

The Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976

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The Cultural Revolution was Mao Zedong's last attempt to transform Chinese society spiritually and structurally. The events of this period were marked by social upheaval, personal vendettas, violence, massive youth movements, and extreme ideological pressure. What were the causes of the Cultural Revolution? How was it experienced and how is it remembered? To what extent are its reverberations felt in contemporary Chinese society, politics, and literature? How have subsequent events affected our understanding of the Cultural Revolution decade? This course will explore the Cultural Revolution from a variety of perspectives, focusing on the relationship between events in China from 1966-1976, and their interpretation in China and the West during the Cultural Revolution decade and since.

Course Requirements:

** This course will combine elements of lecture and in-class discussion. Reading and viewing assignments should be completed before each session, and active participation in discussions is expected. Participation in Friday discussion section is required.

Note that readings are not evenly distributed. **Be advised and be forewarned: it is up to you to plan ahead and stay caught up. **There is a significant amount of reading expected—but it is carefully chosen and accessible--and should not be onerous.** Please be prepared to do the work.

**Grades will be calculated as follows:

Participation: 15%

Primary Source Paper: 20% (**due in section 2/24**)

In Class Tests 2 @ 20% each: 40%

Final exam: 25%

No extensions will be granted without prior permission of the instructor—although reasonable accommodation will almost always be granted in advance--with good justification. Papers submitted late without prior permission of the instructor will be penalized by three points per day. An "A" paper submitted one day after the deadline will receive an "A-". If there is an unavoidable absence for an examination, this should be cleared with the instructor before the examination, or if this is not physically possible, as soon thereafter as is medically feasible. In such cases, supporting documentation **must be provided. **Note that work missing at the end of the semester is grounds for failing the course, regardless of precise numerical average.**

****University Policy on Ethics:** *The strength of this university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations that you witness to the instructor. You may consult the dean of students and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See <http://ethics.jhu.edu> for more information.*

Required Texts:

Andrew Walder, *China under Mao*.

Michael Schoenhals, China's Cultural Revolution: Not a Dinner Party

Anita Chan, *et al*, Chen Village

Feng Jicai, Ten Years of Madness.

Ma Bo, Blood Red Sunset.

Nien Cheng, Life and Death in Shanghai

The above books are available for purchase at the Johns Hopkins University Book Center.

Items marked with an * in the syllabus are available on reserve. These (obviously) are required texts unless otherwise noted.

The films are available through MSEL Reserves. **And may be available from non-JHU sources electronically—but this is not guaranteed and cannot be counted on (check ahead!).**

Week 1: Background to the Cultural Revolution

1/30 Revolutionary Times—The Cultural Revolution in Historical Context

2/1 People, Places, and Institutions—20th Century China Basics

2/3 Discussion Section: Mao's China? China Under Mao?

Reading: Andrew Walder, *China Under Mao*, pp. 1-14, 100-179.

*Optional Film China: The PBS Series (China in Revolution: The Mao Years/Part Two)—This film is very helpful for providing overview and context. It is available on reserve and may be available via YouTube

Week 2: "To Rebel is Justified"-- 1966-1968

2/6 Events and Characteristics of the Early Cultural Revolution

2/8 "Mass supervision" of cadres during the Cultural Revolution—Guest Lecture, Joel Andreas, Department of Sociology, Johns Hopkins University

2/10 Discussion Section: Why the Cultural Revolution? What were the stated objectives? What actions were thus inspired? Who did the Cultural Revolution target? Did events follow the intended trajectory? What inspired popular participation? Was popular participation under the government's control? (What sources do we have for the study of the

Cultural Revolution? Can we differentiate between “prescriptive” and “descriptive” sources—how might we use different types of sources to answer different research questions?

Reading: Schoenhals, p. 43-47, 93-116, 146-7, 166-69, 183-4, 207-22.
Walder, 180-230.

Week 3:

2/13 The Making of a Generation: Revolutionary Heroism and Student Life

2/15 The Red Guards and Rebels—Images, Actions, Fractures

2/17 Politics, Violence, Loss

Schoenhals, p. 3-26, 29-43

*Yang Guobin, “Flowers of the Nation,” *The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China*, CHAPTER 2.

*Film (required): *Though I am Gone* (我虽死去)—we will come back to this film in discussion the final weeks of the class—think in terms of what it depicts here—and when it was made—when we return to it at the end of term)

Week 4: Imagery and Ideology

2/20 In Class Viewing: Revolutionary Ballet: “The White-Haired Girl”--
Baimao nu (synopsis in English available from class website)

2/22 Culture and the Cultural Revolution

Reading: Schoenhals, p. 27, pp. 148-9

*Mao Zedong, * “Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art”

*Red Sun Rising over Tian’anmen

*Serve the People

2/24 Discussion: Revolutionary Culture and History

Internet:

<http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/poster/exhibintro.html>

<http://www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/index.html>

Primary Source Paper due in Section

Week 5 Beyond the Red Guards

2/27 The Cultural Revolution among the Workers

Reading: Schoenhals, p. 210-12, 222-227, 228-233, 55,
59-64

Walder, 232-262.

Reference: *Perry and Li. Proletarian Power : Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution. 29-96.

3/1 The Cultural Revolution in the Countryside, Part I.

Reading: *Chen Village*, pages TBA.

- 3/3 Discussion: The Cultural Revolution as local event:
How did the farmers of Chen village experience Cultural Revolution era political campaigns? How did workers in Shanghai experience the CR? To what extent were central government mandates affected by local allegiances and conditions?

Week 6 Power Struggles and Political Theater

- 3/6 To the Brink of Civil War—Factional Violence and its Consequences
3/8 Military Rules: A Violent Change of Direction
Reading: Andrew Walder, *China Under Mao*, 263-286.
3/10 Discussion: Why did the Rebels divide into factions? Why and how did the violence escalate? Who participated in factional violence—and why? How did dynamics between political leadership and factions contribute to the escalation of violence? Did events play out in similar ways across China?

