

HIS368 History of Modern China Through Film

Point Loma Nazarene University

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Course Description: This is a lecture on Chinese films reflecting critically on historical interpretations of modern China. The course examines how Chinese history, society, and culture are perceived through visual and socio-cultural perspectives in light of such issues as gender and nationalism, intellectuals and the revolution, the country and the city, nostalgia and historical imagination, the martial-arts genre and Chineseness, and new Chinese identities in the global context. In the course of the semester, around 10 films including some documentaries will be shown on DVD or VCD.

Learning Outcomes: Students satisfying 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 the skills in critically viewing and writing on 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 (objective and/or essay), 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 readings. Students will view the films inside of class.

Course Policies

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.

Attendance: Regular and punctual attendance at all classes in which a student is registered is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. Therefore, regular attendance and participation in each course are minimal requirements to be met. There are no allowed or excused absences except when absences are necessitated by certain university-sponsored activities and are approved in writing by the Provost. Whenever the number of accumulated absences in a class, for any cause, exceeds ten percent of the total number of class meetings, the faculty member has the option of filing a written report to the Vice Provost for Academic Administration which may result in de-enrollment, pending any resolution of the excessive absences between the faculty member and the student. 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 (no grade). There are no refunds for courses where a de-enrollment was processed.

Academic Honesty: In accordance with Point Loma Nazarene University guidelines and in order to ensure positive learning environment for everyone, the course policy on academic honesty follows that of PLNU catalog. Cheating and plagiarism may result in failure in the course.

Academic Accommodations: While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual needs of the student. This policy assists the university in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

- Students with disabilities who may need accommodations are encouraged to discuss options with me after class during the first two weeks of class.

Course Grading, Exams, and Assignments:

Class Participation (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:

- a) An objective section consisting of multiple choice based mostly upon the reading from text (*Modern China*).
- 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.

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	
1st Examination	200	
Critical Paper	200	
2nd Examination	200	

Course Outline, Readings, and Assignments (Subject to Minor Changes)

Note: Document readings must be completed for the day indicated.

MC – Modern China, A History

Topic	Films	Assignments
1st Week (09/01) Course Introduction	Legacy: Mandate of Heaven	MC Chapter 1
No class (09/07)	Labor day holiday	
2nd Week (09/14) Qing Society	The Lord of Hangzhou Day On The Grand Canal with the Emperor of China	MC Chapter 1
3rd Week (09/21) Opium War	The Two Coast of China (Part) Opium War	MC pp. 30-42
4th Week (09/28) Western Impact and China's Response	Once Upon a Time in China I	MC pp. 30-42 1st Reflection Paper (Opium War)
5th Week (10/05) Western Impact and China's Response	Shadow Magic	MC pp. 30-42
6th Week (10/12) Revolutions	China in Revolution, 1911-1949	MC pp. 42-113 2nd Reflection Paper (Once Upon a Time in China and Shadow Magic)
7th Week (10/19) 1st Exam	1st Examination	1st Examination
8th Week (10/26) Revolutions	The Soong Family	MC pp. 42-113
9th Week (11/02) Revolutions	Yellow Earth	MC pp. 42-113
10th Week (11/09) Communist China	The Mao years, 1949-1976	MC pp. 114-187 3rd Reflection Paper (Yellow Earth)
11th Week (11/16) 1950~60s, Cultural Revolution	To Live	MC pp. 114-187
12th Week (11/23) Bureaucracy and Democracy	Raise the Red Lantern	MC pp. 188-237
13th Week (11/30) Modern China	Happy Times or TBA	MC pp. 188-237 4th Reflection Paper(Raise the Red Lantern)
14th Week (12/07) Modern China	Beijing Bicycle	MC pp. 188-237
15th Week (12/14)	2nd Examination	Critical Paper Due Date

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 the 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 **4 to 5 pages** double-spaced. It must be typed and it must be spell-checked. Spelling errors will count against your grade.

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 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 we should take? Whom and when we should marry? When we should 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.

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 to 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.