

The Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976

Prof. T. Meyer-Fong
Email: tmeyerf@jhu.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2-3:30, or by appointment
330 C Gilman Hall

TA: Wes Sampias
Email: wsampial@jh.edu

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 subsequent interpretation as history and in historical memory in China and beyond.

Course Requirements:

**** This course will combine elements of lecture and in-class discussion. Reading and viewing assignments should be completed before each session as indicated below, 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.

Learning Objectives: Students will gain insight into the relationship between historical events, scholarly interpretation, and personal memory with specific reference to the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). They will make use of both primary and secondary readings in a range of genres to develop critical arguments and as they participate in civil and lively class discussions. They will have several formal opportunities to demonstrate mastery of course content and their developing skills as close and careful readers of primary and secondary sources.

****No extensions will be granted without prior permission of the instructor. Reasonable accommodation will be granted with good cause if requested in advance of a deadline. 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. **Note that work missing at the end of the semester is grounds for failing the course, regardless of precise numerical average.**

****Grades will be calculated as follows:**

Participation: 20%

Primary Source Skills Project: 25%

Research-based Role-Playing Exercise: 15%

In Class Tests 2 @ 10% each: 20%

Take Home Final Exam due Wednesday, May 10 at 12 noon: 20%

****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.*

Professor Meyer-Fong is aware that many students experience anxiety, depression, and other emotional challenges. The Office of Student Life offers support services to students under stress. If you would like to speak to a professional counselor, please visit the campus Counseling Center. Information is available on the Counseling Center's website:

<https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/>

Required Texts:

Andrew Walder, *China under Mao*.

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

Anita Chan, *et al*, Chen Village

Nien Cheng, Life and Death in Shanghai

The above books are available for purchase at the Johns Hopkins University Book Center. The textbook, *China Under Mao*, is also being made available from the library free of charge as a J-STOR eBook. It can be accessed via e-reserves on CANVAS.

Items marked with an * in the syllabus are available on e-reserves and can be reached via Canvas. These (obviously) are required texts unless otherwise noted.

Students are encouraged to locate and read materials in Chinese if they choose. However, in their written work, students should cite the assigned (English) version.

Week 1: Background to the Cultural Revolution

1/23 Event, Interpretation, and Memory: Reflections on the Cultural Revolution

1/25 Building the Party State (1949-1956)

1/27 Discussion Section: China Basics—Time, Place, Perspectives

How to read a primary source from the Cultural Revolution—a collective exercise
START Reading: Andrew Walder, *China Under Mao*, pp. 1-14, 100-179

Week 2: “To Rebel is Justified”-- 1966-1968

1/30 Revolutionary Times—The Cultural Revolution in Historical Context
(1956-1966)

2/1 Making a Generation: Revolutionary Heroism and Student Life

2/3 Discussion Section: Origins of the Cultural Revolution

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?)

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

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

Close Reading: Schoenhals, p. 3-26, 29-43

Week 3: Mobilizing Mass Organizations

2/6 The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Failure of Mass Supervision,
Guest Lecture Professor Joel Andreas, Department of Sociology, Johns
Hopkins

2/8 Destroying the Four Olds

2/10 Discussion Section: To Rebel is Justified 造反有理?

Close Reading: Schoenhals, p. 43-47, 93-116, 146-7, 166-
69, 183-4, 212-22.

Background Reading: Walder, 180-230.

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

STAGE 1: Primary Source Skills Project Part 1.

*Films (optional):

Morning Sun (八九点钟的太阳) a documentary by Carma Hinton), the
accompanying website <http://www.morningsun.org/film/> is also useful...

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

- 2/13 Mao's image in the Early Cultural Revolution
 2/15 Culture and the Cultural Revolution I: Rhetoric, Imagery, Ideology
 Reading: *Mao Zedong, * "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art"
 2/22 Discussion: Revolutionary Culture and History
 Reading: Schoenhals, p. 27, pp. 148-9
 *Red Sun Rising over Tian'anmen
 *Serve the People (example of Three Constantly Read Articles)
 Required Viewing: The White-Haired Girl (revolutionary ballet; synopsis available on Canvas)

Week 5 Beyond the Red Guards

- 2/20 The Cultural Revolution among the Workers
 2/22 To the Brink of Civil War—Factional Violence and its Consequences
 2/24 Primary Sources
 Reading: Schoenhals, p. 210-12, 222-227, 228-233, 55, Andrew Walder, *China Under Mao*, 231-262. Joel Andreas, *Disenfranchised*, Chapter 5.

