

HIS3068 History of Modern China Through Film

Point Loma Nazarene University

Instructor: Dr. Jaeyoon Kim

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Office location and hours: Colt 206

T/Th 12:15 ~ 13:00PM, 2:30~3:00PM or by an email appointment

Meeting days/times (M 2:45 pm – 6:25 pm)

Meeting location (Colt 120)

PLNU Mission: To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Course Description: This course critically examines Chinese films as reflections of modern Chinese history, society, and culture. Students will analyze how cinema represents themes such as gender and nationalism, intellectuals and revolution, rural–urban divides, nostalgia and historical imagination, the martial arts genre and “Chineseness,” and the construction of new Chinese identities in a global context. By engaging with films through diverse cultural and socio-historical perspectives, students will develop an understanding of how different groups interpret China’s past and present in cross-cultural contexts.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Learning, Informed by our Faith in Christ

Students will acquire knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world while developing skills and habits of the mind that foster lifelong learning.

2. Growing, In a Christ-Centered Faith Community

Students will develop a deeper and more informed understanding of others as they negotiate complex professional, environmental and social contexts.

3. Serving, In a Context of Christian Faith

Students will serve locally and/or globally in vocational and social settings.

HISTORY PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who complete the program in History will be able to:

- Complete a substantial historical project autonomously.
- Demonstrate the relationship between primary and secondary materials by assessing a historian’s work and recognizing the evidence used to construct that historical argument.
- Present and analyze, in written or oral presentation, different perspectives on an event from the past.
- Have an academic transcript that shows courses with content that ranges over time, space, culture, and qualitative and quantitative historical methods.
- Find appropriate materials online, in a library, or in the community and know how to cite them.

Course Learning Outcomes: Students satisfying the above objectives should be able to:

1. have a critical understanding of the development of Modern China in relation to modern history and media culture.
 2. acquire skills in critically viewing and writing visual texts and analyze the differences between word and image.
 3. understand the importance of Chinese culture on local, national, and global levels.
 4. understand cinema as a popular cultural form in telling stories about China and Chinese identities through genres such as tragedy, comedy, melodrama, martial arts and action film.
 5. acquire a different cultural perspective from which to view oneself, one's culture and one's society.
 6. understand key issues about modern Chinese history.
- Learning Outcome is assessed through measures such as examinations (essay questions), writing assignments, presentations, quizzes, participation in discussions, and group activities.

Required Texts:

Edwin E. Moise, *Modern China, A History*, 2/E (Longman, 1994)

Gao Yuan, *Born Red: A Chronicle of the Cultural Revolution* (Stanford University Press, 1987)

Format: The course will combine lectures and discussions, with assigned readings, in order to provide context and background for the films. Some films will be preceded by lectures, designed to supplement the reading. Students will view the films inside of class.

Course Policies

This class will follow the academic policies of PLNU as outlined in the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate Catalog.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2533). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

Language and Belonging*

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all

major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/nondiscrimination.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination*

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/Title-IX.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

Attendance and Participation: Your regular presence in class will help you succeed and will make our class discussions more fruitful. Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to attend all of the class sessions and to arrive on time. Regular and punctual attendance at all classes is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings, the faculty member has the option of filing a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice. If the date of de-enrollment is past the last date to withdraw from a class, the student will be assigned a grade of W or WF consistent with university policy in the grading section of the catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) in the (undergrad/graduate as appropriate) academic catalog.

FERPA Policy: In compliance with federal law, neither PLNU student ID nor social security numbers should be used in publicly posted grades or returned sets of assignments without student written permission. This class will meet the federal requirements by distributing all grades and papers individually. Also in compliance with FERPA, you will be the only person given information about your progress in this class unless you have designated others to receive it in the "Information Release" section of the student portal. See [Policy Statements](#) in the undergrad academic catalog.

Classroom Courtesy and Etiquette: A respectful and professional attitude towards one's classmates and the classroom in general is expected. Leaving class early without notice is not allowed since it disrupts the learning environment of the class. Cell phones are particularly unwelcome and must be turned off at all times.

Course Grading, Exams, and Assignments:

Class Participations and Discussions (200 Points): You are expected to engage with weekly readings carefully and critically and participate actively in class discussions. Failure to attend class and participate in discussion will result in a deduction from your final grade.

