

SYLLABUS

HUMA 2640 Unofficial China: Social History 1800s-1930s

Fall 2024

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Room 3349 & Online
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A survey of socio-cultural history of China from the 19th Century to the 1930s. This course surveys the socio-cultural history of China from the 19th century to the 1930s, with a focus on marginalized groups such as women, workers, peasants, beggars, and criminals. Through a critical analysis of popular culture, violence, crime, and everyday life, students will develop a deeper understanding of Chinese society during this transformative period. By examining both elite and non-elite perspectives, the course seeks to redress stereotypical representations of Chinese society and encourage critical historical analysis.

Texts and Electronic Resources

No textbook is required. Articles, extracts from books and journals are used, and most of them are available on the Canvas site of this course. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to utilize supplementary (optional) reading materials which are relevant to this course. These readings are useful for developing broadening your knowledge on the topics covered in this course and enhancing your performance in classroom discussion and final examination.

With the university's approval, this course is not to be video-captured and hence no recording of lectures will be available.

Assessment

Participation in tutorials and classroom discussions will contribute 50% to your overall grade, and the final research essay, based on one of the course topics, will count for 50%.

Students will have the opportunity to lead one tutorial session in small groups, engaging with a specific week's topic and stimulating discussion among their peers. Tutorials are designed to reinforce the material covered in lectures through in-depth discussions of the weekly readings. The aim is to enhance critical thinking, provide space for debate, and allow students to explore their own interpretations of the historical material.

Attendance to tutorials is compulsory.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

On completion of this course, students will: 1) identify the major problems in our conventional wisdom on some of the selected topics of China social history covered in this course; 2) arrive at a better and deeper understanding of the Chinese society and culture in this period of modern China, and with that to formulate original viewpoints in this regard; 3) read historical materials critically with the basic skills taught in the course; 4) receive basic training in writing an academic paper on a history topic appropriately.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Lectures are held once or twice weekly, depending on the tutorial schedule in a particular week.

Readings must be kept up with because they will help you understand the selected topics in greater details; discussion at tutorial sessions is also based primarily on these reading materials. Optional readings are not compulsory, but they can help you understand a specific topic more deeply. These materials can be also useful if you want to write a better essay **(to be decided)** in this course. You are strongly advised to read all the required reading before going to classes and, in particular, tutorials. Your active participation in tutorial discussion is expected and will be graded.

Classroom Etiquettes (some of the)

1. Please refrain from using electronic devices such as laptop, phone, tablet computer, camera, voice recorder, in lecture. All forms of recording are strictly prohibited. Laptops may be used for note-taking during lectures, but please refrain from using them for other purposes such as social media.
2. Please do not leave the lecture room early; if it is something important and you need to leave early, please alert me before the class starts.

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.

Class Schedule

11 September: Organisation of the Course & What is “unofficial” history of China?

Optional readings:

Jim Sharpe’s “History from Below”, in Peter Burke ed., *New Perspectives in Historical Writings*.

中國近代史常識, ‘序言’

Discussion Questions: Give your impressions of modern China (from the Opium War to 1937). Try to identify problems in these narratives of modern Chinese history.

How are “the people” and “China” represented in these narratives? What do these texts tell us about the historical characteristics of the Chinese people? Identify problems of these images of the Chinese people.

13 September - Violence and Society

Introductory lecture

18 September

No Class

20 September - Violence and Society

Readings: Harry Lamley, "Lineage Feuding in Southern Fujian and Eastern Guangdong Under Qing Rule"

Optional: 林語堂, ‘論宏大’; 鄭義, 紅色紀念碑; 魯彥, ‘柚子’

Discussion Questions: What functions did violence play in traditional Chinese culture and society? What do these descriptions of public violence tell us about the Chinese people, their society, and their country in the traditional and modern periods (approx. between the years 1800s and the 1930s)?

25 September - Violence and Society

Readings: 沈從文自傳, chapters 2-5, 9-11

Optional: 韋正通, “崇尚和平”

Discussion Questions: How was violence justified in public and private spheres? What insights can we gain from autobiographies about personal experiences of violence?

27 September - Crime and punishment

Readings: V.K.Y. Ho, “Butchering fish and execution of criminals: socio-cultural meanings of violence” in Aijmer & Abbink eds. *The Meanings of Violence*.

