasenjit. "De-Constructing the Chinese Nation." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 30 (July 1993): 1–26.

Mosca, Matthew W. "The Literati Rewriting of China in the Qianlong-Jiaqing Transition." *Late Imperial China* 32, no. 2 (2011): 89–132.

Week 6

Monday, Oct 3: The first revolutionaries and the collapse of the Qing dynasty

Wednesday, Oct 5: Early Republican era China and birth pains

Questions to keep in mind: How did many intellectuals, reformers, and revolutionaries characterize China and its people during these decades? What steps did they feel were necessary to correct the ship of state and, somehow, change the people?

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 7 and Ch. 8

Leibold, James. "Competing Narratives of Racial Unity in Republican China: From the Yellow Emperor to Peking Man." *Modern China* 32, no. 2 (2006): 181–220.

Dikötter, Frank. "Racial Identities in China: Context and Meaning." *The China Quarterly* 138 (June 1994): 404–12.

Week 7

Monday, Oct 10: Down with Confucius! We want "Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy"

Wednesday, Oct 12: Seeking order amidst Warlord disorder: the birth of the Nationalist (KMT) and Communist (CCP) parties

Suggested film: The beginning of the great revival AKA The founding of a party 建黨偉業, Directed by Huang Jianxin and Han Sanping, 2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEDv6MaYTkY&list=PLERBgbXWZL08j5OmoKhMjwrKiVCnQiIm7&index=44>

Questions to keep in mind: What motivated students and intellectuals in the May 4th movement? Why was Confucianism and traditional thought deemed so problematic? Are political parties the best way to organize people in the modern world?

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 9 and Ch. 10

Lü Xun (Hsun), *The True Story of Ah Q* in Masterpieces of Modern Chinese Fiction, 1919-1949, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1983

[Fall Break]: October 15-23

Week 8

Monday, Oct 24 and Wednesday, Oct 26: Taming China's Wild, Wild West?

Suggested Film: The Serf 農奴, Director: Jun Li, 1963

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HN70Ms9Yerk>

Part 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ats_Wx9c4LI

Readings: Uradyn Bulag, "Going Imperial: Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism and Nationalisms in China and Inner Asia," in Esherick, Kayali and Young eds. *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, pp. 260-295

Week 9

Monday, Oct 31: Ruling China (parts of it) from Nanjing vs the reality in warlord-controlled regions—China in the late 1920s and 30s

Wednesday, Nov 2: Communist base camps, land reform and the Long March to Yan'an

Suggested Film: Red Sorghum 紅高粱, Director: Zhang Yimou, 1991

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-E3Iv5HJsCI&t=272s>

Questions to keep in mind: How do we explain the differences in rural China vs urban and treaty port China? Which groups of people were trying to change the conditions for rural Chinese? What made these conditions ripe for communism?

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 11 and Ch. 12

Shen Congwen, "Meijin, Baozi, and the White Kid," in Jeffrey Kinkley, trans., *Imperfect Paradise: Twenty-Four Stories* (pp. 81-96)

Joniak-Lüthi, Agnieszka. "The Han *Minzu*, Fragmented Identities, and Ethnicity." *J of Asian Stud* 72, no. 4 (November 2013): 849–71.

Week 10

Monday, Nov 7: At loggerheads with Japan; Manchuria becomes a Japanese colony

Wednesday, Nov 9: China's experience of WW2—the 2nd Sino-Japanese War

Suggested Films— *City of Life and Death* 南京！南京！, *Directed by Lu Chuan, 2009* OR *Lust, Caution* 色戒, *Directed by Ang Lee, 2007*

Questions to keep in mind: Why is there a difference in how nations remember historical events? What conditions lead to excesses in warfare?

Readings: Schoppa, Chs. 13, 14 and 15

Rodriguez, Andres. "Building the Nation, Serving the Frontier: Mobilizing and Reconstructing China's Borderlands during the War of Resistance (1937–1945)." *Mod. Asian Stud.* 45, no. 2 (March 2011): 345–76.

Fiskesjö, Magnus. "Rescuing the empire: Chinese nation-building in the twentieth century." *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2006): 15-44.

Week 11

Monday, Nov 14: The structure and organization of Communist China; the honeymoon years and anti-imperialism

Wednesday, Nov 16: Mao Zedong unleashed: the Anti-rightist campaign and the beginnings of constant revolution, death and chaos

Questions to keep in mind: What accounts for the far, extreme turn taken by the Chinese Communist Party in the late 1950s? Why did Mao begin to see enemies lurking everywhere? Was Mao simply seeking revolutionary purity?

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 16 and Ch. 17

Howland, Douglas. "The Dialectics of Chauvinism: Minority Nationalities and Territorial Sovereignty in Mao Zedong's New Democracy." *Modern China* 37, no. 2 (2011): 170-201.

