Course Syllabus
University of Michigan Department of Asian Languages and Cultures
Fall 2015

ASIAN 355 (satisfies LSA Interdisciplinary Distribution)

Revolution in Life: How Communism Changed China

Instructor: Dr. Emily Wilcox (eewilcox@umich.edu)
Course Time and Location: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00-2:30pm
Office Hours: Tues 2:00-4:00pm or by appointment, Office Location: 5159 South Thayer

Course Overview: China is one of the only countries in the world ruled by a political party that calls itself communist. Furthermore, the country’s communist history has been a major source of tension and misunderstanding between China and the United States. Why did China become communist? What long-term impacts has communism had on Chinese culture and society? How do Chinese people view communism today? In this course, we answer these questions and others through an interdisciplinary examination of Chinese culture in the twentieth century, with a focus on how communist revolution was experienced by those who lived through it and, in many cases, carried it out. Using memoirs, personal interviews, documentaries, and other primary source materials, students will conduct their own examinations of Chinese communist revolution, which they will bring into dialogue with recent research by academics from around the world.

Prerequisites: None.

Course Requirements: Students will be graded on a combination of attendance and in-class activities, reading quizzes, three short papers, an interview project, a memoir project, and a final paper. Grades will be broken down as follows:

- Attendance and in-class writing activities: 15%
- Reading Quizzes: 15%
- Interview Project: 10%
- Three Short Papers: 30%
- Memoir Project: 15%
- Final Paper: 15%

• Attendance and in-class activities: Students are expected to attend class and to participate actively in class activities. As a seminar course, this class employs interactive teaching approaches together with standard lecture format. Short writing assignments will be a regular part of in-class activities and will contribute to this portion of the course grade. Excused absences will be allowed only with written proof such as a medical note or verification of required participation in a university required activity. Quizzes missed due to unexcused absences can be made up for 1/2 credit.

• Reading quizzes: Periodically, the professor will give pop quizzes in class to assess students’ preparation of the assigned readings and viewings for that day. Unlike assignments, there will be no prior warning for quizzes, which could
happen at any time. Quizzes will take a variety of forms. They are designed to provide incentives for keeping up with the course readings, as well as a system to identify and reward students who consistently complete the reading and viewings on time.

• **Interview Project:** Early in the course, students will conduct a 1-hour interview with a person who lived in mainland China through high school. Students will be provided with a set of required questions, which they will supplement with additional questions of their choosing. Students will submit a written transcript of the interview, along with a 4-page reflection paper. Students will be required to revise one of the three short papers, and the final grade for that assignment will be an average of the grades on the first draft and revised versions.

• **Three Short Papers:** At the end of each important segment of course content, students will synthesize their learning through a written response in the form of a 3-page expository paper written in response to a question prompt. These papers are NOT research papers. Instead, they require students to respond to the required course readings and materials. Students will be evaluated on their ability to develop an original thesis in response to the posed question, by drawing upon the required course materials covered in class. Students will be required to revise one of the three short papers, and the final grade for that assignment will be an average of the grades on the first draft and revised versions.

• **Memoir Project:** As the final project for this course, students will select and read one memoir written by a person who lived through a part of the Chinese communist revolution. A list of memoirs will be provided ahead of time, and a copy of each will be placed on reserve in the library. Students will submit a 5-page review of the memoir on the day they present on their memoir in class. In these reviews, students will analyze the ways in which various aspects of communist revolution studied in class impacted the life of the memoir’s author. In addition, they will assess the author’s ideological position as represented in the narrative. Students will form small groups and will provide 1-page responses to the presentation and short paper of each group member during the peer review portion of the Memoir Project.

• **Final Paper:** The final paper for this course requires students to expand upon their Memoir Project by selecting one theme from the Memoir Project to expand into a short research paper. The paper should be at least 8 pages long, and it should incorporate ideas from previous course assignments, including one of the Short Papers or the Interview Project. Students will submit a draft of the Final Paper during the final week of class, after which they will receive individual feedback from the instructor. The final revised version of the paper will be due on the day of the scheduled final exam as listed in the official UM Exam Schedule.

**Assignment guidelines and evaluation:** All assignments are due before class on the day noted in the course schedule. Specific guidelines and evaluation criteria will be distributed via CTools and discussed in class at least one week before the assignment is due. Students will be given written feedback on all assignments, and grades will be posted regularly on Ctools few student review and verification.
Readings and other course materials: Most required readings and viewings will be made available on Ctools for free either as scanned pdf’s or as streaming files using the Media Gallery function. Apart from these resources, students should purchase the following three required books, all of which are available used at reasonable prices online:


The following is a preliminary list of memoirs students may choose for the Memoirs Project. Each student is required to select ONE memoir to read (although no more than five students may be allowed to select any one book):


Chen, Da. *Colours of the Mountain*.

