

East 493: Special Topics in East Asian Studies: Revolution in Modern China

Winter 2021

Instructor: Prof. Gal Gvili

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Time: Thursdays, 11:35-1:25

Place: Zoom+ two in-person “check-in” sessions on January 28 and March 25, location: ARTS 230

Office hours: Thursdays, 1:25-2:25, or by appointment.

Course Description

This course will focus on “Revolution” as a prism through which to study political and cultural transformations in 20th century Chinese history. We will examine different manifestations of the notion of revolution in literature, cinema, music and art, while looking into the ways in which the meaning of the revolutionary was negotiated both politically and aesthetically, throughout the 20th century.

Over the course of the semester, we will study key moments in modern Chinese history, while and by analyzing major textual and visual works. The goal of this class is therefore threefold: to provide you with a strong grasp of Chinese history, broaden your knowledge of modern Chinese major texts and develop your analytical skills of texts from different media. Several questions will run throughout our discussion: Is art capable of creating a revolution or does art merely represent revolutionary ideas? How are movements or ideologies such as Feminism, Marxism, Capitalism and Globalization represented in stories and visual images? How do different art forms engage with politics? How do they adhere to ideology, and how do they subvert it? Our secondary readings will simultaneously deepen our understanding of Chinese history and situate China in a global context of revolution. Our primary sources will include fiction and poetry, films, and popular songs.

Structure of the Course

Our class meets once a week over zoom. Every session will begin with a 10-15 minutes presentation by one of the students to be followed by discussion of the reading materials. Real-time discussions will provide you with an opportunity to ask for clarification, interact with your instructor and classmates in breakout groups, and discuss texts, films, images, etc. The final hour of each meeting will be dedicated to an office-hour style free discussion. Students can speak with me privately or raise questions together. Students, at this point, will be free to log off or stay as they wish.

We will also have two opportunities to meet in person: two of our sessions will be held in person and will give us a chance to get to know each other and for you to raise issues you may have in a “real, live” meeting. Our second check-in meeting will focus on discussing your research paper proposals. The check-in sessions are not mandatory. Those of you who are not in Montreal, or who would like to avoid a face-to-face are welcome to meet with me in a separate zoom meeting, if you’d like.

During the semester, we will check in regularly to see what is working and what is not working. I encourage and invite all of you to email me or chat with me during office hours and express your opinion about your experience in the class, the readings, and any concern you may have.

Attendance

Attendance is not mandatory, though it is strongly encouraged. You may complete the course asynchronously if you wish—all the sessions will be recorded and posted on mycourses. If you attend real-time discussion, you must complete the assigned material beforehand in order for it to be a productive experience for everyone. I would like to ask you to turn your camera on, as it will be a huge help for me in understanding YOUR experience in this class and to improve my teaching accordingly. If you feel that you need to keep your camera turned off, please email me and explain the reason so that we could have a dialog in this way. If you are unable to attend the live sessions please email me to let me know so that I can make sure that you are fully accommodated. Those of you who cannot attend the class sessions are asked to select a week to present and contact me via email to coordinate a meeting between you and myself so that you could deliver your presentation to me then.

Course Evaluation

12 Weekly Postings	25%
1 Presentation (including discussion questions)	20%
Final Paper Proposal	20%
Final Research Paper (15-20 pages including bibliography)	35%

Presentations and Discussion Questions

Starting January 14, each student is responsible for one weekly oral presentation to be given in the beginning of each class and is asked to post in advance three questions on the chosen week's reading assignment. Questions should be posted by **Tuesday at 7:00 PM** so your fellow students will have time to respond. Your presentation (10-15 minutes) should summarize the main points the readings evoke, and raise one or two questions in order to launch class discussion for the larger part of the session. Please sign up on mycourses discussion board.

Weekly Postings

Starting January 14, each student must post approximately **300 words** onto mycourses for every class. Your postings should be uploaded no later than **Wednesday at 23:00 PM** to allow myself and your fellow students ample time to read through your thoughts. Each posting should respond to one question out of three that will be posted under the discussion section on mycourses by the week's presenter. **Please do not summarize the texts but respond to the question by engaging in close reading of the literary works and putting them in conversation with the secondary sources we will be reading.** You are encouraged to focus on one or two particular aspects of the text, and/or raise questions for class discussion. Please cite page numbers.

Class Policies

Academic Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Submission of written work: In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Electronic Devices: Laptops are permitted in lecture for taking notes only. No other electronic devices (e.g., cellphones, recording devices) are allowed so as to minimize distractions to other students and the instructor.