Reflection Papers (400 Points): Students will write **Four** short reflection papers (200 Points) and **one** Critical Paper (200 Points) that react to films, course readings and lectures. The film reflection paper is a key element of our class. The paper (4-5 pages) must be typed double-space in twelve point font. Pages should be numbered and papers should be stapled. Normally your reflection paper will be due the about a week from when we finish the film. Late paper will be penalized five points per day. Direct quotes are encouraged but their historical significance must be explained. The assignment's purpose is to make the student analyze and comment on the films. Do not retell the story. Assume that the audience already knows the film's plot and wants to know why it is significant. More specific instructions and guidelines for the short reflection paper and for the critical paper are attached at the end of this syllabus. I encourage students to relate the films to the texts we are reading in class, as well as do some research into the films.

Examinations (400 Points): 2 exams will be presented during the semester. Each examination will include:

1. a) An objective section consisting of multiple choice based mostly upon the reading from text (*Modern China*).
2. b) An identification essay section in which students are called upon to identify and analyze the historical significance five out of ten items in at least one Full paragraph each.

Final Exam: (day/time, Monday, 04/27, 2:45pm)

Make-ups: Make-up examinations, quizzes, and assignments are both burdensome on me and unfair to the remainder of the class, and for both reasons make-ups are not readily given. Exceptions for good cause are allowed, but you should be prepared to provide written verification of any incident preventing you from not taking an exam on the designated day. Make-up exams may have a different format from the original one.

Keep Track of Your Grade Using the Chart Below (1000 Total Points)

Assignment	Point Possible	Points Achieved
Class Participation	200	
Short Reflection Papers	200	
1 st Examination	200	
Critical Paper	200	
2 nd Examination	200	

Film Reflection Paper

The purpose of the film reflection is to give you a chance to think critically about the major themes we have been discussing in class and to reflect on how one or more of those themes is represented in the film you watch. Before you sit down to watch the movie, be sure to review those major themes in your mind or on paper. That way you will be thinking about them as you watch the film. Make some notes while you are watching films.

What should the paper include? A good film reflection paper that is specifically not a consumer review (of the Siskel & Ebert type) focuses not on the entertainment value of the film, but rather, on how the film depicts the theme or themes you want to emphasize. You should assess how accurately the film represents historical reality as you know it. Whatever your conclusions are, they should then be used as the framework for your assessment of the film as a learning tool for history students trying to make sense of the past.

Your paper should be between **3 to 4 pages** double-spaced. It must be typed, and it must be spell-checked. Spelling errors will count against your grade. Your paper **must include quotes from your main textbook with reference page numbers**.

Suggested Questions on your Reflection Papers

1st Reflection Paper (Opium War)

1. Write individual responses to the Opium War from the point of views of following groups, British merchants, British officials, Chinese merchants, and Chinese officials.
2. Imagine you are diplomats charged with concluding these treaties for the Qing state on the one hand and for foreign powers on the other. Write a report detailing your negotiations. What are your main concerns? What are the different ways you could look out for your interests?
3. Locate copies of the treaties China concluded with foreign powers from 1842 until 1905, including the entire Treaty of Nanjing, the Treaty of the Bogue and Treaty of Wanghui in 1844, the Treaty of Tianjin of 1858 and Beijing Convention of 1860, the Zhefu Convention in 1876, the Tianjin Convention of 1876, the Treaty of Tianjin of 1885, the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, the Boxer Protocol of 1900, and Japan's Twenty-One Demands of 1915. Trace the evolution over time of greater concessions and indemnities imposed upon China. Given what you know of China's situation and foreign powers, evaluate these treaties. Were they "fair," "just," or defensible? Explain the reasons of your answers.
4. Although short in years, the Opium War radically altered the course of Chinese history. China's defeat by the British, and the land and trade concessions that followed, are considered a national disgrace. Yet, some scholars believe the Opium War, perhaps inadvertently, marked the birth of Chinese Nationalism and the Revolutions that would follow. What are the reasons behind of these scholars' arguments?

