MODERNITY AND NATIONHOOD IN CHINA

Instructor: Thomas Wilson
Office: KJ 123
Office hours: Thurs. 9:30-10:30; Wed. 1:00-2:00, by appointment

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Aims of the course: This course examines modernity and nationhood in China from the nineteenth-century to recent times. Readings and class sessions consider the limits of understanding modern China from a Western perspective and how to situate the issues involved within contexts of Chinese historical experiences. The course critically examines the “Western impact” model—premised on the belief that the West was the source of Chinese modernity—in global and Chinese historical contexts and challenges prevalent conceptions of modernity.

Accommodation requests: I will make reasonable accommodations on assignment deadlines for a student who requires them because of a documented disability as allowed by the Dean of Student’s office. If you need such accommodations, please discuss them with me no later than the end of the second week of classes so that we can make necessary arrangements for the semester.

Books for purchase
Jonathan D. Spence, The Search for Modern China, Third Edition (Norton, 2013)
Tobie Meyer-Fong, What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China (Stanford, 2013)

All other readings available on Blackboard unless marked with †, indicating an electronic journal article available through Burke Library (e.g., JSTOR, Project Muse, etc.)

Δ Discussion Board assignments are due by 9:00 AM THE MORNING OF CLASS. Unless otherwise noted, these assignments are limited to no more than 75 words, summarize an essential point of the reading, and briefly explain the importance of your point. A “point” may address the author’s argument, a historical problem posed in an article, or an event described in the readings.

Come to class prepared to discuss all readings on the dates for which they are assigned.

Introduction (1/19)

I. Late Imperial China: Ming, 1368-1644, and Qing, 1644-1911 (1/21-1/28)
1/21: Society: social status; economic organization and practices; bureaucratic regulation
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 3-47

1/26: State: emperor, rituals; civil bureaucracy & examinations, Confucian gentry; Manchu conquest, Qing rule
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 48-114
Imperial Pantheon (Blackboard document)
mystery question: Where is Justus Doolittle buried?

1/28: CLASS DISCUSSION
Δ The problem Western perspectives on Chinese society.
topics: Christianity, secularism
II. China & the West (2/2-2/4)
2/2: Europe in Asia: Marco Polo, Jesuits, MaCartney Mission, Canton System, Opium Wars
Δ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 115-163
Begin reading!! Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China*

2/4: Class discussion
Δ Duara, “Introduction,” *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago, 1995), 3-16
Δ Duara, “Linear History and the Nation-state,” 13-50
lexicon: agency, teleology, aporia (know the meaning of these words)
topics: modernity Enlightenment, rationalism, secular humanism, positivism, linear history; industrial revolution

III. Nineteenth-century rebellions: (2/9-2/16)
2/9: Secret societies and rebellions
Δ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 164-185
Janet Chen, et. al., *The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection* (Norton, 2014), 111-118
preparing your first essay

2/11: Class discussion: Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China*

2/16: Class discussion: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom
final queries on your essays

IV. Fin de siècle (2/18-2/23)
2/18: Self-Strengthening Movement
† William Wooldridge, “Building and State Building in Nanjing after the Taiping Rebellion,” *Late Imperial China* 30 (Dec. 2009) 2: 84-126
Δ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 208-233
Janet Chen, et. al., *The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection*, 134-152

2/19 (Friday): First essay due (see page 5 for the assignment)

2/23: Hundred-Days Reform, Boxer Rebellion
Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 234-254

V. Nationhood and Revolution (2/25-3/1)
2/25: Nationhood and Republican Revolution, 1911-12
 Δ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 257-273

3/1: Warlord Era 1916-1928
 Δ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 273-278
 Janet Chen, et. al., *The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection*, 203-210

VI. Competing Modernities (3/3-3/29)
3/3: May 4th Movement: Cai Yuanpei (1876-1940), Hu Shi (1891-1962), Chen Duxiu (1879-1942)
 Δ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 279-283
 Janet Chen, et. al., *The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection*, 219-230

3/8: Marxism and the Revolution: Li Dazhao (1888-1927), 1921-1949
 Δ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 283-300

3/10: **CLASS DISCUSSION:** Republicanism’s anti-religious campaigns

**SPRING BREAK!**

3/29: Nanjing/Republican Decade (1927-1937)
 Post-Modernity (class discussion)
 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 327-352
 Δ Lu Xun, “The New Year’s Sacrifice,” *Selected Stories of Lu Hsun*

VII. Mao and Maoism (3/31-4/14)
 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 356-385
 **BEGIN READING:** Mao, “Report on an Investigation . . .” (complete by 4/15)

4/7: Pre-‘49 Mao: formation of a Chinese Marxism
 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 391-459

4/12: State Maoism
 Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 460-523
 Janet Chen, et. al., *The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection*, 412-436
 prchistory.org: a valuable on-line source for documents and scholarly articles on PRC history
Δ Mao Zedong, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People” (2/27/57)

4/14: The Cultural Revolution
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 523-555
Δ Janet Chen, et. al., The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection, 441-455
“Cultural Revolution Campaigns,” External Link
“Serve the People: Images of Daily Life in China during the Cultural Revolution,” external link
Δ Wang Liang, “The Confucius Temple Tragedy of the Cultural Revolution” (Wilson, On Sacred Grounds), 376-398
Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung, 1-22, 45-57

