ASIAN 355
Revolution in Life: How Communism Changed China

Instructor: Dr. Emily Wilcox (eewilcox@umich.edu)
Course Time and Location: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:40-7:00pm, 1460 Mason Hall
Office Hours: Tues 2:00-4:00pm or by appointment, 5159 South Thayer Building

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 Objectives:
• Engage in critical reflection on Chinese communism and its historical representations within the context of Cold War politics;
• Gain an understanding of the history of Chinese communism, from its beginnings in Marxist revolutionary thought and the Russian revolution through its culmination in the Chinese revolution and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China;
• Learn about the social transformation of Chinese society during and after the Chinese revolution through a diverse array of first-person accounts;
• Become familiar with the cultural strategies employed by Chinese communist artists and intellectuals and interpret films and other media from the early PRC period;
• Read and synthesize the current scholarly research on a topic of choice.

Readings and other course materials: This course takes advantage of materials available for free to students through the UM Library. Most required course readings and viewings are available to students at no cost. Those not available on Canvas are on reserve in Shapiro Library. Students are encouraged to purchase their own copies of the following three books:
**Course Requirements**: Students will be graded on a combination of attendance, participation, reading quizzes, three short papers, an interview project, and a final paper. Grades will be broken down as follows:

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<td>Attendance</td>
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<td>Interview Project</td>
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<td>Three Short Papers</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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- **Attendance**: Class will begin promptly at 5:40pm. Students are expected to arrive on-time and attend class in its entirety. All students will be allowed one free excused absence. After that, excused absences will be allowed only with written proof such as a medical note or verification of required participation in a university activity. Quizzes missed due to excused absences can be made up for full credit. Quizzes missed due to unexcused absences can be made up for 1/2 credit. Attendance grades will be posted weekly using the Canvas grade roster.

- **Participation**: As a seminar course, this class employs interactive teaching methods in place of a lecture format. Students are expected to complete required readings and assignments before class and to arrive prepared to participate actively in class discussion. Apart from discussion, small group tasks and short writing assignments will also be completed in class and will contribute to this portion of the course grade. Participation grades will be posted weekly using the Canvas grade roster.

- **Reading quizzes**: Periodically, pop quizzes will take place at the beginning of class to assess students’ preparation of the assigned readings and viewings for that day. Unlike assignments, there will be no prior warning. Quizzes 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. Quizzes are designed to assess basic completion of the reading, not comprehension. At the end of the semester, the lowest quiz score will be dropped.

- **Interview Project**: During Unit Two, students will conduct a 90-minute oral history interview with a person who lived in the People’s Republic of China at least through high school. This may be a member of the student’s family, the relative of a friend or acquaintance, or someone the student is matched with through the assistance of the professor. Prior to the interview, students will submit an Interview Plan and learn basic interview skills during in-class activities. After the interview is complete, students will submit a recording along with a short (2 pp double spaced) reflection paper, which will serve as the basis for a short in-class presentation. Detailed instructions for this project will be distributed to students during Unit One.

- **Three Short Papers**: At the end of each Unit, students will synthesize their learning through a written response in the form of a 3-page (double spaced) 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 posted question, by drawing upon evidence from the course content. The final day of each Unit will be dedicated to brainstorming ideas for the paper.

- **Final Paper**: The final paper for this course requires students to explore further one topic of interest from the course content, by reading and summarizing three academic
research articles on the selected topic. Students will propose a topic and three sources toward the end of Unit Three, which must be approved by the professor. The Final Paper should be 7-8 pages long (double spaced) and should focus on the following content: 1) outlining the question and its significance; 2) summarizing what can be learned from the three research articles; and 3) explaining what remains unknown. Detailed instructions for this assignment will be distributed to students at the beginning of Unit Three.

**Assignments:** All assigned readings and viewings should be completed before class on the day noted in the course schedule. Assignments listed as “preparation” should be brought to class in hard copy and may be typed or hand written. All other written assignments should be submitted on Canvas. Students will receive written feedback on all assignments and are encouraged to visit the professor during Office Hours to discuss any questions or concerns. Grades will be posted regularly on Canvas for student review and verification.

**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.

**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**

Tues, Sept 5 – Introduction to the Course

Thurs, Sept 7 – Orientations: The Politics of Cold War History

Read:

**Week One: Comparative Trajectories—Communist Revolution from Marx to Lenin to Mao**

**Week 2: Communist Revolution in Marx and Engels**

Tues, Sept 12 – Introduction to Marxist Thought
Read:


Thurs, Sept 14 – Early Communist Documents

Read:

The readings for today are available online here:
https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm

- “Manifesto of the Communist Party, Part I: Bourgeois and Proletarians”
- “Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith”
- “The Principles of Communism”
- “Demands of the Communist Party in Germany”

**Week 3: Communist Revolution in Russia**

Tues, Sept 19 – Launching a Revolution

Read:


Thurs, Sept 21 – The Bolshevik Experiment

Read:


❖ Interview Proposal due on Canvas by Friday night at 11:59pm.

