

DRAFT SYLLABUS
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 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. Readings are carefully selected to be informative and accessible. Even when the page count may seem high, the reading is not difficult or dense. Rise to the challenge.**

**** *To protect the privacy of classmates and to ensure a comfortable and confidential classroom community, the recording of class sessions is strictly prohibited. The use of smart phones and watches during class is strictly prohibited as is the use of social media; computers should be used only for note taking.***

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: 20%
In Class Test: 15%
Final Exam: 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:

Michael Schoenhals, China's Cultural Revolution: Not a Dinner Party
Ma Bo, Blood Red Sunset.
Nien Cheng, Life and Death in Shanghai
Andrew Walder, China Under Mao.

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

- 1/22 Event, Interpretation, and Memory: Reflections on the Cultural Revolution
- 1/24 Discussion Section:

China Basics—Time, Place, Language, Perspectives

How to read a primary source from the Cultural Revolution—a collective exercise

Week 2: The People's Republic Before the Cultural Revolution:

- 1/27 Building the Party State (1949-1956)
- 1/29 Revolutionary Times—From the Anti-Rightist Campaign to the GPCR (1956-1966)

- 1/31 Discussion Section: Origins of the Cultural Revolution (Plus: how to read a secondary source)
Reading: Andrew Walder, *China Under Mao*, pp. 1-14, 100-179

Week 3: Mobilizing Mass Organizations

- 2/3 Launching the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution
- 2/5 Making a Generation: Revolutionary Heroism and Student Life
- 2/7 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?)

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: Walder, 180-230.

Close Reading: Schoenhals, p. 3-26, 29-47, 93-101, 146-7, 148-9, 166-69, 183-4

Recommended Film: *Though I am Gone* (我虽死去) dir. Hu Jie (2007).

STAGE 1: Primary Source Skills Project Part 1.

Week 4: Imagery and Ideology

2/10 The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Failure of Mass Supervision,
Guest Lecture Professor Joel Andreas, Department of Sociology, Johns Hopkins

2/12 Culture and the Cultural Revolution I: Rhetoric, Imagery, Ideology

Please preview before lecture:

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

2/14 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)

Schoenhals: 101-116, 188-192, 210-22.

Required Film: The White-Haired Girl (revolutionary
ballet; synopsis available on Canvas)

Week 5 Beyond the Red Guards

2/17 The Cultural Revolution among the Workers

2/19 To the Brink of Civil War—Factional Violence and its
Consequences

2/21 Primary Sources

Reading: Schoenhals, 222-227, 228-233, 55,

Andrew Walder, *China Under Mao*, 231-262.

Joel Andreas, *Disenfranchised*, Chapter 5.

Week 6 From Cities to Countryside

2/24 Up to the Mountains, Down to the Villages--The “Sent Down Youth”

2/26 Gender, Family, and Private Life

Guest Lecture: Professor Jin Jiang

2/28 Discussion: Displacement, Gender, Experience, and Memory:

How did Ma Bo’s gender, status, and location shape his experience and
memory of his life as a Sent Down Youth during the CR? To what extent
does his memoir demonstrate the ways in which central government
mandates were affected by local allegiances, personalities, and conditions?
How does Ma Bo describe the effects of the Sent-Down experience on his
personal relationships and commitments in his memoir, which was
published in the late 1980s? What does the Sent-Down Youth experience
mean to him (and perhaps, in his view, to China), in retrospect?

Reading: Ma Bo, *Blood Red Sunset*.

Week 7 Power Struggles

3/3 Military Rules

3/5 The Cultural Revolution in the Countryside

3/7 Discussion: 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 outside of Beijing aware of major national events (draw upon your reading of Ma Bo's *Blood Red Sunset* for evidence and examples)?

Reading:

Background Reading: Walder, Chapter 12.

Primary Source Skills Stage 2

Week 9 Shifts of Direction

3/10 Change at the Top: The (Literal) Fall of Lin Biao and its Effects

3/12 The Nixon Visit

3/14 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 quite insightful for its time).

3/17-3/23 SPRING BREAK

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

3/24 Power Struggles

Reading: Walder, 287-314

3/26 The Culture of the Cultural Revolution, Part II

3/28 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*) August 1968.
 * “The Brilliance of Mao Tse-tung’s Thought Illuminates the Whole World” (*Peking Review*) 1966
 *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?

- 3/31 The Death of Zhou Enlai/Tiananmen 1976
 4/2 The End of the Cultural Revolution (incomplete) Reconciliation and (Partial) Repudiation
 4/4 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

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

Week 12 Memory and Forgetting

- 4/7 Wounds—Reopened? Ghosts of the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s
 4/9 **In class test**
 4/11 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*.
 Schoenhals, 313-355.

Recommended Film: *A Small Town Called Hibiscus*

Week 13 Rethinking the Cultural Revolution—New Perspectives

- 4/14 Memoirs and Films for International Consumption
 4/16 Mao Resurrected (Shades of Mao in the post-Mao era)
 4/18 Discussion: The Cultural Revolution in American Memory
 Reading: *Life and Death in Shanghai*.
 Recommended Film: *The Blue Kite*

Week 14 Cultural Revolution—Nostalgia and Strategic Forgetting

4/21 Images of the Cultural Revolution: Documentary and Ideological Photographs as Historical Record, Guest Lecture by Prof. Gaochao HE

4/23 The Cultural Revolution in Art and Memory

REQUIRED FILM: *In the Heat of the Sun* 阳光灿烂的日子, 1994)

4/25 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>

Recommended Film (again) *Though I am Gone*, Hu Jie (2017)

Week 15:

4/28 The Cultural Revolution: A Difficult Past at Present