

**HUMA 5520 Modern Chinese History: From Violence and Culture,  
to War and Society**

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Office hours: Wednesday 1630-1800, Friday 1450 to 1610, or by appointment

This series of seminar aims at exploring the social and cultural history of late Imperial and modern China (roughly from the 1800s to late 1930s). Certain key aspects of life, socio-cultural phenomena and political events are examined to broaden our knowledge of the late-Qing and Republican society as well as revealing the complexity of historical reality. The various topics to be discussed in these seminars will demonstrate that it was during times of conflict and chaos that human nature was unveiled and the people's integrity put to real test. Ideal and reality was widely divided.

**Intended Learning Outcomes:** To deconstruct the post-modernist discourse of historical narratives commonly found in official Chinese history standard texts in late-imperial and modern period; to understand how political persuasions are implanted into official/semi-official narratives of historical events (such as the Opium War, the Taiping Rebellion, foreign invasion of China, warlords, Chinese nationalism, peasant movement, the Communist Party of China in rural hinterland, the Second Sino-Japanese War, etc.) through critical analysis of those late-Qing and Republican-time events and the people presented in Chinese history textbooks and movies; to learn the skills of presenting one's arguments in academic seminars and the techniques of writing a history paper appropriately.

**Class Schedule, Reading Assignments and Term Project**

1) Readings must be kept up with because they will help you understand the selected topics in greater details and in-class discussions are also based primarily on these reading materials. Before coming to a seminar, you are

expected to have read all the assigned readings, consulted other relevant materials, and come up with thought-provoking ideas or questions to share with your course-mates. Your active participation in classroom/tutorial discussion is expected and will be graded.

- 2) Each student is required to lead discussion in class for at least once.
- 3) Since seminar is an occasion for exchanging ideas and information, its success largely depends on your active participation in discussion. Your contribution in this respect is both essential and expected. Your attendance is mandatory.
- 4) In addition to participation in in-class discussion based on the assigned readings, each member of the course is expected to write and present one original research paper of respectable standard on a subject of his/her own choice, but must be related to the issues covered in this course and with the course instructor's prior approval; or, alternatively, to take a final exam.
- 5) When reading your materials, you should formulate questions on anything related to the common themes or ideas of these readings; identify problems in your readings and try to provide your views on those problems; pay attention to the kinds of sources an author used, the goodness and the limitations of those sources, and their methodological problems; look into an historical issue from/with a broader perspective, i.e. don't just narrow yourself to the reading of a specific week.

### **Assessment**

Attendance: 10%

Participation in seminars and Presentation: 15 + 15%

Term essay (or exam?): 60%

### **Classroom Etiquettes**

- 1) Please refrain from using electronic devices such as laptop, smart phone, tablet computer, camera, voice recorder, in lecture.
- 2) Please do not leave the seminars early; if it is something important and you need to leave early, please alert me before the class starts.

3) Absence must be applied well in advance and with the support of original documents such as medical letter, interview invitation, and so on.

### **Topics and Schedule**

1. *The reading list below is for reference only; the exact amount of readings will be adjusted realistically.*
2. *The class schedule below is for reference only. Actual flow of the course may vary, depending on the class composition, circumstances and other pedagogical factors and needs.*

**Week 1:** Organizing the course + What is “unofficial” history of China and why is it necessary?

Readings:

Peter Burke’s “History from Below”, in Peter Burke ed., New Perspectives in Historical Writings; Lawrence Stone, “The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History”

SQD: What are the pros and cons of official history of modern China? Explain your arguments with reference to any Chinese history text published by a State publisher, such as The People’s Press. Why “unofficial history” matters?

**Weeks 2, 3:** Violence in Chinese Cultures

A) General: Rhetoric and Reality

Readings: 韋政通, ‘崇尚和平’; 沈從文自傳, chapters 2-5, 9-11. Barend J. ter Haar, “Rethinking ‘Violence’ in Chinese Culture”, in Aijmer & Abbink eds. The Meanings of Violence

B) Cultural Semantics of Violence

Readings: 魯彥, ‘柚子’; Ho, “Butchering fish and execution of criminals: sociocultural meanings of violence” in Aijmer & Abbink eds. The Meanings of

Violence; 鄭義, 紅色紀念碑;

### C) Cultural Reality as Seen in Social Conflicts

Readings: Harry Lamley, "Lineage Feuding in Southern Fujian and Eastern Guangdong Under Qing Rule"; 擎霄, "械鬥..."; Joseph Esherick, The Origins of the Boxer Uprising, chapters 2-4.

SQD: What did you learn about Chinese cultures, society, and the people by studying the socio-cultural and political phenomena of violence in China in this period?

### **Weeks 4, 5:** Chinese Society as Seen Through the Opium War (and the Taiping)

Readings: Arthur Waley, Opium War Through Chinese Eyes, Parts 3 & 4; Frederic Wakeman Jr., Strangers at the Gate, Parts One and Three

SQD: What did you learn about Chinese cultures, society, and the common people of that time from this historical episode?

### **Weeks 6, 7:** Impacts of Wars on China

Readings: 粵海關十年報告 nos. 1 and 3; 津海關十年報告 nos. 1 and 2;

SQD: Critically analyze the impacts of foreign invading wars and unequal treaties on China and Chinese society.

### **Week 8:** Students' Presentation of Project's Preliminary Topic and Outline

### **Week 9:** Warlords, Conflicts and Society

Readings: 張靜如, 北洋軍閥統治時期中國社會之變遷, chapters 1, 3, 7; "The Dog-Meat General"; Robert Kapp, "Chungking as a Center of Warlord Power, 1926-1937"; Edward McCord, "Burn, Kill, Rape, and Rob: Military Atrocities, Warlordism, and Anti-Warlordism in Republican China"; James E. Sheridan,

Chinese Warlord; pp.74-107;

SQD: Critically analyze the impacts of warlords' wars on Chinese society. **Weeks 10, 11: Peasants, Communism, and Rural Society**

Readings: Fei Hsiao-tung, Peasant Life in China , chapters 2-8, 10-12, 15; Duara Prasenjit, Culture, Power and State in North China, chapters 4,6,8; 林耀華, 金翼, chapters 1-4, 6-as you like; Sulamith and Jack Potters, China's Peasants, chapter 1; Sidney Gamble, Ting Hsien, chapters 3,5, 10,13; Mary Bernhardt, Rents, Taxes and Peasant Resistance, pp.161-220; 周谷城, 農村中貧富懸殊之風險; "廣東區委關於廣東農民運動報告", in 廣民革命历史文件彙集 vol.6; 毛澤東, "湖南農民運動考察報告"; Jack Belden, China Shakes the World, pp.174-185; Lucien Bianco, Peasants Without the Party, chapters 8, 11.

SQD: Were Chinese peasants silent victims of socio-economic exploitations? Were they practitioners of Communism and keen supporters of CCP? Why did the CCP win eventually? Was peasant and popular support of the CCP the major reason for its final victory in 1949?

**Weeks 12, 13: People and Society as Seen Through the War with Japan**

Readings: 1) 廣東民國史 pp. 825-79; "中共廣州市委工作報告" 等, in 廣民革命历史文件彙集 vol. 39, pp. 43-53, 143-151, 177-186; in 廣民革命历史文件彙集 vol. 41, pp. 135-47..... 2) Read Canton newspapers for any 30 days between August 1937 and August, 1938.

SQD: Critically examine the power and the limits of Chinese nationalism during the war years. What were the concerns of urbanites with reference to Canton?