MODERNITY AND NATIONHOOD IN CHINA

Instructor: Thomas Wilson
Office: KJ 140
Office hours: M 11:00-12:00; Tu. 2:00-5:00; by appointment

Class hours: TR 9:00-10:15
Class room: KJ 109

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.

Books for purchase

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.)

Discussion Board assignments are due by 8:00 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 (8/29)

I. Late Imperial China: Ming, 1368-1644, and Qing, 1644-1911

9/3: Society: social status; economic organization and practices; bureaucratic regulation
Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3-47

9/5: 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?

9/10: CLASS DISCUSSION

Δ The problem Western perspectives on Chinese society.
topics: Christianity, secularism

II. China & the West

9/12: 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*
9/17: 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 civil wars:
9/19: Secret societies and rebellions
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 164-185
*Janet Chen, et. al., The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection (Norton, 2014), 111-118
Δ Dominck LaCapra, “Writing History/Writing Trauma,” in Writing History/Writing Trauma (Johns Hopkins, 2014), 1-42

9/24: CLASS DISCUSSION: Tobie Meyer-Fong, What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China
preparing your first essay

9/26: CLASS DISCUSSION: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom
Δ *“The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle,” The Taiping Rebellion 2: 51-79
final queries on your essays

IV. Fin de siècle
10/1: 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

10/3: Hundred-Days Reform, Boxer Rebellion
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 254-254

10/4 (Friday): FIRST ESSAY DUE (see page 5 for the assignment)

V. Nationhood and Revolution
10/8: Nationhood and Republican Revolution, 1911-12
Δ Spence, The Search for Modern China, 257-273

VI. Competing Modernities
10/15: May 4th Movement: Cai Yuanpei (1876-1940), Hu Shi (1891-1962), Chen Duxiu (1879-1942)
△ Spence, The Search for Modern China, 279-283
△ Janet Chen, et. al., The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection, 219-250

△ Spence, The Search for Modern China, 283-300

10/24: CLASS DISCUSSION: Republicanism’s anti-religious campaigns

Fall Recess

10/29: Nanjing/Republican Decade (1927-1937)
Post-Modernity (class discussion)
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 327-352
△ † Lu Xun, “The New Year’s Sacrifice,” Selected Stories of Lu Hsun

VII. Mao and Maoism
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 356-385

11/7: Pre-‘49 Mao: formation of a Chinese Marxism
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 391-459

11/12: State Maoism
Spence, The Search for Modern China, 460-523
△ Janet Chen, et. al., The Search for Modern China, A Documentary Collection, 412-456
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)

11/14: The Cultural Revolution
Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 523-555
° “Cultural Revolution Campaigns,” [External Link](http://massline.org/PekingReview/PR1966/PR1966-33g.htm)
° *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*, 1-22, 45-57

11/15 (Friday): SECOND ESSAY DUE (see page 5)

VIII. Post-Mao Era
11/19: 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

11/21 Film: “Last Train Home” (2010), dir. Fan Lixin

THANKSGIVING BREAK!

12/3 Film: “Last Train Home” (finish film) & [CLASS DISCUSSION]

12/5 Changing Mentalities
Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 666-707

12/10: *The Corpse Walker*  [CLASS DISCUSSION]
° Liao Yiwu, *The Corpse Walker: Real Life Stories: China From the Bottom Up*

200-WORD POST: Modernity, we have learned in the course, is as much a state of mind or a discursive attitude as it is the end point—or the most recent moment—of history. Based on at least two stories in Liao Yiwu’s *The Corpse Walker*, examine Liao’s own perspective on the ways that “traditional” ideas endure, are subordinated, or are otherwise negotiated in contemporary China.

12/12 Post-reform Culture and Society  [CLASS DISCUSSION of readings]

† Sébastien Billioud, “Confucian Revival and the Emergence of ‘Jiaobua Organizations’: A Case Study of the Yidan Xuetang,” Modern China 37 (May 2011) 5: 286-314


12/16 (Monday): THIRD ESSAY DUE (see page 5 below)

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.

This course assigns at least three different kinds of sources. The TEXTBOOK (e.g., Spence) surveys the most recent scholarship on the subject of modern Chinese history; it is a consensual document that summarizes other scholars’ research. Use it in your papers for basic facts about modern China, always cite in notes where you rely on it, but do not quote it. MONOGRAPHS and SCHOLARLY ARTICLES are based on the author’s own research on primary sources and in archives. Since scholars seek to establish insights, truths, facts about the past, bear in mind that the information in such works are part of (embedded it) their arguments. When using information in these articles and monographs to build your own argument or thesis, you need to acknowledge the author’s contribution to the understanding of the subject-matter and situate that information in the author’s larger argument. Quote articles and monographs only when you respond to their argument, otherwise summarize their findings in your own words and always cite the exact pages in footnotes. Focus your analysis on the PRIMARY SOURCES in your essay; quote them sparingly in your prose and always cite the exact pages in your notes.

#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 October 4.

#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 November 15.

#3: Drawing from Liao’s The Corpse Walker and at least two other sources listed on the syllabus (under sections vii-viii), discuss ways that post-Mao reforms have affected peoples everyday experience in China today; roughly 1800 words due at 12:00 PM on December 16.
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:
Be advised that the Honor Code applies to all work submitted for a grade in this course.

1. ARGUMENT: a compelling argument comprises a clearly formulated thesis—the broadest, most general point of the essay—at the beginning of the essay, and support of the thesis on the basis of sound, persuasive interpretation/analysis of relevant evidence, including both primary and secondary sources. Develop your ideas fully; where necessary, summarize the content of your sources sparingly. A thesis or argument should be based on your own interpretation of the sources. 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 with some grammatical or stylistic problems, mostly documented, and descriptive of the source’s contents rather than thoroughly analytical. A “good” (i.e., B) essay is clearly written, properly documented, logically sound, and presents an interesting interpretation of and convincing argument on the basis 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 thesis and 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 or stylistically weak writing; and D+ or below for repeated infractions of basic rules of writing, depending upon frequency and egregiousness of such errors.

**Hamilton College curricular goals:**

*History 285* addresses several curricular goals of the College. It examines “facts, phenomena and issues in depth, and from a variety of perspectives” and challenges students “to revise [their] beliefs and outlooks in light of new evidence” (*Intellectual Curiosity and Flexibility*). It engages students to think critically about the assumptions and long-standing practices and methods of History as a discipline (*Disciplinary Practice*). The writing assignments stress the central importance of “clarity and eloquence” as described under “Writing Assignments” at the end of the syllabus (*Communication and Expression*). Finally, as a history course on China, the course expects students to critically engage the cultural traditions and perspectives of modern China (*Understanding of Cultural Diversity*).

**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.

The Counseling Center ([www.hamilton.edu/offices/counselingcenter](http://www.hamilton.edu/offices/counselingcenter)) offers individual consultations and treatment, and a 24-hour hotline. If you need immediate assistance, phone the Counseling Center at 315-859-4340 and select option 2, which will connect you with a counselor, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Other options: contact Associate Dean of Students for Student Support, Lorna Chase at 315-859-4600 or email at lchase@hamilton.edu or Associate Dean of Students for Academics, Tara McKee, who can be reached during regular hours at 315-859-4600 or by email at tmckee@hamilton.edu. Contact your faculty advisor for academic questions.