Graduate Seminar Course Syllabus  
University of Michigan, Fall 2018  
Department of Asian Languages and Cultures

**ASIAN 537**  
**Rethinking China after 1949:**  
**New Approaches in PRC Cultural Studies**

Instructor: Dr. Emily Wilcox (eewilcox@umich.edu)  
Course Time: Wednesdays 5:00-8:00 PM, 2108 MLB  
Office Hours: Mondays 9:00-11:00 AM, 5159 South Thayer Building (5th floor)

**Overview:** This is an interdisciplinary graduate seminar designed to introduce and inspire innovative research on the society and culture of socialist and postsocialist China, through a combination of secondary source readings and independent research.

**Course Description:** This course examines and interrogates what it means to study the intersections between “politics” and “culture” in the People's Republic of China. We will read together a series of new books, mainly published within the last five years, that address this question from a variety of disciplinary approaches, including area studies, history, anthropology, literary studies, the history of science, media studies, and gender studies. Our discussions will pay special attention to research methodology, and students will produce a final research paper that applies methodological approaches discussed in the course to their own work. Ultimately, our goal will be to determine the current and future directions of “cultural studies” as a new paradigm within Chinese studies scholarship.

**Enrollment Requirements:** This course is limited to UM graduate students. Advanced undergraduates or students from other institutions may enroll only if spaces are available and with the written permission of the instructor. There is no language requirement for this course. All required readings will be in English.
Assignments/Grading:
The following components will contribute to students’ overall course grade:

- Attendance and participation: 30%
- Weekly response papers: 30%
- In-class presentations (2): 15%
- Final research paper: 25%

**Attendance and participation:** Students are expected to attend all class meetings, to come to class prepared by having read and brought the assigned readings, and to actively participate in class discussions by contributing their own questions, ideas, and perspectives on the assigned readings and related topics. Students are encouraged to speak with me to receive feedback on your in-class participation during the course of the semester. If you need to miss class for some reason, you may make up the missed class by submitting a 3-4-page reflection paper on the assigned readings for that week. This should be submitted via email before the next class meeting.

**Weekly response papers:** Reading responses will be submitted on Canvas and are due by 5pm on Wednesday at the start of class. Students are encouraged to bring their responses to class either in hard copy or electronic format to use as reference during the class discussion. Reading responses should be a minimum of 600 words and should address the following questions:

- What is the topic and scope of the book?
- What are the main themes and arguments presented by the author?
- What are some important examples or cases the author uses to develop these themes and arguments?
- What would you say are the main strengths and shortcomings of the book overall?
- How could this book contribute to a cultural studies methodology for PRC studies?

Your reading responses should address the book as a whole. However, you are not expected to have read every page of the book from cover to cover every week. We will discuss effective reading practices and expectations for how to approach reading assignments on the first day of class.

**In-class presentations:** Students will give two in-class presentations over the course of the semester. The first presentation will be about one of the books on the reading list and will take place during weeks 2-11 (Sept 12-Nov 14). Students will sign up for these on the first day of class. The second presentation will be on the student’s own research project and will take place between weeks 12-14 (Nov 21-Dec 5). Students will sign up for these later in the semester. Student presentations will take place during the second half of the seminar (after the break) and should be prepared as follows:

- Book presentation: the goal of this presentation is NOT to summarize the contents of the book we have read for this week. Instead, your goal will be to
  1) Introduce the author (provide a photo, tell us about her/his educational background, current employment, other publications, types of courses offered, and your impression of this person’s overall interests and specialties);
2) Figure out and present on the research materials and process that the author used to conduct the research for the book (using the book’s acknowledgements, notes, and bibliography, put together a list of the major types of sources used and give examples of each that are cited in the book; explain briefly how they are used);

3) Select three of the most important sources used in the book and explain how you would go about getting access to them, either through the UM library or through research in other libraries or archives (be as specific as possible; this will take some research);

4) Bring in one primary source that was used in the book for examination by the class (this could be electronic or hard copy; it may take some time to track it down, so start early! The source you bring in must be of a different kind than what has been presented in earlier classes)

You should prepare slides for your presentation. Presentations should last about 15 minutes and then open up into discussion about how to find sources and how to interpret the source you brought.

Student research presentations: share your preliminary research for your final paper with the class. These presentations will be more informal and discussion-based. It will be a chance for you to tell the class about the research you have conducted so far and get feedback and questions to help you develop your project further. Slides should be used to illustrate the primary source material being analyzed and to introduce any key people, places, cultural texts, institutions, or historical events relevant to your project. Presentations will last about 10 minutes and then open up into discussion.

Final Paper: The final assignment will be a research paper of 20-25 pages (double-spaced) on a topic of your choice. Ideally, the paper should examine a set of primary sources from the PRC and should engage methodologically with cultural studies methods and concerns addressed in the course. In some cases, with permission, students may choose to employ methods and concerns addressed in the course to examine a set of materials from outside the PRC. When organizing your paper, use the following as a general guide: 1) about 10-12 pages should contain your own original analysis of the primary source materials; 2) about 5-7 pages should be spent framing your analysis within the context of relevant secondary sources; 3) about 5-pages should be spent considering how this research might be developed into a larger project that would contribute to ‘PRC cultural studies’ as discussed in this course.

A final paper proposal will be due in place of a weekly response paper on October 31st. This proposal should include a minimum 500-word abstract of your proposed research project. It should also contain a list of all primary and secondary sources you have located for your project.

Readings
Many of the readings for this class are available as e-books through the UM library and are marked in the course syllabus. Students are free to use these versions but should be sure to check in advance to learn about any barriers to access (some books only allow one user at a time, some have limited “check out” or download capacities, etc.). I have also placed a hard copy of most books on reserve in the Shapiro Library. Students are encouraged to purchase their own copies of the books when possible.
SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Sept 5)
Introduction to the course

Week 2 (Sept 12)
e-book: https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1017/CBO9781316026724
Hard copy on reserve in Shapiro Library

Week 3 (Sept 19)
e-book: https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1215/9780822372431
Hard copy on reserve in Shapiro Library

Week 4 (Sept 26)

Week 5 (Oct 3)
Hard copy on reserve in Shapiro Library

Week 6 (Oct 10)
Hard copy on reserve in Shapiro Library

Week 7 (Oct 17)
Hard copy on reserve in Shapiro Library

Week 8 (Oct 24)
Hard copy on reserve in Shapiro Library

Week 9 (Oct 31): NO CLASS
In place of an assigned reading, conduct research for your final papers.
Submit your final paper proposal on Canvas in place of the weekly response paper.
Week 10 (Nov 7)

Week 11 (Nov 14)

Week 12 (Nov 21)

Week 13 (Nov 28)

Week 14 (Dec 5)

**Final Research Papers** (20-25 pp) are due via electronic submission on Canvas by 11:59pm on Thursday, December 20th.