Accommodation

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not yet registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities, you should do so right away. I am not a mental or physical health specialist and for this reason I have no qualification to understand/excuse/cooperate with emotional or physical difficulties. It will, in fact, in light of my lack of training, be irresponsible of me to try. The Office for Student Disabilities is there to mediate for you and help your professors understand what is the best way to work with you while respecting your limitations. Please approach them as soon as possible at: <https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/> or 514-398-6009 or disabilities.students@mcgill.ca

Sexual Assault Survivor Support and Allyship

Should you or someone you know need support as a survivor of sexual assault, harassment and/or discrimination on campus, please contact McGill's Sexual Violence Response Advisor, Émilie Marcotte, at 514-398-4486 or by email at: osvrse@mcgill.ca, situated in the new Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education (located at 550 Sherbrooke, suite 585) for assistance. They also offer drop-in hours during the school year (the schedule is online). For more information on their office, sexual violence support and reporting options visit: www.mcgill.ca/saap. The Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Student's Society (SACOMSS) offers peer counseling and support to students who have experienced sexual violence and their allies, as well as outreach and education. You can find out more about them at <http://www.sacomss.org/wp/>. Their hotline number is: (514) 398-8500 and they offer drop-in hours as well (the schedule for which is online)

A note on Chinese names

Chinese names are preceded by the last name to be followed by a first name. For example, the protagonist of Wang Anyi's excellent novel *Song of Everlasting Sorrow*'s name is Wang Qiyao. This means that her surname is Wang and first name is Qiyao. As is customary in China, people are usually referred to by their full name especially in writing. Please make a note of this and avoid confusing first and last names. For example, the author Yu hua who we will read carries that last name Yu and first name Hua. You should refer to him in your writing as Yu Hua and not as "Hua" and preferably not as "Yu" either.

Readings

All Available on mycourses or as E books in the library. The recommended readings are there for those of you who wish to further explore the various topics. You are welcome to read them, bring them up in class discussion or use them for further reference in your papers, but they are not a requirement.

SCHEDULE:

January 7: Introduction: How do we talk about China and Revolution today?

January 14: “Literature to the Rescue”: The May 4th Moment

*Liang Qichao. (1902) “On the Relationship Between Fiction and the Government of the People” In: Denton. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought* pp. 74-82.

*Hu Shi. (1917) “Some Modest Proposals for the Reform of Literature”. In: Denton. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought* pp. 123-140.

*Lu Xun. 1980. (1923). “Preface to Call to Arms”, “Diary of a Madman”, “The True Story of Ah Q”, In: Yang and Yang (trans.) *Lu Xun Selected Works* Beijing: Foreign Languages Press. pp. 33-39, 39-52, 102-155.

*Arthur Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* [1894], 2003, EastBridge, “The Absence of Sympathy”, pp. 167–185. Available Online: <https://archive.org/details/cu31924023247160>

Recommended:

*Lydia H. Liu. 1995. *Translingual Practice*, “Translating National Character: Lu Xun and Arthur Smith” pp. 45-77.

January 21: The Birth of Chinese Feminism

*Lydia Liu, Dorothy Ko and Rebecca Karl. 2013. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, “Introduction” pp. 1-48.

*Liang Qichao. 1897. “On Women’s Education”, In Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, 2013, Columbia University Press, pp. 189–203.

*He Yinzhen. (1907-1908) “On the Question of Women’s Liberation” In *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory* pp. 49-71.

*Ding Ling. 1989. “When I was in Xia Village” (1941), “Thoughts on March 8” (1942) In *I Myself am a Woman* (Tani E. Barlow, trans.) Beacon Press. pp. 298-315; 316-322.

January 28: Check In Session: One on One meetings at ARTS 230. Please pre-register on mycourses discussion board.

February 4 Capitalism, Imperialism, Nationalism: the 1930’s

*V.I. Lenin. (1917). *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, “Concentration of Production and Monopolies”; “The Export of Capital”; “The Division of the World Among Capitalist Combines”; “The Division of the World Among Great Powers”; “Imperialism as a Special Stage of Capitalism” pp. 11-25, 61-99.

*Mao Dun. (1932) *Spring Silkworms*. (Sidney Shapiro, trans.) In *Modern Chinese Stories and Novellas, 1919-1949* edited by Joseph S. M. Lau, Chih-Tsing Hsia, Leo Ou-fan Lee Pp. 144-157.