Week 7 Sent-Down Youth

- 3/13 Midterm Exam #1
3/15 Up to the Mountains, Down to the Villages--The “Sent Down Youth”
3/17 Experience and Memory: What does the memoir/novel *Blood Red Sunset* tell us about the Sent Down Youth Experience? What does it tell us about the moment in which it was written? --Guest speaker: Rachel Hsu
Reading: Ma Bo. *Blood Red Sunset*.
Recommended Film: *Sacrifice of Youth* (青春祭)

3/20-3/26 **SPRING BREAK!**

Week 8 Politics and Performance

- 3/27 Change at the Top: The (Literal) Fall of Lin Biao and its Effects
Reading: *Media coverage from the Chinese and Western press—on reserve.
Walder, 287-314.

- 3/29 The “Second Cultural Revolution”

Reading: *"Lin Piao is a Devout Disciple of Confucius," *Peking Review* v. 7, n. 16 (Feb 1974): 7-12. <http://www.massline.org/PekingReview/PR1974/PR1974-06g.htm>

- 3/31 Discussion: Based on your reading of the second part of *Chen Village*: To what extent did the situation during the late Cultural Revolution reflect the success or failure of the movement’s earlier objectives? What values did the leadership advocate? Do you see continuity or change with the early phase of the Cultural Revolution? To what extent did ordinary people adopt these values and

ideologies? To what extent (and with what effect) were people in Chen Village aware of national political events like the Lin Biao incident and Nixon's visit?

Reading: Part II of *Chen Village* pages TBA

Week 9: Culture and Gender—the Late Cultural Revolution

4/3 The Cult of Mao—Art, Literature, and Film from the Late Cultural Revolution Period

* “Mao Tse-tung’s Thought Directs Us in Battle” (*Peking Review*)

* “The Brilliance of Mao Tse-tung’s Thought Illuminates the Whole World” (*Peking Review*)

Required Film: *Breaking with Old Ideas* (also available on YouTube)

4/5 Gender and Society—Guest Speaker: Yige Dong, PhD student, Sociology Readings TBA!

4/7 Discussion: What do prescriptive and “literary” texts from the Late Cultural Revolution tell us about the politics of this period—and how were the politics of the period reflected and expressed through literary and prescriptive texts from this period? Discuss readings from the two lectures—

Week 10 Endings?

4/10 The Death of Zhou Enlai/Tiananmen 1976

Reading: *Anne Thurston, *Enemies of the People*, pp. 3-27.

4/12 The End of the Cultural Revolution—A Partial Repudiation

4/14 Scar Literature—The Politics of (incomplete) Reconciliation?

Reading: Schoenhals, pp. 291-312.

*Lu Xinhua, “The Wounded”

*Xu Hui, “Nightmare: Notes from a Mother’s Hand”

*Yang Guobin, “The New Enlightenment,” *The Red Guard Generation*, Chapter 6.

Week 11 Other Perspectives

4/17 Midterm # 2

4/19 Wounds—Reopened? Ghosts of the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s

*Ba Jin, *The Cultural Revolution Museum*

4/21 Discussion: A literary monument? Feng Jikai’s *Ten Years of Madness*

Week 12 Rethinking the Cultural Revolution—New Perspectives

4/24 Memoirs and Films for International Consumption

4/26 Mao Resurrected (Shades of Mao in the Reform Era)

Reading: Very Short Selections from the Mao Craze

- *Zhang Weihong, “A Typology of the Mao Craze,” in Barme, *Shades of Mao*, 158-161.
- *Xin Yuan, “A Place in the Pantheon,” in Barme, *Shades of Mao*, 195-200.
- *Hou Dangsheng, “Hanging Mao,” in Barme, *Shades of Mao*, 211-214.
- Central Department of Propaganda, in Barme, *Shades of Mao*, “Publish and Perish,” 235-237.
- *People’s Daily, “Sparing Mao a Thought,” in Barme, *Shades of Mao*, 257-258.
- *Tang Can, et al, “Galluping Mao: A 1993 Opinion Poll,” in Barme, *Shades of Mao*, 261-268.

Professor Wang Zheng of the University of Michigan will be speaking today at noon—about her new book, *Finding Women in the State*, on women in revolutionary China. She is a leading expert on feminism in China; she herself was a sent-down youth and has direct experience with the events covered in our class. You are all strongly encouraged to attend her talk and ask questions. (This will count toward class participation!)

4/28 Discussion: An American Bestseller --*Life and Death in Shanghai*.

Week 13 Cultural Revolution—Nostalgia?

- 5/1 Nostalgia and Strategic Forgetting—Art and Memory in the 1990s and Beyond (*In the Heat of the Sun* 阳光灿烂的日子)
Note: Please view **In the Heat of the Sun* for discussion in class
- 5/3 The Cultural Revolution: A Difficult Past at Present

5/5 Discussion: How do people talk about the Cultural Revolution in China (and beyond) today? Is the Cultural Revolution still a “current event”—if so, why and how?

Reading:

Matt Sheehan, “Speak, Memory: Is China Finally Coming to Terms--on Television, on the Internet, and in Person-- with Its Horrific Past? (Oct 31, 2013)

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/10/31/china_apology_cultural_revolution_tv

<http://humanities.uchicago.edu/faculty/ywang/history>

http://www.nybooks.com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/articles/2014/12/18/china_s-brave-underground-journal-ii/

http://www.nybooks.com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/articles/2014/12/04/china_s-brave-underground-journal/

*Yang Guobin, “Factionalized Memories,” *Red Guard Generation*, Chapter 7.