**Week 4: Communist Revolution in China (I)**

Tues, Sept 26 – Opium War to the Long March

Read:


Thurs, Sept 28 – Yan’an to the Great Leap Forward

Read:


**Week 5: Communist Revolution in China (II)**

Tues, Oct 3 – Cultural Revolution to Reform and Opening

Read:

Thurs, Oct 5 – Reflections on Unit One
No Readings or Viewings.
Prepare:
• Bring to class an outline for Short Paper One

❖ **Short Paper One due on Canvas by Friday night at 11:59pm.**

**Unit Two: Communism at the Ground Level—Revolution as Lived Experience**

**Week 6: Land Reform Up Close**

Tues, Oct 10 – Rural North China in the 1940s
Read:

Thurs, Oct 12 – Land Reform in a Shanxi Village
Read:

❖ **Interview Plan due on Canvas by Sunday night at 11:59pm.**

**Week 7: Women’s Lives Before the Revolution**

Tues, Oct 17 – NO CLASS (FALL BREAK)

Thurs, Oct 19 – NO CLASS
Read:
• “Introduction” (pp. 1-12) and Chapter 2 “No One is Home” (pp. 32-64) in Gail Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China’s Collective Past*. University of California Press, 2011.

**Week 8: Early Communism for Rural Women**

Tues, Oct 24 – Changes in Family Life
Read:
• Chapter 4 “Activist” (pp. 96-128) and Chapter 5 “Farmer” (pp. 129-153) in Gail Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China’s Collective Past*. University of California Press, 2011.

❖ **Interview presentations (Group 1)**

Thurs, Oct 26 – Reproduction and Women’s Labor
Read:
• Chapter 6 “Midwife” (pp. 154-181) and Chapter 7 “Mother” (pp. 182-209) in Gail Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past*. University of California Press, 2011.
Interview presentations (Group 2)

Week 9: A Male Intellectual’s Story

Tues, Oct 31 – Coming of Age in Communist China
Read:

Interview presentations (Group 3)

Thurs, Nov 2 – Life During the Cultural Revolution
Read:

Interview presentations (Group 4)

Week 10: Under the Cultural Revolution

Tues, Nov 7 – Individuals in a Changing Society
Read:

Interview presentations (Group 5)

Thurs, Nov 9 – Reflections on Unit One
No Readings or Viewings.
Prepare:
- Bring to class an outline for Short Paper Two

Short Paper Two due on Canvas by Friday night at 11:59 pm.

Unit Three: Revolutions of Thought—The Communist Media Sphere

Week 11: The Yan’an Experiment

Tues, Nov 14 – Mao’s “Talks” and Transforming the Intellectuals
Read:

Thurs, Nov 16 – The Yangge Movement, or “New Wine in Old Bottles”
Read:
**Week 12: Using Culture to Launch Revolution**

**Tues, Nov 21 – Wartime Drama and the Story of Liu Hulan**

*Read:*


**Thurs, Nov 23 NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)**

**Week 13: Revolution on Film**

**Tues, Nov 28 – Representing Suffering and Liberation**

*Watch:*

- *Bai Mao Nü (White-Haired Girl)* 1950 film  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRQ9BjvqBNY

**Thurs, Nov 30 – Critiquing Imperialism as Revolutionary Pre-History**

*Watch:*

- *Xiao Dao Hui (Dagger Society)* 1959 film  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VL9FU9iNsMg&t=6s

❖ **Final Paper Plan due on Canvas by Friday night at 11:59 pm.**

**Week 14: Socialism on Film**

**Thurs, Dec 5 – Ethnic Diversity in Cinema**

*Watch:*

- *Wu Duo Jin Hua (Five Golden Flowers)* 1959 film  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SsLta3m7F4

**Tues, Dec 7 – New Female Ideals**

*Watch:*

- *Li Shuangshuang* 1962 film  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKStgwbVprQ

❖ **Short Paper Two due on Canvas by Friday night at 11:59 pm.**

**Week 15: Course Wrap up**

**Tues, Dec 12 – Prepare for Final Papers**

*Prepare:*

- Read first source for final paper and be prepared to discuss it in class.

❖ **Final Paper due on Canvas on Tuesday, December 19th at 11:59 pm.**