Discussion Questions: How were murders treated under the law during the Qing dynasty and Republican era? What do case studies of murder reveal about the role of violence in Chinese society? How did gender, class, and local politics affect the outcomes of murder trials? How do the legal treatments of murder reflect broader societal values and anxieties?

2 October

No Class

4 October - Oppression of Women

Readings: 陳東原, 中國婦女生活史, pp.221-291

Readings: Ida Pruitt, *A Daughter of Han* (中譯本: 漢家女)

Optional: Maria Jaschok and Suzanne Miers, *Women & Chinese Patriarchy*, pp. 1-15; Arthur Smith, *Village Life in China*, chapter 23 (中譯本: 中國鄉村生活); 辜鴻銘, 中國人的精神.

Discussion Questions: How did patriarchal norms shape women's lives, and how did some women navigate or resist these structures?

9 October - Women Lives

Readings: Elizabeth Johnson's "Hakka Women"; 楊步衛, 一個女人的自傳, Parts 1-2;

Discussion Questions: In what ways did regional or class differences shape women's lives? How did individual women resist or adapt to social expectations?

11 October

No Class

16 October

Tutorial session

18 October - Women Lives

Readings: 吳麗娥, 命運的雲沒有雨, pp.1-64.

Readings: 廣州民國日報 (I), pp.1-6, 8-19, 22-3, 54-6.

23 October - Prostitution

Readings: 康素珍, 青樓恨, chapters 1,2,3,5; 平襟亞, '舊上海的娼妓'; Sidney Gamble, *Peking*, chapter X; 廣州民國日報 (II), '廢娼問題'等, pp.468-70, 527-36.

Discussion Questions: What were the social and economic factors that sustained prostitution in Republican China? How did societal attitudes toward prostitution change during the early 20th century?

25 October - Prostitution

Readings: Christian Henriot

Optional: Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures*; 蘇童, 紅粉; V.K.Y. Ho "To laugh at a penniless man rather than a prostitute" in *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol.1, no.1 (2001).

30 October Tutorial session

1 November - Opium Smoking

Readings: 平襟亞, '舊上海的煙'; Jonathan Spence, "Opium Smoking in Ch'ing China";

Optional: Virginia Berridge and Edwards Griffith, *Opium and the People* (1986); '勸戒鴉片文'; '勸戒洋煙'

Discussion Questions: What were the social and economic consequences of opium smoking in Qing China? What factors contributed to the failure of anti-opium campaigns?

6 November - Opium Smoking

Readings: Paulès

8 November - Workers

Readings: Emily Honig, *Sisters and Strangers* (Stanford: 1986), "Chapter Six: The Working Day"; '英商公共汽車'

Optional: 林耀華, 金翼 (*Golden Wing*), chapters 1-4.

Discussion Questions: How did industrialization affect class relations in Republican China? What role did urban workers play in challenging the social and economic order during the Republican period? How did state responses to labor movements shape future labor policies?

13 November Tutorial session

15 November - Peasants

Readings: 周谷成, '農村中貧富懸殊之風險'; Fei Hsiao-tung, *Peasant Life in China*, chapters 11 & 15 (中譯本: 江村經濟);

Discussion Questions: How did rural families adapt to changing economic conditions in modern China?

20 November

Tutorial session

22 November - Beggars, Vagrants, and Rootless People

Readings:

Discussion Questions: What were the social and economic factors that contributed to the rise of beggars and vagrants in late imperial and Republican China? How were beggars and vagrants perceived by society and the state in late imperial and Republican China? In what ways did state policies and charity organizations address the issue of homelessness and vagrancy? Compare the lives of rural vagrants with those of urban beggars—what does this reveal about the structure of Chinese society.

27 November - Squatters and Survival on the Streets

Readings:

Discussion Questions: How did informal housing and street economies shape urban life in Republican China? What role did squatters and street vendors play in urban survival strategies, and how were they perceived by the authorities? How did the state attempt to manage or control these groups, and what were the consequences?

29 November - From life to death: social invisibility

Readings:

Discussion Questions: How do death rituals and burial practices for marginalized people reflect broader social attitudes toward them?