

## Spring 2023, History 295-01: China from the Margins

Tuesday: 10:00-11:50 AM and Thursday 10-10:50 AM

HSSC S3321

Instructor: Jomo Smith, [smithjomo@grinnell.edu](mailto:smithjomo@grinnell.edu)

Office: HSSC N3148

Office Hours: Schedule a time with me or just drop by. I'm usually in my office, even after 5pm.

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

China on the Margins. What do we mean by marginality? Certainly, the margins can include those who are different in terms of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, and political ideology. Throughout recent Chinese history, we can find ample examples of all of the above. Marginality also comes from not taking part in what some scholars call the “cultural master narrative”. In our case, those living on the margins are not seen as central or essential to the grand narrative of history in China and thus can be easily ignored. Their stories, we have often thought, do not matter, and perhaps their futures matter even less. In recent decades, Western scholars of Chinese history have been showing how those on China’s periphery, or margins, have been key to how dynasties (and the current nation-state) understand themselves. In other words, we now seek to make the periphery the center and bring the margins into the core. If the tail end of last dynasty is any guide, what happens in China’s less populated western regions can threaten the longevity of the reigning government. Surely the ancients were right when they said 水則載舟、水則覆舟 (water not only floats the boat, it also sinks it). Thus, in this class, we aim to consider the stories and experiences of different marginalized groups of people living within China’s territory. Perhaps their histories will help us to look at our world through very different lenses.

### Required Texts:

Ha Guangtian, ed. *The Contest of the Fruits*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021)

Nulo, Naktsang. *My Tibetan Childhood: When Ice Shattered Stone*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014)

Yang Kuisong. *Eight Outcasts: Social and Political Marginalization in China Under Mao*. (Berkeley, CA: Univ of California Press, 2019)

## *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.

## **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

**Assessments and Grading:** Your grade for this course consists of the following categories

Attendance and Participation: 5%

Music and art as cultural expression: 5%

Map Quiz (Week 4): 5%

Weekly Reaction Papers (1 pg.): 25%

Film Review: 10%

Uyghur music and poetry (Week 8): 10%

Tibet policy brief (Week 10): 15%

Research Paper: 25%

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

Music/Cultural Expression: The purpose of this assignment is to further expose you to aspects of Chinese cultural production. While the course will be addressing very complicated and thorny topics, this first assignment dovetails with the scholarly articles that examine China from a wider lens. Music, art, and other forms of cultural production also allow us to take a 30,000 foot view of society and consider what the various forms of art tell us about values, interests, and preoccupations.

You are tasked with finding a piece of music, film, visual art, etc. where the Chinese creator expresses broad views about China or what it means to be Chinese. The assignment is designed for you to engage in intercultural communication with Chinese friends on campus if you are not

familiar with where to look. We will look at an example in class. Your presentation will be oral and with visuals as necessary. No written portion is required.

Map Quiz: The map quiz is designed to familiarize you with relevant regions in western China and a few select cities in China's heartland. The professor will provide a list of places before the quiz. Date: Week 4

Reaction Papers: This weekly assignment is designed to provide you with a space where you can cogitate on the readings for the week. In no more than one single-spaced page, please refer to as many of the readings and/or films as you can. Since it is more important that you finish the readings for the week, I am not asking you to write a lot. Instead of volume, try to focus on points of confusion in the texts, points where you disagree with the author, or perhaps points where you find the author's ideas in agreement with someone else you have read. This weekly assignment begins in Week 3.

Please print out a copy of your weekly paper and bring it to class, where you will exchange it with a neighbor. You will also upload a digital copy of your weekly paper to a OneDrive drop box created by the professor. The drop box will serve as the formal repository for all your written work. Please DO NOT email papers to the professor since they will get buried by far too many emails.

Film Review: You are required to write one film review of the various films listed in the syllabus. Film reviews should be 3-4 pages.

All films and readings for this course were carefully chosen to reflect upon themes that are important for our course.

When you read and watch films, please keep this basic point in mind and ask yourself what are the broader concepts that are being represented in the text or film. In particular, when watching a foreign language film, it is very important that you take notes. This is part of active learning. Your notes should probably include a list of major characters, the towns/cities they mention, and the character's relationships with each other. Your notes will aid you in analyzing the film and keeping track of events.

When you write your film review, you may choose to comment on the following aspects:

- 1) Why did the director choose to direct a film, on this topic, during this particular moment in history?
- 2) What form of social commentary is the film making through its plot? Is the purpose of the plot to comment on the present or the past?
- 3) How does the film engage with themes we have been covering in class or that you have seen mentioned in your readings?
- 4) Is the film a fair reflection of what you know about history and society at the time?

Uyghur music and poetry project: Tentatively, this assignment will continue with some of the music and poetry content that we have seen in "Contest of the Fruits". This project invites you to

find other examples of Uyghur contemporary music, poetry, and other forms of expression that speak to issues of identity and history.

Tibet Policy Brief: Policy briefs are quite common in government and foreign affairs circles. To put your growing knowledge of thorny historical issues to use, you will write a policy brief where you suggest a solution to the Tibetan problem. This policy brief **MUST** make reference to various historical facts that you will garner through research. Each student will also choose an audience for their policy brief: the Chinese government or the Tibetan government in exile.

Research Paper: 200-level history classes at Grinnell are usually designed with a research paper component. In general, these research papers should be 10-15 pages in length and be written on a topic that the student and professor agree upon. To aid in this process, research paper topics will be due in Week 10. You will also submit a thesis statement, annotated bibliography and a portion of your paper prior to the final deadline.