Esherick, Joseph W. "On the 'Restoration of Capitalism': Mao and Marxist Theory." *Modern China* 5, no. 1 (1979): 41-77.

Week 12

Monday, Nov 21 and Wednesday, Nov 23: The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: 10 years of madness

Suggested Films: Morning Sun (documentary), Directors: Carma Hinton, Geremie R. Barmé, Richard Gordon, 2005

Associated website: <http://www.morningsun.org>

The East is Red 東方紅, Director: Wang Ping, 1964

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQaK3tL6qIE&list=PLERBgbXWZL08j5OmoKhMjwrKiVCnQiIm7&index=15&t=5005s>

Questions to keep in mind: What were the causes of the Cultural Revolution (not an easy question)? What groups of people suffered, and how did they suffer? Do you think that Mao and other actors reached their aims? What were the social, political, economic, and cultural consequences of this wide-ranging movement?

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 18

Young, Graham. "Mao Zedong and the class struggle in socialist society." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 16 (1986): 41-80.

Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy" (Jan 15, 1940) in Timothy Cheek, *Mao Zedong and China's Revolutions: A brief history with documents* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 76-111

Mao Zedong, "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People" (June 1957) in Timothy Cheek, *Mao Zedong and China's Revolutions: A brief history with documents* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 127-159

Happy Thanksgiving!!! Enjoy your break from your other classes.

Week 13

Monday, Nov 28: Historical memory and the problem of victim/victimizer; Cult of Mao

Wednesday, Nov 30: Seismic shift: Political/economic reforms and an open door to the world

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 19

Questions to keep in mind: Whose voice is more important in this era of Chinese history—the victim or the victimizer? How did Deng Xiaoping accomplish his political heist in the wake of Mao's death?

Perry, Elizabeth. "Moving the masses: Emotion work in the Chinese Revolution." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (2002): 111-128.

Week 14

Monday, Dec 5: Angry youth? A retrospective on June 4, 1989 and post June 4th reforms

Wednesday, Dec 7: Development and assimilation of frontier peoples

Suggested Films: *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, Directed by Richard Gordon and Carma Hinton, 1995

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Gtt2JxmQtg&t=61s>

Associated website: <http://www.tsquare.tv>

Film—Kekexili (Mountain Patrol), Director: Lu Chuan, 2005 (available on Amazon Prime and Vudu)

Readings: Schoppa, Ch. 20 and Ch. 21

Questions to keep in mind: How does the CCP legitimize its rule and what tools is it using, effectively, to stay in power and in the graces of the Chinese people?

Suggested Film Series for the whole course:

China: A century of Revolution, 1911-1949

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5cl0GjPjy4&t=7s>

China: A century of Revolution, 1949-1976

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJyoX_vrlns&t=2s

China: A century of Revolution, 1976-1994

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwiCDl6B7TY>

University Policies and Course Policies

Attendance:

Your attendance, particularly in a small class, is really important. I will automatically excuse two absences for emergencies or anything else that may come up in your life. Absences beyond two will only be granted with a doctor's note attesting to a dire illness. If you have a condition that requires you to leave class periodically, please notify the instructor and sit near a door.

The college's overall attendance policy can be read [here](#). Students who plan to observe holy days that coincide with class meetings or assignment due dates should consult with me in the first three weeks of classes so that we may reach a mutual understanding of how you can meet the terms of your religious observance and also the requirements for this course. Please also speak with me if you need to miss class due to an athletic event or another co-curricular activity.

Honesty/Intellectual Integrity:

Consult and follow the rules for Academic Honesty in the Grinnell College Student Handbook and the college catalog. You can see the academic catalog policies on academic honesty [here](#). It is the college's expectation that students be aware of and meet the expectations expressed in this policy. If you have any questions about how a particular assignment relates to the College's policy, please consult with me in advance of the assignment's due date. Any suspected case of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Committee of Academic Standing.

Learning Needs:

Creating a fully inclusive classroom is important to me as an instructor; thus I welcome you to approach me directly about any distinctive learning needs that apply to you. Specifically, I encourage students with disabilities to have a conversation with me and disclose how our classroom or course activities might impact the disability and what accommodations would be essential to them. Students with disabilities will also need to have a conversation about their disability with the Coordinator for Disability Resources, Jae Hirschman (hirschma@grinnell.edu), located on the 1st floor of Steiner Hall. Appropriate documentation is required for this process.

Statement on Diversity and Inclusion:

All students should feel welcome in this course, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability, economic background, religious belief, or political perspective. I will work hard to create a classroom environment where everyone feels safe and has the opportunity to have his or her voice heard. This includes referring to you by the pronoun of your choice. Please recognize that any occasional lapses are not intentional.