

CHES5105 Selected Themes on Chinese History –The Cultural Revolution

2020-21, Fall Term, Thursdays 6:30pm - 9:15pm

Instructor: Prof. Michel BONNIN (michel.bonnin@gmail.com)

Teaching Assistant: Cecilia Chan

Special circumstances due to the Coronavirus pandemic

All sessions of this course will be conducted in real time on ZOOM. The meeting details and password will be shared in time on Blackboard as well as by email. Recording of classes is not permitted.

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

Students are expected to complete the required readings before each session. Questions will be welcome and rational discussion encouraged.

Each student will write successively two summaries of an assigned or recommended reading (or of an audio-visual material proposed by the instructor at the beginning of the course). These summaries will be concluded by personal remarks on the text or film by the student. A Guideline for the Reading Reviews will be provided on Blackboard at the beginning of the course. The expected length will range from 400 to 700 words. Students can contact the instructor for further explanations if they have doubts. An electronic version of these reviews with the VeriGuide receipt will be sent to the instructor. Deadlines will be 8 October and 5 November (a copy of the VeriGuide receipts shall be sent to the TA).

A Final Paper will have to be submitted in electronic form with the Veriguide receipt no later than Friday, 4 December (copy of the VeriGuide receipt also sent to the TA). The topic of this final paper

shall be chosen by each student, but discussed first with the instructor during one or two Paper sessions, which will be held at a convenient time after discussion with the students. A Guideline for the Final Paper will be provided on Blackboard at the beginning of the course. The expected length will range from 2500 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

Reading review 1: 25%

Reading review 2: 25%

Final Paper: 50%

Course schedule

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

Session 1: 10 September 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:

- Immanuel Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford UP, 2000, chap. 6, 10 and 16.

- Chow Tse-tung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1960, Introduction and Conclusion, esp. p. 358-61.

Session 2: 17 September 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, p. 23-39.

- 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 Contemporary Approach*, Brill, 2011, p. 541-550.

Session 3: 24 September 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:

- Mao Zedong, “Talks with Mao Yuanxin” and “Talk to Leaders of the Centre”, in Stuart Schram (ed.), *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters, 1956-71*, Penguin Books, 1974, p. 242-55.

- Mao Zedong, "Introducing a Co-operative", April 15, 1958 at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_09.htm
- Frank Dikötter, *The Cultural Revolution – A People's History, 1962-1976*, Bloomsbury, 2016, chap. 2, p. 15-26.

Session 4: 8 October 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:

- R. MacFarquhar and M. Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, p. 14-31 (chap.1).
- Michael Schoenhals (ed.), *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969: Not a Dinner Party*, Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996, p. 3-9, 27-65, 146-50, 166-69.

Session 5: 15 October The "Revolutionary" Period of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969). 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 9th Congress. Was this first period of the CR a real revolution, a political purge, or something else?

Required Readings:

- Walder, *China Under Mao*, p. 263-277.
- R. MacFarquhar and M. Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, p. 239-252 (chap.14), 273-284 (chap. 16).

Session 6: 22 October 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:

- Andrew Walder, *China Under Mao...*, p. 200-30.
- Michael Schoenhals (ed.), *China's Cultural Revolution*, p. 166-181, 183-184.

Recommended Readings:

- Xiaowei Zheng, "Passion, Reflection and Survival: Political Choices of Red Guards at Qinghua University, June 1966-July 1968", in Escherick, Pickowicz and Walder (eds.), *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, Stanford UP, 2006, p. 29-63.
- 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.

Session 7: 29 October Different Types of Violence during the Cultural Revolution

Who were the main victims and the main perpetrators of violence? Why was violence so extreme in the countryside?

Required Readings:

- MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, p. 117-131 ("Red Terror")
- Feng Jicai, *Voices from the Whirlwind: An Oral History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, Random House, 1991, p. 38-54 ("Was I Really Guilty?").
- Song Yongyi, "Preface: Deconstructing the Mythos of Mao Zedong's Peasant Revolution", in Tan Hecheng, *The Killing Wind*, Oxford UP, 2017, p. XVII-XX.
- Zheng Yi, *Scarlet Memorial – Tales of Cannibalism in Modern China*, Westview Press, 1996, p. 45-50 ("Kill or Be Killed").