## **Content and Schedule**

### **Week 1**

Tuesday Jan 24 and Thurs Jan 26: *Introductions; The importance of geography and shifting borders; History and Identity through music*

### **Week 2**

Tuesday Jan 31 and Thurs Feb 2: Music and art presentations; no class on Thursday

### **Week 3**

Tuesday Feb 7 and Thursday Feb 9: *China—a 30,000 foot view; Theories on how to understand China*

Wang Hui. "The liberation of the object and the interrogation of modernity: rethinking the rise of modern Chinese thought." *Modern China* 34, no. 1 (2008): 114-140.

Xu Jilin. "Tianxia-ism, the Distinction Between the Civilized and the Uncivilized, and Their Variations in Modern China." In *Chinese History and Literature: New Ways to Examine China's Past*, pp. 127-151. 2018.

Yu Ying-shih. "The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century." *Daedalus* Vol. 122, no. 2 *China in Transformation* (Spring, 1993): 125-150

Film: *Wolf Warrior 2*, 2017 (d. Wu Jing)

\*\* Complete music and art presentations

### **Week 4**

Tuesday Feb 14 and Thurs Feb 16: *30,000 foot theories continued*

Selections from Xu Jilin. *Rethinking China's Rise: A Liberal Critique*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Selections from Chen Xiaomei. *Occidentalism: A theory of counter-discourse in post-Mao China*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

Selections from Ge Zhaoguang. *What Is China?: Territory, ethnicity, culture, and history*. Harvard University Press, 2018.

\*\* MAP QUIZ

### **Week 5**

Tuesday Feb 21 and Thurs Feb 23: *Xinjiang/Uyghur country, an historical introduction*

Schluessel, Eric. "Down and Out in Khandu and Qarakhoja: An Autobiography from Late Qing Turfan." *Journal of Central Asian History* 1, no. 1 (2022): 130-157.

Selection from Thum, Rian. "The sacred routes of Uyghur history." In *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*. Harvard University Press, 2014.

Kardos, Amy. "A Rock and a Hard Place: Chinese soldiers in Xinjiang caught between center and periphery after 1949" in *China on the Margins. Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Program* (2010): 135-157.

### Week 6

Tues Feb 28 and Thurs March 2: *The Contest of the Fruits (book); Connecting contemporary Uyghurs to their past*

"The Contest of the Fruits Lyrics", a modernized rap adapted by Nashtarr and Eric Schluessel  
Guangtian Ha and Slavs and Tatars, "Introduction" in Ha, Guangtian, ed. *The Contest of the Fruits*. MIT Press, 2021.

Film: *A First Farewell*, 2019 (dir. Wang Lina) [streams from Grinnell library database AVON]

### Week 7

Tues March 7 and Thursday March 9: Uyghur forms of resistance in *Contest of the Fruits*

"The Changing face and fate of Uyghur writing"; "West Side Stories"; "Compelled Silence and Sound: The erasure of Uyghur soundscapes"

Scott, James C. *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. Yale University Press, 1985. (Chapter 2)

### Week 8

Tuesday March 14 and Thur March 16: *Overview of Tibetan History, particularly the northeast*.

Horlemann, Bianca. "The 'Liberation' of Golog as Reflected in the Memoir of Wang Yuying." In *Conflicting Memories: Tibetan History under Mao retold—Essays and Primary Documents*, pp. 89-108. Brill, 2020.

McGranahan, Carole. "Truth, fear, and lies: Exile politics and arrested histories of the Tibetan resistance." *Cultural Anthropology* 20, no. 4 (2005): 570-600.

Nulo, Naktsang. *My Tibetan Childhood: When Ice Shattered Stone*. Duke University Press, 2014. (first half)

\*\* Uyghur Project Due \*\*

**Spring Break [March 18- April 3]**

### **Week 9**

Tuesday April 4 and Thurs April 6: Tibet beyond Lhasa

*My Tibetan Childhood* (second half)

Films: *Summer Pasture* (a documentary), dir. Lynn True and Nelson Walker III (2011)

*The Horse Thief*, 1986 (dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang) <https://youtu.be/LZSjjOQUtHY>

### **Week 10**

Tues April 11 and Thurs April 13: *Persecuted and Marginalized Han Chinese*

Films: *The Blue Kite*, dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang (1993)

*Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl*, dir. Joan Chen (1998) <https://youtu.be/qa9J6hilvRU>

\*\* Tibet Policy Brief Due \*\*

\*\* Final Paper Topics due \*\*

### **Week 11**

Tuesday April 18 and Thurs April 20: *Persecuted and Marginalized Han Chinese cont'd*

Yang Kuisong. *Eight Outcasts: Social and Political Marginalization in China Under Mao*. Univ of California Press, 2019. (first half)

Selections from Qiang Fang. *The Communist Judicial System in China, 1927-1976: Building on Fear*. Amsterdam University Press, 2021.

### **Week 12**

Tuesday April 25 and Thurs April 27:

Yang Kuisong. *Eight Outcasts: Social and Political Marginalization in China Under Mao*. Univ of California Press, 2019. (second half)

### **Week 13**

Tuesday May 2 and Thursday May 4

Final paper Annotated Bibliography Workshop

### **Week 14**

Tuesday May 9 and Thur May 11

Final Paper Thesis and first few pages

## ***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](mailto: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.