

History 658: History of the People's Republic of China, 1949 to the Present

Meisner
Spring semester, 1977
Tuesday and Thursday evenings,
7-8:15 p.m.

The course will examine the major developments -- political, economic, social and intellectual -- in China since 1949 and consider the broader historical and theoretical problems posed by the People's Republic's unique pattern of "post-revolutionary" history in the comparative perspective of other modern revolutions, particularly the Russian revolution. Special emphasis will be placed on the evolution of Maoist theory, its relationship to socio-economic development, and the problems involved in attempting to bring about a socialist reorganization of state and society in conditions of economic scarcity. Foreign relations will be considered only to the extent they have impinged directly on internal development.

No prior knowledge of Chinese history is presupposed. The first four weeks of the semester will be devoted to a general consideration of the modern Chinese historical situation and a survey of the Chinese Communist revolution (1921-1949).

There will be a final take-home examination based on the lectures, discussions, and readings. It will be distributed on Tuesday, May 17, and is due on Monday, May 23. A term paper is desirable but not required; in lieu of a paper, students may elect to take the optional mid-semester examination (focusing on the period to 1957) and/or write a critique of the readings.

Lecture and Discussion Outline:

Weeks I-IV: The Historical and Revolutionary Background

Imperialism, Capitalism, and the Modern Chinese Social Class Structure
The Failure of Bourgeois and Proletarian Revolutions (1911-1927)
The Consequences of 1927
The Kiangsi Era (1928-35)
The Yen-an Era (1935-45)
The Development of Maoism
The Revolutionary Heritage

Weeks V-VI: The New State (1949-52)

Dilemmas of Victory: Revolutionaries Turned Rulers
China and Russia: a Comparison of Starting Points
The Consolidation of Power
The Ideology of State Power: the Chinese History of the Marxist Concept
of Bourgeois Revolution
Control of the Cities
The Land Reform Campaign

Weeks VII-VIII: The Social Consequences of Industrialization and the Search for
a Chinese Road to Socialism (1953-57)

The First Five Year Plan
Maoism and the Dilemma of Means and Ends
Agricultural Collectivization
Emergences of the "Two Roads"

Week IX: The Era of the Hundred Flowers, 1956-57

Socialism, Bureaucracy and Freedom
The Question of Stalin
Mao and the Chinese Communist Party

Week X: The Great Leap Forward Campaign, 1958-60

The Theory of Permanent Revolution
Maoist Economic Strategy
The Rise and Decline of the Communes
Maoism and Utopianism

Week XI: Thermidor, 1960-65

The Problem of Bureaucracy
The New Economic Policy
The Socialist Education Movement

Week XII-XIV: The Cultural Revolution

Political History of the Cultural Revolution, 1966-69
Social Results of the Cultural Revolution
Political Implications of the Cultural Revolution
The Cult of Mao

Week XV: China in the Aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, 1970-76

The Fall of Lin Biao
The Passing of the Old Revolutionaries

Week XVI: Maoism, Socialism, and the Marxist-Leninist Tradition

Readings:

1. Stuart Schram, Mao Tse-tung (Penguin paperback)
2. Franz Schurmann, Ideology and Organization in Communist China, revised and enlarged edition (Univ. of California Press paperback)
3. Ezra Vogel, Canton Under Communism (Harvard paperback)
4. Stuart Schram (ed.), Chairman Mao Talks to the People: Talks and Letters, 1956-71 (Pantheon paperback)
5. Stuart Schram (ed.), Authority, Participation and Cultural Change in China (Cambridge University Press paperback)
6. Charles Bettelheim, Cultural Revolution and Industrial Organization in China (Monthly Review paperback)
7. David and Nancy Milton, The Wind Will Not Subside: Years in Revolutionary China, 1964-69 (Pantheon paperback)

In addition, a limited number of periodical articles and documentary materials will be suggested.