

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of History

HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
CHINA, 1949 TO THE PRESENT

Meisner
263-1848
Office: 5117 Humanities
Office Hours: 3:30-5 TR

History 342
Spring 1986
Tuesday and
Thursday

In the late 1930s and 1940s, Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese Communists organized tens of millions of Chinese peasants into what was certainly the most massive, and perhaps the greatest, revolution in world history. The Chinese revolution took the historically unique form of harnessing the forces of peasant revolt in the rural areas to surround and overwhelm the cities. The political result was the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. This course is an inquiry into the post-revolutionary history of Chinese Communism, from the formal establishment of the Communist state in 1949 to the current post-Maoist era of the "Four Modernizations." The inquiry will focus on the successes and failures of Chinese Communists in power, particularly with respect to their proclaimed aim of building a socialist society in the world's most populous land. In a broader sense, the course is concerned with the nature and social results of 20th-century socialist revolutions in general, addressing the question of whether it is possible to carry out a genuine socialist reorganization of state and society under conditions of economic scarcity. The question is relevant to the history of the Soviet Union and to a variety of contemporary Third World societies and revolutionary movements. The examination of the Chinese Communist historical experience hopefully will prove helpful for understanding the dilemmas which confront other revolutionary movements and societies which today proceed under Marxist and socialist banners.

No prior knowledge of Chinese history is presupposed. The first three or four weeks of the semester will be devoted to a survey of the history of Marxism and Communism in China from the time of the May Fourth Movement in 1919 to the victory of the Maoist revolution in 1949. This will serve as a review for those who have some familiarity with modern Chinese history, and, for those who do not, as an introduction to the history of the People's Republic.

The course is divided into five parts. Part I, as noted above, will be a brief survey of the Chinese Communist Revolution (1919-1949). Part II will be concerned with the consolidation of Communist state power (1949-52) and the period of the First Five Year Plan (1953-57), focusing on the social and political consequences of Soviet-style industrialization. Part III will examine one of the great utopian episodes in world history, the Great Leap Forward campaign of 1958-60 and its aftermath. Part IV will reassess the Cultural Revolution and the end of the Maoist era (1966-1976). Part V will consider the deradicalization of the Chinese revolution in the years since the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976 and the current economic reform experiments undertaken by the Deng Xiaoping government. In pursuing inquiries into these various eras, comparisons between Chinese history and the histories of other post-revolutionary societies (especially the Soviet Union) will be suggested in both lectures and readings.

Lectures usually will be confined to about 45 minutes, followed by a half-hour of general discussion.

REQUIREMENTS

1. A mid-semester exam.
2. A final take-home examination based on the lectures and readings listed below.
3. A paper (about 8-10 typewritten pages) selected from one of the topics suggested below. Other topics may be chosen in consultation with the instructor.

GRADING

Final exam: 40%
Paper: 40%
Mid-semester exam: 20%

PAPERBACK EDITIONS of the following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore and elsewhere:

Lucien Bianco, The Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949 (Stanford University Press).

William Rosenberg and Marilyn Young, Transforming Russia and China (Oxford University Press).

Maurice Meisner, Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic (The Free Press).

David and Nancy Milton, The Wind Will Not Subside: Years in Revolutionary China, 1964-69 (Pantheon).

Roger Garside, Coming Alive: China After Mao (Mentor).

LECTURES AND READINGS

PART I: THE CHINESE REVOLUTION, 1919-1949

- January 21: Problems in the Study of Contemporary Chinese History.
January 23: The Making of a Revolutionary Situation: China, 1839-1919.
January 28: The Introduction of Marxism and the Origins of the Chinese Communist Party.
January 30: The Failure of the Revolution of 1925-27.
February 4: The Origins of Maoism and the Yanan Era of Chinese Communism (1935-45).
February 6: The Nature of the Chinese Communist Revolution: The theory of "peasant nationalism."
February 11: A Comparison of the Chinese and Russian Revolutions.