4/15 (Friday): SECOND ESSAY DUE (see page 5)

VIII. Post-Mao Era (4/19-5/5)
4/19: Economic Reforms & Political Effects CLASS DISCUSSION
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 559-665
Janet Chen, et. al., The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection, 493-506
Liao Yiwu, The Corpse Walker: Real Life Stories: China From the Bottom Up (begin reading)

4/21 Film: “Last Train Home” (2010), dir. Fan Lixin

4/26-4/28: Post-reform Culture and Society
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 666-707
Liao Yiwu, The Corpse Walker: Real Life Stories: China From the Bottom Up (finish reading)

5/3 Film: “Bored in Heaven”

5/5: CLASS DISCUSSION of readings in preparation for final essay

5/8 (Friday): THIRD ESSAY DUE AT 12:00 PM (see page 5)
Course Requirements:

**Writing assignments**: All papers are due as email attachments by 3:00 P.M. on the date due unless specified otherwise. No extensions granted unless by prior arrangement—for extraordinary circumstances only—more than 24 hours before assignments are due.

**BE SURE TO PRESENT A CLEAR THESIS AND USE EVIDENCE IN THE SOURCES TO SUPPORT AND DEVELOP YOUR ARGUMENT**

#1 Essay on China’s nineteenth-century crisis based on Meyer-Fong’s *What Remains*, at least one primary source on the Taiping rebellion, and another secondary source listed in sections ii-iii of the syllabus. Refrain from drawing from personal experiences or understanding to characterize the nature of Christianity. Rather, consider, for example, the writings of Doolittle, a missionary in China roughly at that time, as a way to shed light on how Western missionaries responded to the Taipings and its theology; roughly 1800 words due February 19.

#2 Essay on Marxism and modernity in the first half of the twentieth century with an emphasis on Mao’s writings based on sources listed in sections vi-vii; roughly 1800 words due April 15.

#3: Essay on everyday life in the post-Mao era using at least **T**hree sources listed on the syllabus under sections vii-viii; roughly 1800 words due at 12:00 PM on May 8.

**final course grade determined on the basis of the following:**

- Discussion board posts: 20%
- Class participation: 20%
- Essay #1: 20%
- Essay #2: 20%
- Essay #3: 20%

Papers are graded on four broad criteria:

1. **ARGUMENT**: formulation of a thesis, support of the thesis on the basis of a compelling argument, and effective interpretation/analysis of relevant evidence, both primary and secondary sources. A compelling argument comprises (a) a clearly formulated thesis – the broadest, most general point of the essay – that is consistently articulated at the beginning, middle, and end of the essay and (b) effective, persuasive interpretation of sources. Be sure to develop your ideas fully and summarize the content of your sources only very sparingly, if at all. A thesis or argument should be based on your own interpretation of the sources. Be sure to acknowledge points that are not your own in notes or in the text (Write this: “Richard Smith writes that the imperial Chinese government was so dominant because it ‘created a religion in its own image.’” *NOT THIS*: “The imperial Chinese government was so dominant because it ‘created a religion in its own image.’”). Raise your own critique of the sources, consider how you think the author might respond to these criticisms. A thoughtful interpretation requires digging beneath the surface meaning of the texts to a subtler understanding of their connections to broader (intellectual, social, political, etc.) contexts.

2. **WRITTEN EXPRESSION**: clarity and persuasiveness of prose and effective integration of evidence (e.g., quotations) into your own prose. A well-written paper requires thorough reading and precise written expression. A **thorough understanding of your sources depends upon close reading, careful reflection, and re-reading**. The most important ideas of the essay should be clearly stated, explicated, and documented.
Explain passages that you quote with transitional sentences that help the reader understand what exactly in the quotation you believe is pertinent to your argument and how exactly it connects with your thesis. Precise written expression requires writing, editing, and re-writing!

3. **Documentation**: cite all sources of information that you use, *even if you do not quote a source directly* in your essay. If you do not cite the sources from which you derive information, or on which you base your description of an event, or interpretation of an idea or text, etc., the implication is that the idea is your own, or that it is based on your own primary research. Failure to cite such sources constitutes plagiarism. Be sure to cite exact page numbers of any source from which you quote directly, although it is rarely necessary to cite the same source more than once in the same paragraph. Use proper citation forms (i.e., footnotes or end notes) as described in the Hamilton College Style Sheet. Be consistent in the citation format used.

4. **Mechanics**: correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

**Grading criteria**: A “fair” (i.e., C) essay is coherently written, mostly documented, and descriptive of the source’s contents. A “good” (i.e., B) essay is clearly written, properly documented, logically sound, and presents an interesting and convincing interpretation of the sources. An “excellent” (i.e., A) essay presents a compelling argument for a thoughtful and imaginative interpretation of the sources based on a thorough reading and re-reading of the sources and careful reflection upon the problems raised. A compelling argument meets three criteria: (1) a clear formulation of a problem, (2) analysis of the texts under scrutiny, and (3) a scrupulous use and citation of supporting evidence from the texts (i.e., “documentation,” see below). A thoughtful interpretation requires digging beneath the surface meaning of the texts to a subtler understanding of their connections to broader contexts. A “prose” grade of C– (i.e., less than “satisfactory”) is assigned to grammatically correct but informal and stylistically weak writing; and D+ or below for repeated infractions of basic rules of writing, depending upon frequency and egregiousness of such errors.