UGEC1431 / CCSS1003 The Chinese Cultural Revolution and Its Legacies

2019-20, Term 2, Tuesdays 10:30am - 1:15pm

YIA_LT4 (Yasumoto International Academic Park)

Instructor: Prof. Michel BONNIN (michel.bonnin@gmail.com)
Teaching Assistant: Ms. Verna YU (verna.yu@gmail.com)

Course Description
Half a century after its launching, the Cultural Revolution is still haunting China. What do we know about this extraordinary period, its causes, sequence of events and consequences? And how is it collectively remembered (or not remembered)?

This course will present the different sources, many of them unofficial and recent, which are the basis of our historical knowledge of this period. These sources will include primary sources, secondary scholarship and a substantive amount of audio-visual materials (photos included in the PPT presentations and extracts of documentary and fiction videos). References of useful websites will also be provided. For sources in Chinese language, an English translation will always be available. The course will discuss the complexity of the causes of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, linked to Mao Zedong's own personality and experience, and the paradoxical influence it had on the minds of a whole generation and on the later fate of the country. Its impact outside China will also be presented, as well as its obvious traces in the present collective memory, in spite of the oblivion encouraged officially. Finally, we shall discuss the legacy of this period and wonder if a new Cultural Revolution could happen in a foreseeable future.

Learning Outcomes
After attending this course, students should:

- Have a rather detailed knowledge of the main historical events which took place during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.
- Have some familiarity with the primary sources and secondary scholarship available on this topic, as well as with visual and audio-visual materials.
- Have a certain knowledge concerning the memory of this event, as it expressed itself officially and unofficially until now.
- Be able to reflect on the historical causes and consequences of the Cultural Revolution, as well as on the specific nature of the Mao regime as it expressed itself through this event.
- Be able to write short reviews of interesting materials linked to the course and to choose, with the help of the instructor, an original research topic on which they will produce their final paper.

Learning Activities
This course will require regular attendance. Students are expected to come to class on time, after having completed the required readings. Questions will be welcome and rational discussion encouraged.

Each student will write a summary of an assigned reading (or of an audio-visual material proposed by the instructor at the beginning of the course). This summary will be concluded by a personal evaluation of the text or documentary film by the student. This summary will be submitted to the instructor one week before the date of the course that includes the reading. The instructor will then be able to answer questions or correct misunderstandings concerning the reading.

A Final Paper will have to be submitted in paper form (with the Veriguide receipt) no later than Monday, 6 April at 5.00 p.m. The topic of this final paper shall be chosen by each student, but discussed first with the instructor at least three weeks before submission. More guidelines will be given for the Final Paper during the semester, but the expected length will range from 3000 to 4000 words.
Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the
disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details
may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/. With each assignment,
students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of the policies, regulations
and procedures.

Course Assessment
Attendance and participation: 30%
Reading review: 20%
Final Paper: 50%

LECTURES
Note: This syllabus might be changed according to the needs of the class.

Week 1: 7 January  I. Historical Roots of the Chinese Cultural Revolution
Decline and fall of the Empire, The Taiping Rebellion, the Boxer Rebellion, the Nationalist Revolution,
the Kuomintang and the warlords, emergence of the Chinese Communist Party, its “Long March” to
power, the role of the Japanese invasion.

II. The main sources of our knowledge on the Cultural Revolution
Main sources in English and other Western languages. Main sources in Chinese: the role of Hong
Kong and the importance of popular (minjian) historiography.

Recommended Readings:
- Chow Tse-tsung, The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China, Cambridge,

Week 2: 14 January  Causes of the Cultural Revolution (1)
The rise of Mao Zedong as preeminent leader of the CCP. Mao’s experience, the influence of the
Peasant Movement in Hunan (1926-1927), his leadership style and ideology (from his youth till the
end of the 1950s)

Required Readings:
- Mao Zedong, “Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan” (1927), in Selected Works of Mao Tse-
tung, vol.I.
- Mao, “On New Democracy” (1940) in Timothy Cheek, Mao Zedong and China’s Revolutions: A Brief
- Gao Hua, How the Red Sun Rose: The Origin and Development of the Yan’an Rectification
Movement, 1930-1945, chapter 11, sections 6 and 7.
- Michel Bonnin, “Servant, Bogeyman or Goddess: Democracy in the Discourses of Power and
Dissidence in China”, in Delmas-Marty & Will, China, Democracy and Law: A Historical and

Week 3: 21 January  Causes of the Cultural Revolution (2)
Mao in the first half of the 1960s: the aftershock of the Great Leap catastrophic failure, the Sino-Soviet
rift and Mao’s desire for total control over the future. The concept of “Continuous Revolution”.

