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Instructor: Lawrence Zhang

Fall 2025

Office: Rm 2302, Academic Building

Email: hmlczhang@ust.hk

Drop-in Hours: Tuesdays, 2-4pm

Teaching Assistant: Law Chun Yin

Email: hmlcyin@ust.hk

HUMA 1440: Modern China

Modern China is a concept that is frequently used but often poorly defined. This course will explore the basis for this term – what does it mean to be “modern” and how China can be defined and understood in this context. The course will examine major themes in the history of China from the “early modern” period of the Qing up to the beginning of the reform era in 1979. In doing so, we will discuss how modernity ought to be understood specifically in the context of China and how our view of the past shapes our understanding of the present.

Course Hours:

Tuesday: 4:30pm – 5:50pm

Thursday: 4:30pm – 5:50pm

Location:

Rm 2407

Evaluation:

30% Papers

30% Midterm examination

10% Exam questions submission

30% Final examination

CILOs:

1. Paraphrase the most important political, economic, social, and cultural events in China in the past 200 years
2. Analyze the causes and significance of the important historical events in modern China
3. Summarize the general trends in modern Chinese history such as the rise of nationalism and Communism so that they may better understand what is happening in China today
4. Compare and contrast the influences of historical and revolutionary legacies to China

Late assignments:

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Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the days when they are due. Anything submitted after the due time is considered late. For each day of lateness, one third of a letter grade will be deducted from the assignment's grade, including weekends.

Laptops & electronic devices:

Cell phones and other devices that will make noises during the class need to be shut off.

Generative AI:

This course will not accept work done using generative AI (ChatGPT and other similar programs). Anyone detected to have used such methods to generate text for their assignment will receive an automatic zero for the assignment as it is a form of academic dishonesty by submitting work not produced by the student.

Readings:

David G. Atwill & Yurong Y. Atwill, *Sources in Chinese History: Diverse Perspectives from 1644 to the Present*, London: Prentice Hall, 2010.

For reference, you can also read

William T. Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009. (This is available on JSTOR [here](#))

Items marked as "background" are optional additional reading

Class schedule:

2nd Sept: What does "Modern" even mean?

Ho Ping-ti, "The Significance of the Ch'ing-Period," *Journal of Asian Studies* 26:2 (Feb 1967), 189-95. (PDF on Canvas)

4th Sept: The Manchus

Atwill & Atwill, 6-11.

Background: Di Cosmo, Nicola, *The diary of a Manchu soldier in seventeenth-century China : My Service in the Army*, London: Routledge, 2006, 1-45. (E-book through ProQuest Ebook Central)

9th Sept: "High Qing"

Rowe, William. *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*. Harvard University Press, 2009. Chapter 3 – High Qing, pp. 63-89. (PDF on Canvas)

11th Sept: China Marches West

Perdue, Peter. *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*. Belknap Press, 2005. "Introduction". (PDF on Canvas)

16th Sept: Enjoying the Grand Canal

<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/qing/tours.html>

Please also look at these two paintings be prepared to discuss them:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/49251>

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<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/41493>

Background: Elliott, Mark. *Emperor Qianlong: Son of Heaven, Man of the World*. Longman, 2009. 68-85. (PDF on Canvas)

18th Sept: Tea and world trade

Atwill & Atwill, 22-31.

Background: Wong, John. *Global Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The House of Houqua and the Canton System*. Cambridge University Press, 2016. 18-31. (PDF on Canvas)

23rd Sept: Opium and war

Atwill & Atwill, 36-45

25th Sept: Internal rebellions

Atwill & Atwill, 48-58

30th Sept: Foreign contacts

Atwill & Atwill, 64-71.

Day, Jenny Huangfu. *Qing Travelers to the Far West: Diplomacy and the Information Order in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge University Press, 2018. Chapter 1 (PDF on Canvas)

2nd Oct: Disaster at the turn of the century

Atwill & Atwill, 89-110.

Film: *55 Days at Peking* (1963), directed by Nicholas Ray – on reserve at library

7th Oct: NO CLASS (Day after Mid-Autumn Festival)

9th Oct: **Midterm**

14th Oct: Revisiting modernity

Cohen, Paul. *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*. Columbia University Press, 1984. 57-96. (PDF on Canvas)

16th Oct: Chinese overseas

Kuhn, Philip. "Why China Historians Should Study the Chinese Diaspora, and Vice-versa." *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 2.2 (2006): 163-72 (PDF on Canvas)

21st Oct: Chinese nationalism

Zou Rong, *The Revolutionary Army*, trans. John Lust, The Hauge: Mouton & Co., 1968. Chapters 1-2. (PDF on Canvas)
Chinese version also available as PDF on Canvas.

23rd Oct: Long Live the Republic

Atwill & Atwill, 149-155

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Background: Zarrow, Peter. *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924*. Stanford University Press, 2012. "Introduction". (Ebook through Proquest Ebook Central)

28th Oct: The May 4th Moment

Atwill & Atwill, 163-171.

Background: Hu, Shih and Lin, Yu-Tang. [China's Own Critics: A Selection of Essays](#). New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1931,1969. (PDF on Canvas)

30th Oct: Warlords and the KMT conquest

Kwong, Chi Man. "Finance and the Northern Expedition: From the Northeast Asian Perspective, 1925-1928". *Modern Asian Studies* 48:6 (Nov 2014): 1695-1739. (PDF on Canvas)

4th Nov: Modernity in daily life

["Soybean and Changing Food Culture in Chinese History"](#), in Hon-Ming Lam (ed.), *Agrobiotechnology in Perspectives: History, Economy, Science and Technology on the Plate*, World Scientific Publishing Co., pp.83-94.

6th Nov: The Nanjing Decade and the War of Resistance

Atwill & Atwill, 208-215, 223-229.

11th Nov: The Chinese Civil War

Cheng, Victor Shiu Chiang. "Modern War on an Ancient Battlefield: The Diffusion of American Military Technology and Ideas in the Chinese Civil War, 1946-1949." *Modern China* 35:1 (January 2009): 38-64. (PDF on Canvas)

13th Nov: Early years in the PRC

Film: Huozhe 活着 (1994), directed by Zhang Yimou – on reserve at library

18th Nov: Jumping into socialism

Atwill & Atwill, 248-249, 268-271

Dikotter, Frank. *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962*. Bloomsbury, 2017. Chapters 17-20. (E-book through Proquest Ebook Central)

20st Nov: The Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution

Atwill & Atwill, 283-292

Background: MacFarquhar, Roderick. *Mao's Last Revolution*, Harvard University Press, 2006. Chapters 6-7. (EBook through JSTOR)

25th Nov: Looking forward from the 1970s

Atwill & Atwill, 302-306

Listen: Nixon in China excerpt (Audio on Canvas)

27th Nov: Review/Discussion