Readings:

Lucien Bianco, The Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949 (Stanford paperback) or Stuart Schram, Mao Tse-tung (Penguin paperback), chs. 1-8, or James Sheridan, China in Disintegration (Free Press Paperback).

William Rosenberg and Marilyn Young, Transforming Russian and China (Oxford paperback), chs. 1-6.

Maurice Meisner, Mao's China: A History of the People's Republic (Free Press paperback), chs. 1-4.

NOTE: Schram's Mao Tse-tung is out of print. If you can find a used copy (or use library reserve), it is to be preferred over the Bianco book.

PART II: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNIST POLITICAL POWER AND THE ERA OF THE FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN, 1949-1957

- February 13: Revolutionaries Turned Rulers: The New State and its Ideology.
- February 18: Repression, Terror and the Korean War.
- February 20: Urban China: The Era of National Capitalism and the Maoist Theory of "New Democracy."
- February 25: Rural China: The Land Reform Campaign.
- February 27: The First Five Year Plan and its Social Consequences.
- March 4: Agricultural Collectivization.
- March 6: The Hundred Flowers Campaign.

Readings:

Meisner, Mao's China, chs. 12-17.

Rosenberg and Young, Transforming Russia and China, ch. 8.

- March 22-31: Spring Recess
- April 1: Midterm Exam

PART IV: THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND THE CLOSE OF THE MAOIST ERA, 1966-76

- April 3: The Concept of "Cultural Revolution."
- April 8: Class Struggles and Political Struggles, 1966-69.
- April 10: Results and Consequences of the Cultural Revolution.
- April 15: The Rise and Fall of the "Gang of Four," 1970-76.
- April 17: Successes and Failures of the Maoist Era.

Readings:

David and Nancy Milton, The Wind Will Not Subside: Years in Revolutionary China, 1964-69 (Pantheon paperback).

PART V: POST-MAOIST CHINA, 1976-86

April 22:	The Ascendency of Teng Hsiao-p'ing (Deng Xiaoping).
April 24:	Politics and Social Policies in the Teng Era.
April 29:	The Ideological Basis of Economic Reform.
May 1:	The Decollectivization of Agriculture.
May 6:	Plan and Market in Industry.
May 8:	Socialism, Capitalism and Modernization: Chinese Markism in the Post-War Era.

Readings:

Roger Garside, Coming Alive: China After Mao (Mentor).

PAPERS

Due on or before May 1.

FINAL EXAM

Final exam questions will be distributed on May 6 and your essays are due no later than May 13.

SUGGESTED PAPER TOPICS AND READINGS

Essays should be reasonably concise (about 8-10 typewritten pages), well-argued, and based on the critical reading of two of the listed books. Most of the books should be available on reserve in Helen C. White Library.

1. The Nature of the Chinese Communist Revolution; a nationalist or a social revolution?

Chalmers Johnson, Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power
Mark Selden, The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China

2. The Character of the Kuomintang Regime -- and why it collapsed.

Lloyd Eastman, The Abortive Revolution
Suzanne Pepper, Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-49

3. Maoism as a Variant of Marxism-Leninism.

Benjamin Schwartz, Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao
Stuart Schram, The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung
or
Maurice Meisner, Marxism, Maoism, and Utopianism

4. China and the Korean War.

Bruce Cummings, The Origins of the Korean War
Allen Whiting, China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter
the Korean War

5. The Nature of the Chinese Communist State.

Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolution
V. Nee and D. Mozingo (eds.), State and Society in Contemporary
China

6. Industrialization during the Maoist Era.

Stephen Andors, China's Industrial Revolution
Barry Richman, Industrial Society in Communist China
or
Thomas Rawski, China's Transition to Industrialism

7. Industry in the Country Side.

Dwight Perkins (ed.), Rural Small-Scale Industry in the People's
Republic of China
Jon Sigurdson, Rural Industrialization in China

8. Women in China: Chinese Communism and Sexual Inequality

Delia Davin, Woman-Work: Women and the Party in Revolutionary
China
Elisabeth Croll, Feminism and Socialism in China
Marilyn Young (ed.), Women in China