Required Readings:
- Cheng, Lestz and Spence, The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection, New York:
Norton, 1999, p. 413-16 (“The Origin and Development of the Differences between the Leadership of
the CPSU and Ourselves”, *People’s Daily* editorial) and p. 417-21 (“Life and Death of Lei Feng, an Admiraible ‘Fool’”).

**Week 4: 28 January**

**Lunar New Year Festival -- No Class**

**Week 5: 4 February**

The “Revolutionary” Period of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969)

1: The Purge at the Top.

Discussion of the periodization of the “Cultural Revolution”. Presentation of the evolution of the “revolutionary” period of the CR. Main events, the first salvos of Mao’s attack on his colleagues, Mao’s strategy and the other leaders’ impotence, participation of the “masses”: the Red Guards.

**Required Readings:**

**Week 6: 11 February**


2: Militarization as the Only Way Out of Chaos?

Failure of the project of a new political system. Endless clashes between rival Red Guards groups. Final complete reliance on the Army and reconstruction of the Party at the IXth Congress. Was this first period of the CR a real revolution, a political purge, or something else?

**Required Readings:**

**Week 7: 18 February**

Manipulated Youth: The Turbulent Movement of the Red Guards

Why were they so easily manipulated? Can they be compared to the Hitler Youth Corps? Causes of their infighting. The role of the system of class labels. What was the difference between “Red Guards” and “Rebels”?

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Reading:**
- 徐友渔, 形形色色的造反 — 红卫兵精神素质的形成及演变, 香港中文大学出版社, 1999, p. 53-68.

**Week 8: 25 February**

Cult of Mao and Violence in the Cultural Revolution

Is there a link between those two main irrational features of the CR? Who were the main victims and the main perpetrators of violence? Why was violence so extreme in the countryside?

**Required Readings:**
As of 31 July 2019

- Andrew Walder, China Under Mao…, p. 277-82.
- MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, p. 117-131 (“Red Terror”)

Recommended Reading:

Week 9: 3 March The Rustication Movement of Chinese Educated Youth: End and Continuation of the Cultural Revolution
Punishment of the Red Guards or training of “revolutionary successors”? Solution to the urban employment problem or remedy to the rural deficit of knowledge? The complex motives for this long-lasting movement.

Required Readings:
- Michael Schoenhals, China’s Cultural Revolution, p. 181-182.

Week 10: 10 March Fin de Règne in Zhongnanhai: A Deeply Fractured Leadership
The Lin Biao Affair, obscure campaigns, economic stagnation, death of Mao Zedong and arrest of the “Gang of Four”. The emergence of a new logic of government.

Required Readings:
- Cheng, Lestz and Spence, The Search for Modern China…, p. 432-34 (“Lin Biao’s Fall”).

Week 11: 17 March A Dissatisfied and Derelict Society, Emergence of Unorthodox Thoughts in this Generation
The debilitating effects of the Revolution in education and of the rustication movement. The countryside as a place to reflect for former Red Guards. Aspiration to stability and progress. Rejection of Mao style politics. First Tiananmen movement and later revolt of the rusticated youth.

Required Readings:

Week 12: 24 March The Cultural Revolution between Oblivion, Distortion and Memory

Official evaluation of the CR, official uses of its memory and forced oblivion. Attempts to revive memory, inside and (mainly) outside of the system. Popular (minjian) memory: diverse and conflicting memories, but large consensus on the “duty of memory”. An individual, social and political necessity? The question of repentance.

Required Readings:

Week 13: 31 March Conclusion: What Does the Cultural Revolution Reveal of the Maoist Political Regime? Could it Happen Again?

Different interpretations of the Cultural Revolution. Maoism as a specific form of totalitarianism. Charisma, control and manipulation of “the masses”.

Required Readings:
- Ross Terrill, “Foreword”, in Zheng Yi, Scarlet Memorial, p. XI-XVII.
- Su Yang, Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution, chap. 9 (“Understanding Atrocities in Plain Sight”), p. 242-64.
- Andrew Walder, China under Mao..., (p. 332-341).

(Final paper should be submitted in paper and electronic forms no later than Monday, 6 April)