

HIS3068 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 12 feature films and two or three documentaries will be shown on DVD or streaming.

History Program Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to...

- Present and analyze, in written or oral presentation, different perspectives on an event from the past. (Assessed with the research paper and essays on exams.)
- Find appropriate materials online, in a library, or in the community and know how to cite them. (Assessed with the research paper.)

Course 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 (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 readings. 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.

Academic Accommodations: While all students are expected to meet the minimum standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic adjustments, modifications or auxiliary aids/services. At Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU), these students are requested to register with the **Educational Access Center (EAC)**, located in the Bond Academic Center. (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). The EAC's policies and procedures for assisting such students in the development of an appropriate academic adjustment plan (AP) allows PLNU to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Section 504 (a) prohibits discrimination against students with special needs and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities. After the student files the required documentation, the EAC, in conjunction with the student, will develop an AP to meet that student's specific learning needs. The EAC will thereafter email the student's AP to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester. The AP must be implemented in all such courses.

If students do not wish to avail themselves of some or all of the elements of their AP in a particular course, it is the responsibility of those students to notify their professor in that course. PLNU highly recommends that DRC students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester about the applicability of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not desire to take advantage of some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

Academic Honesty: Please remember that your greatest contributions to this course are your own original thoughts and words. "Academic Honesty" means that you should have integrity in all that you do in this course. Plagiarism, copying, and cheating in any form is dishonest and undermines your ability to learn the material.

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. As explained in the university catalog, academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. Violations of university academic honesty include cheating, plagiarism, falsification, aiding the academic dishonesty of others, or malicious misuse of university resources. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for a) that particular assignment or examination, and/or b) the course following the procedure in the university catalog. Students may

appeal also using the procedure in the university catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for further information.

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. An objective section consisting of multiple choice based mostly upon the reading from text (*Modern China*).
2. 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	
1 st Examination	200	
Critical Paper	200	
	200	

2nd Examination

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 (08/31) Course Introduction	Legacy: Mandate of Heaven	MC Chapter 1
No class (09/06)	Labor day holiday	
3^d Week (09/13) Qing Society	The Lord of Hangzhou	MC Chapter 1
4th Week (09/20) Opium War	The Two Coast of China Opium War	MC Chapter 2
5th Week (09/27) Western Impact and China's Response	Once Upon a Time in China I	MC Chapter 2 1st Reflection Paper (Opium War)
6th Week (10/04) Western Impact and China's Response	Shadow Magic	MC Chapter 2, 3
7th Week (10/11) Revolutions	China in Revolution, 1911-1949	MC Chapter 3 and 4 2nd Reflection Paper

		(Once Upon a Time in China and Shadow Magic)
8th Week (10/18) 1st Exam	1st Examination	1st Examination
9th Week (10/25) Revolutions	The Soong Family	MC Chapter 3, 4, and 5
10th Week (11/01) Revolutions	Yellow Earth	MC Chapter 3, 4, and 5
11th Week (11/08) Communist China	The Mao years, 1949-1976	MC Chapter 6, 7, and 8 3rd Reflection Paper (Yellow Earth)
12th Week (11/15) 1950~60s, Cultural Revolution	To Live	MC Chapter 8
13th Week (11/22) Bureaucracy and Democracy	Raise the Red Lantern	MC Chapter 9 and 10
14th Week (11/29) Modern China	Happy Times or TBA	MC Chapter 11 4th Reflection Paper(Raise the Red Lantern)
15th Week (12/06) Modern China	Beijing Bicycle or TBA	MC Chapter 11
16th Week (12/13)	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 **3 to 4 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.