* Marc Shell, “The issue of representation,” in Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen, *The New Economic Criticism: Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 53-74

*Mao Dun. Sketch of the Stock Exchange, trans. Anatoly Detwyler (2 pages)

February 11 Urbanization in Cinema and Literature

*Please watch the silent Film: [Daybreak](#) (1933)

*Mu Shiyiny. “Shanghai Foxtrot” *Modernism/Modernity* 11,4 (2004): 797-807.

*Zhang Zhen. 2005. *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, “Worldly Shanghai, Metropolitan Spectators” pp. 42-88.

*Shih Shumei. 2001. *The Lure of the Modern*. Berkeley: University of California Press. “The Global and Local Terms of Chinese Modernism” pp. 1-45.

February 18 Enter the Party: Art’s Uses and Abuses

*The Revolutionary song *Nannivan* 南泥_湾 South Muddy Bend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g59PliFjad4>

* Karl, Rebecca E. 2010. *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth Century World: A Concise History*, Duke University Press. “Yan’an, The War of Resistance Against Japan and Civil War 1939–1945”, pp. 51–72.

*Mao Zedong. “Talks at the Yan’an Forum On Literature and Art” In: Denton. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought* pp. 458-485.

*Mao Zedong “On Contradiction” https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_17.htm

February 25: Revolution as Genre: Socialist Realism in the 1950’s and 1960’s

*Ding Ling, *The Sun Shines Over Sanggan River* first twenty chapters, pp. 1-26, 241-361.

*Dobrenko, Evgeny. 2007. *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*. Yale University Press. “Socialism as Will and Representation”, pp. 1-45

*Clark, Caterina. 1997. "Socialist Realism with Shores: The Conventions for the Positive Hero" In *Socialist Realism Without Shores*, edited by Evgeny Dobrenko and Thomas Lahusen. Duke University Press. pp. 27-51.

March 11: Counting A Nation: Guest Lecturer: Arunabh Ghosh, Harvard University.

*Arunabh Ghosh, [*Making it Count: Statistics and Statecraft in the Early People's Republic of China*](#) (NJ: Princeton UP). "Introduction"+a chapter of your choosing.

*****Final Paper Proposal Due*****

March 18: Revolution and Its Narratives: Model Works of Art

*Barbara Mittler, [*A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*](#) (Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2012): "Popular Culture and Cultural Revolution Culture: Theory, Practice, and Experience" pp. 2-32.

*[*The White Haired Girl*](#)

<https://www.bilibili.com/video/av19047554/>

The following Wikipedia entry has the libretto under "plot". I recommend you read that before watching the ballet.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_White_Haired_Girl

*McGrath, Jason. "Cultural Revolution Model Opera Films and the Realist Tradition in Chinese Cinema" *The Opera Quarterly* 26(2-3), 2010: 343-376.

Recommended

*Wang Ban. 1997. *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in 20th Century China*. Stanford University Press. "The Cultural Revolution: A Terrible Beauty is Born" pp. 194-228.

March 25: Check-In: Discussion of Final Paper Proposals.

April 1: "Post Socialism" : Whither Revolution? The 1980's in Literature and Cinema

"Post Socialism" I: Whither Revolution? The 1970's and 1980's in Literature

*Lu Xinhua. (1978) "The Wounded" In *The Wounded: New Stories of the Cultural Revolution*. (Geremie Barmé and Bennett Lee, trans.) Hong Kong: Joint Pub. Co. Pp. 9-24.

*Ah Cheng. "The King of Trees" In: *The King of Trees: Three Novellas* (Bonnie. S. Macdougall, trans.)

2010, New Directions.

*Li Tuo. 2000. "Resistance to Modernity" In *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century*, edited by Pang-yuan Chi and David Der-Wei Wang. Indiana University Press. pp. 137-146.

*Mo Yan, "The Transparent Carrot"

*Film: [*Red Sorghum*](#) (1987)

* Chow, Rey. 1995. *Primitive Passions*. Columbia University Press. "Film as Ethnography" pp. 173-202.

April 8: The Rise of New Consumerism: New Documentary Filmmaking

*Film: Jiu Liangwang, [*Plastic China*](#) (2016)

*Margaret Hillenbrand, "Ragpicking as Method" *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese Literature* 16,2 (October 2019): 260-297.

*Chris Berry, Lu Xinyu and Lisa Rofel. 2013. *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record* pp. 1-48.