Week 6 From Cities to Countryside

- 2/27 Up to the Mountains, Down to the Villages--The "Sent Down Youth"
 3/1 MIDTERM #1 in class
 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?
 Reading: *Chen Village*, pages 1-140

Week 7 Power Struggles

- 3/6 Military Rules
 3/8 The Cultural Revolution in the Countryside
 3/10 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* 141-185, 213-266.
 Background Reading: Walder, Chapter 12.

Week 9 Shifts of Direction

3/13 Change at the Top: The (Literal) Fall of Lin Biao and its Effects
3/15 The Nixon Visit

3/17 Politics: Domestic and International
Reading:

“Something Must be Happening” and “Power Struggle in Peking.”

*Media coverage of Nixon visit from the Chinese and Western press.

*Film: *Misunderstanding China* (please note that this film contains material that is racially insensitive; in that regard it is an accurate reflection of American attitudes at the time it was made. It also attempts, however clumsily, to describe earlier attitudes toward China and the way in which images of China produced in the US reflected realities in the United States more than they did the situation in China. In this regard it is insightful for its time).

Primary Source Skills Stage 2

3/18-3/26 SPRING BREAK

Week 10: Culture and Power—(1971-1976)

3/27 Power Struggles

Reading: Walder, 287-314

3/29 The Culture of the Cultural Revolution, Part II

3/31 Discussion: The Late Cultural Revolution

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? Why do women—especially Iron Girls and Women’s Militias (and barefoot doctors) become so prominent in the literary and visual culture of this moment?

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

Required Reading: * “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*)

*Wan Shan-hung, “The Iron Girl,” *Chinese Literature*, 5, 1971, 59-66.

*"Lin Biao is a Devout Disciple of Confucius," Peking Review, Vol. 17, #6, Feb. 8, 1974, pp. 7-12
Research-based Role-Playing Exercise Due on Turnitin

Week 11 Endings?

- 4/3 The Death of Zhou Enlai/Tiananmen 1976
4/5 The End of the Cultural Revolution (incomplete) Reconciliation and (Partial) Repudiation

4/7 Scar Literature and the Politics of 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 12 Other Perspectives

- 4/10 Wounds—Reopened? Ghosts of the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s

4/12 Midterm # 2
4/14 Discussion: A literary monument? Feng Jikai's *Ten Years of Madness*
Reading: Selections from Feng Jikai's *Ten Years of Madness* (pp. 1-4, 17-31, 49-59, 219-234)
*Ba Jin, *The Cultural Revolution Museum*, from Barne and Minford, *Seeds of Fire*.
Optional Film: *A Small Town Called Hibiscus*

Week 13 Rethinking the Cultural Revolution—New Perspectives

- 4/17 Memoirs and Films for International Consumption
4/19 Mao Resurrected (Shades of Mao in the Reform Era)
4/21 Discussion: An American Bestseller
Reading: *Life and Death in Shanghai*.
Optional Film: *The Blue Kite*

Week 14 Cultural Revolution—Nostalgia and Strategic Forgetting

- 4/24 Images of the Cultural Revolution: Documentary and Ideological Photographs as Historical Record, Guest Lecture by Prof. Gaochao HE
4/26 The Cultural Revolution: A Difficult Past at Present
4/28 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:
<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/>

*Helen Gao, “A Scar on the Chinese Soul,” New York Times OpEd,
January 17, 2017

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

China’s Cultural Revolution in Memories CR/10

<https://culturalrevolution.pitt.edu/#main>

Optional Film: *In the Heat of the Sun*

Primary Source Skills Project STAGE 3—the Essay due via Turnitin