2nd Reflection Paper (Once Upon a Time in China and Shadow Magic)

1. Research the effects of the different foreigners active in China at this time such as missionaries, officials, or merchants. What does this say about cultural contact and the effects of imperialism? Also, look at the long-range economic impact of imperialism in China by tracing the nineteenth century trades.
2. How do these movies reflect traditional Chinese ideas? Western ideas?
3. To whom do you think western ideas would appeal most in Chinese society: rulers, the educated, commoners, or merchants?
4. What was meant by "Chinese essence" and "Western techniques?" Why was it important for Chinese thinkers at the end of the century to formulate their suggestions for change in this way?
5. Why do you think that, in the twentieth century, China was receptive to a revolution and the foreign ideas of Marxism?
6. Compare the situation of China in this period with that of the Ottoman Empire, Japan, and Russia. How were their situations similar? Different?

3rd Reflection Paper (Yellow Earth)

1. How would the Chinese Communist Party have appealed to people like these peasants in this village?
2. What do you suppose the communist revolutionary authorities believed about the peasants?
3. What did Mao predict about peasant behavior in the future? Was Chinese communist revolution successful in this village?

4. What do you think this movie was suggesting as a wise course of action to follow regarding peasants and revolution?
5. What factors were necessary to make a rural based revolution succeed?

4th Reflection Paper (Raise the Red Lantern)

1. What place is given to individual freedom in the American definition of the ideal political society? How does this seem to differ from the Chinese sense of the ideal political society or from their sense of an individual's rights?
2. On what principle do Americans disagree with the Chinese system of government? Do you and your classmates agree on how people "should" behave? How do Americans feel about laws that affect our personal behavior?
3. Do Americans accept government censorship of the news, media, television, radio, newspapers? Would Americans generally agree that through open discussion and free expression of opinion, the correct ideas emerge? How would this differ from the Chinese view?
4. Do we, as Americans, accept the idea that someone in government should be able to tell us how best to arrange our personal affairs? What job should we take? Whom and when should we marry? When should we have children and how many?
5. Research the perspective of both a student protestor and a government official during the Tiananmen Square Massacre and write a research-based diary entry relaying this person's point of view.

The Critical Paper

Drawing on the assigned reading (*Born Red*), and on the film (To Live) write a Six **to seven** page paper explaining the ideology, motivations, and personal experiences of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. What were the specific values and goals of the Cultural Revolution that were shown in the film and the book? What were the consequences of the Cultural Revolution for the lives of Chinese people? What different perspectives on/ interpretations of the Cultural Revolution do the film and the book present? Your essay should also reflect the role of the film and literature as an element in Cultural Revolution politics (i.e. propaganda), or as part of the post-Mao attempt to make sense of what happened during the Cultural Revolution. The critical paper will be judged by the same standards as the film response, except that they are expected to be more thoughtful and analytical than the film responses. The paper is due on your final exam day. Your paper **must include quotes from Born Red and To Live with references.**

1. Was the Cultural Revolution successful?
2. What motivations drew students together to launch and participate in "revolution"? What were some of the activities in which they engaged?
3. How did the campaign criticize the "Four Olds" attempt to dismantle traditional society and values? How do the characters of the movie and the book represent the struggle between the traditional past and the revolutionary present?
4. Some have said that Mao was a visionary who slowly lost touch with reality as time went on. Do you agree or disagree? Answer by citing examples or events from the reading to support your position.
5. Mao's call to "Bombard the Headquarters" re-fueled political activism during the Cultural Revolution. Who came under attack and for what reasons?
6. Can you see how anti-foreign, nationalist arguments would appeal to the Chinese? Explain.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
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Date	Details	Due
Wed Jan 14, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Wed Jan 28, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Wed Feb 4, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Mon Feb 9, 2026	Reflection Paper 1 - Opium War 	due by 2:45pm
Wed Feb 11, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Wed Feb 18, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Mon Feb 23, 2026	Reflection Paper 2 - Shadow Magic and Once Upon a Time in China 1 	due by 2:45pm
Wed Feb 25, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Mon Mar 2, 2026	Mid-term Examination 	due by 2:45pm
Wed Mar 18, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Wed Mar 25, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Mon Mar 30, 2026	Reflection Paper 3 - Yellow Earth 	due by 2:45pm
Wed Apr 1, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
Fri Apr 10, 2026	Critical Paper 	due by 11:59pm
Wed Apr 15, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Mon Apr 20, 2026	Reflection Paper 4 - Raise the Red Lantern 	due by 2:45pm
Wed Apr 22, 2026	Class Discussion Assignment 	due by 11:59pm
Mon Apr 27, 2026	Final Examination 	due by 2:45pm