Cheng, Nien. *Life and Death in Shanghai*.


Li, Cunxin. *Mao’s Last Dancer*.


Wong, Jan. *Red China Blues: My Long March from Mao to Now*.

Language: Chinese-language options of viewings and readings may always be substituted for English-language options if they are identical to the assignments posted. These materials are completely optional and no knowledge of Chinese language is required for this course. Quizzes and assignments will always be based on the English-language version. All students are encouraged to take advantage of the writing and language resources on campus to improve your writing and language skills.

Extra Credit: Extra credit opportunities will be announced regularly throughout the semester. Extra credit assignments will be posted on Ctools and announced in class. If you have an idea for an extra credit assignment, please let me know.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: Plagiarism will result in an automatic failing of this course and possible disciplinary action by the University. It is your responsibility to understand the rules of plagiarism and to cite your sources appropriately in assignments for this course. The following is an explanation of plagiarism as defined by the UM: http://www.lib.umich.edu/academic-integrity/understanding-plagiarism-and-academic-integrity

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Course Introduction
Introduction to the course. No assigned readings.
Week 2: What is Communism?
- Introduction to Communist Thought

- World Communism to 1917

❖ In-class writing exercise: conducting and transcribing interviews.

Week 3: Urban Beginnings of Revolution in China
- China at the Turn of the 20th Century

- The May Fourth Movement and the White Terror

❖ In-class writing exercise: conveying people in writing.

*Interview Project due on CTools by Friday night at midnight.

Week 4: Struggles and Victories
- The Long March and Yan’an

- Civil War and the New China

❖ In-class writing exercise: developing strong thesis arguments.

*Revision of Interview Project due on CTools by Friday night at midnight.

Week 5: Changing Life in the Countryside
- Rural China in the Early 20th Century

- Land Reform
In-class writing exercise: connecting examples with arguments.

*Short Paper One due on CTools by Friday night at midnight.

**Week 6: Creating a New Culture**
- Revolution in Language
  Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) “Foreword to the Second Edition” by Lin Biao (Piao) and Selections in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. 1966. All selections.
- Revolution in Life
  Viewing: *China: A Century of Revolution (Part 2)*

In-class writing exercise: revising Short Papers.

**Week 7: Everyday Life in the Mao Era**
- Ideology
- Family and Fate
  Viewing: *To Live* (Zhang Yimou, 1994)

In-class writing exercise: writing about film.

**Week 8: Art and Entertainment Under Communism**
- Film
  Viewing: *Female Basketball Player #5* (Xie Jin, 1957)
- Visual Art
  Reading: Lincoln Cushing and Ann Tompkins. *Chinese Posters: Art From the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*.

In-class writing exercise: writing about visual culture.

**Week 9: Diversity Within Communist Culture**
- Traditional Culture
  Viewing: *Precious Lotus Lantern* (China Experimental Opera Company, 1957)
- Gender
In-class writing exercise: writing about performance.

*Short Paper Two due on CTools by Friday night at midnight.

**Week 10: Under the Cultural Revolution**
- Resisting the Party Line

- Underground Literature

In-class writing exercise: constructing arguments with archival sources.

**Week 11: The End of an Era**
- The Reform Era
  Viewing: *China: A Century of Revolution (Part 3)*

- Coming to Terms with the Past
  Readings: Lu Xinhua "Scar" (1978), Liu Xinwu “The Class Monitor” (1977)

In-class writing exercise: writing about literature.

**Week 12: Red Glow and Post-Mao Culture**
- Cui Jian’s Rock Music as Post-Mao Critique

- Individuality and the Post-Mao Generation

In-class writing exercise: ethnographic writing.

*Short Paper Three due on CTools by Friday night at midnight.

**Week 13: Memoirs Projects**
- No class Monday. Read memoirs.
- Identifying ideology in U.S. popular media representations of China

In-class writing exercise: identifying and writing about ideology in the media.
*Short Paper Revision Final Deadline Friday night at midnight.

**Week 14: Memoirs Projects**
Student Presentations and Peer Reviews.

Memoirs Project Paper and Peer Review Feedback due in class.

**Week 15: Course Wrap up**

- In-class writing exercise: developing introductions and counter-arguments.

First Draft of Final Paper due Friday night at midnight.

**Finals Period**

Receive written feedback and individual consultations for revision of Final Paper.

Final Paper due on the day of Final Exam listed UM official Exam Schedule.