Modern China: From the Ming to This Morning  
Spring 2017  

Class Meeting Times: Olin-Sang 116  
Mondays (M) and Wednesdays (W)  
3:30 – 4:50 PM  

Instructor: Xing Hang  
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Course Description and Objectives  

The course provides a thematic and chronological survey of China from 1600 until this morning, emphasizing the broad interrelationships of political, social, economic, and literary trends. We begin with the maturation of a confident, sophisticated, and “modern” universal empire, followed by a play-by-play account of its tumultuous disintegration and collapse in the nineteenth century. We then witness how the bits and pieces of this rubble combined with the imported ideologies of liberalism, nationalism, and communism over the twentieth century to forge the global power of today, itself a work-in-progress toward a new and uncertain “modernity.” In addition, the course will trace the role of Xinjiang, Mongolia, Tibet, and other non-Han regions, as well as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the overseas diaspora in shaping China’s transition from Sinocentric empire to multiethnic nation. The course challenges Eurocentric images of a “timeless” and “isolated” Chinese civilization by situating its historical development in an East Asian and global context.  

Through lectures, discussions, visual media, and essays, all based upon the careful examination of primary documents and select academic scholarship, students learn to clearly convey their thoughts and apply their analytical abilities in speech and writing. These are crucial skills that can transfer into their careers and other aspects of their lives. Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will read, on average, 50 to 100 pages, or a minimum of nine hours of study time per week, in preparation for class.
**Course Requirements**

1) **Lecture attendance and participation in discussions and debates. 30%**

A typical course meeting consists of a mix of lecture and discussion. Lectures emphasize broad historical themes and trends, while discussions are based upon the careful reading of primary documents and selected secondary scholarship for that week. Because of the controversial and contested nature of more recent historical events, discussions will occupy a greater share of class time as the semester progresses. During certain days, we will also hold debates on topics with significant economic and geopolitical ramifications for the present day. Detailed instructions will be provided. In discussions and debates, students are expected to remain civil and back up whatever they say with evidence and facts.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every meeting; two excused absences are allowed—any undocumented absences beyond that count against the final grade (that is, you will get a grade of 0 per missed meeting). **Active participation and engagement**, not mere presence, is necessary to earn a high grade. Substantial and frequent tardiness will count as absences. Students should have read all the assignments listed each week in the **Course Outline before** the first class meeting of the week, with specific questions and issues in mind. They should also download the list of key terms and discussion questions, found on LATTE under each class meeting, to facilitate note-taking and comprehension.

2) **Two midterms. 30%**

The two midterms will, respectively, cover material from the first and second halves of the semester. Both exams involve the identification of key terms that challenges students to evaluate the historical significance of what they have learned. To prepare, study over the careful notes (hopefully!) you have taken during lectures based upon the list of key terms and discussion questions.

3) **Two analytical essays. 40%**

One key goal of this course is to improve students’ critical thinking and writing skills. Accordingly, they will hand in a 5-7 pages double-spaced paper on at least two of our primary readings worth **15%** of the final grade. There will also be a final essay (8-10 pages double-spaced) that makes up **25%** of the total score, and involves the synthesis of sources from the semester. Detailed instructions will be announced in class. All essays are to be handed in BEFORE the start of lecture on the stated date, or they will be considered a day late.

**Technology Policy**

I encourage the use of technology in the classroom, as they are a crucial trend in the future of higher education. However, they are not to be abused for purposes unrelated to the class. I reserve the right to restrict or ban their use if necessary.
General Rules

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai). Faculty may refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to, failing grades being issued, educational programs, and other consequences.

No late assignments will be accepted without the prior agreement of the instructor and/or the submission of a valid written explanation. Course overloads and work duties are not acceptable excuses for late assignments or failure to participate fully in other class activities. Late papers will be marked down a letter grade for each day they are late, weekends included. If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Required Reading

The following textbook is available for purchase at the Brandeis Bookstore:


Assignments from the above reading will be marked in the Course Outline under Text. All other required books and articles, as well as the syllabus, lecture outlines, and debate guidelines are available online. Reading assignments from LATTE will be marked under (surprise!) LATTE.

For more background and context for lectures, refer to Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China, Third Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), available at the Brandeis Bookstore or other venues. Students can utilize it as a handy reference and/or to refresh their memories. Note, however, that the book CANNOT substitute for regular lecture attendance, since many themes and issues will only be covered in class.

Any part of this syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. LATTE contains all of the assignments listed below under “Course Outline” and reflects updates and modifications. In cases of conflict, refer to LATTE as a living version of this syllabus.
Course Outline

Week 1
1/18 (W): 1. The Setting

Week 2
1/23 (M): Review the maps, chronology, and Romanization conversion charts
1/25 (W): 2. Chinese History Review: Four Thousand Years in One Hour

Week 3
Text: Chen et al., 1-53.
1/30 (M): 4. Inner Asian State-building and Ming Decline
2/1 (W): 5. Qing Conquest and Consolidation

Week 4
Text: Chen et al., 54-93
2/6 (M): 6. The Height of Modernity
2/8 (W): 7. Rotten to the Core

Week 5
Text: Chen et al., 94-133.

Week 6
NO CLASS

Week 7
Text: Chen et al., 134-178.
2/27 (M): 10. An Effort at Reform
3/1 (W): 11. MIDTERM 1
Week 8

Text: Chen et al., 179-218.

3/6 (M): 12. Defeat, Demoralization, Desperation

Week 9

Text: Chen et al., 219-258;

LATTE: Lu Xun, Selected Stories (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 1-6, 65-112.

3/15 (W): 15. The Nanjing Decade

Week 10

Text: Chen et al., 258-344;

LATTE: Timothy Cheek, Mao Zedong and China’s Revolutions: A Brief History with Documents (New York: Bedford, 2002), 183-204;

Film: China: A Century of Revolution.

3/22 (W): 17. ESSAY 1, TURN IN BEFORE CLASS

China in World War II

Week 11

Text: Chen et al., 345-411;

Film: China: A Century of Revolution.

3/27 (M): 18. Fixing the Frontiers

Week 12


4/3 (M): **Film:** China: A Century of Revolution

4/5 (W): 20. A Great Leap, to Where?

21. The New Equilibrium

Week 13

**Text:** Chen et al., 436-497;


**Film:** China: A Century of Revolution.

4/10 (M): 22. Cultural Revolution: Social Progress or Retardation?

4/12 (W): 23. MIDTERM 2

Week 15 NO CLASS

Week 16

**Text:** Chen et al., 514-530, 536-542;


**Film:** The Gate of Heavenly Peace.

4/24 (M): 24. The Liberal Turn

4/26 (W): 25. Crackdown at Tiananmen Square

Week 17

**Text:** Chen et al., 566-611;


5/1 (M): 26. Saying “No” with Trepidation: China from the Nineties to Now

5/5 (F): FINAL ESSAY DUE BY END OF DAY