Recommended Readings:

- Wang Youqin, "Student Attacks against Teachers: The Revolution of 1966", *Issues & Studies* 37, no. 2 (March/April 2001), p. xx-xxx.

- 杨继绳, “集体屠杀的总体情况和根本原因”, 《天地翻覆》, 香港天地图书有限公司, 2016, p. 684-686.

Session 8: 5 November **1. The Cult of Mao:** different rituals and meaning of this extraordinary wave of political religion.
2. 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:

1. - Andrew Walder, *China Under Mao...*, p. 277-82.
- Daniel Leese, *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in China's Cultural Revolution*, Cambridge UP, 2011, chap. 6, p. 128-148.
2. - Michel Bonnin, *The Lost Generation: The Rustication of China's Educated Youth (1968-1980)*, Hong Kong, Chinese University Press, 2013, p. 2-46, 65-81, 88-93, 229-33.
- Michael Schoenhals, *China's Cultural Revolution*, p. 181-182.

Session 9: 12 November **1. 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.
2. 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:

1. - R. MacFarquhar and M. Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, p. 333-40 (Lin Biao), 379-95 (“Deng Xiaoping Takes Over”), 422-30 (“The First Tiananmen Incident”)
- Walder, *China under Mao*, p. 293-302, 310-15.
2. - Feng Jicai, *Voices from the Whirlwind: an Oral History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, Random House, 1991, p. 3-27 (They Who Suffered Greatly), 157-67 (“A Modern Rouge et Noir”).
- 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 Contemporary Approach*, Brill, 2011, p.550-561.

Recommended Readings:

- F. Dikötter, *The Cultural Revolution – A People' History, 1962-1976*, chap. 21 (“The Silent Revolution”), p. 270-284.
- Yiching Wu, *Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis*, Harvard UP, 2014, p. 170-83 (Yang Xiguang).
- Chan, Anita, Stanley Rosen and Jonathan Unger, eds., *On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System: The Li Yizhe Debates*, Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1985, p. 2-16.

Session 10: 19 November **The Cultural Revolution between Oblivion, Distortion and Memory (1)**

Official evaluation, official uses and forced oblivion. Attempts to revive memory, inside and outside of the system.

Required Readings:

- M. Bonnin, “The Threatened History and Collective Memory of the Cultural Revolution's Lost Generation”, *China Perspectives*, 2007, 4, p. 52-64.
- Wang Youqin, “Finding a Place for the Victims: The Problem in Writing the History of the Cultural Revolution”, in *China Perspectives*, 2007, 4, p. 65-74.
- Gao Wenqian, “Author's Note”, in *Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary*, Public Affairs/Perseus Books, 2007, p. 311-315.

- "Nihil sine Xi: China is struggling to keep control over its version of the past", *The Economist*, 29 October 2016, p. 29-30.

Recommended Reading:

- M. Schoenhals, *China's Cultural Revolution*, p. 291-312.

Session 11: 26 November The Cultural Revolution between Oblivion, Distortion and Memory (2)

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:

- Yang Guobin, "China's Zhiqing Generation – Nostalgia, Identity and Cultural Resistance in the 1990s", *Modern China*, Vol 29 N° 3, July 2003, p. 285-289.

- M. Bonnin, "Restricted, Distorted but Alive: the Memory of the Lost Generation of Chinese Rusticated Youth", *The China Quarterly*, September 2016, n° 227, p.752-772.

- Ch. Buckley, "Bowed and Remorseful, Former Red Guard Recalls Teacher's Death", *New York Times*, January 13, 2013.

- J. Hannon, "In China: a son haunted by the Cultural Revolution", *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 2013.

- Xiao, Han, "Confessions of the Cultural Revolution", *New York Times*, January 27, 2014.

- Yu Hua, "Cultural Revolution Nostalgia", *New York Times*, April 10, 2014.

Recommended Reading:

- Michael Schoenhals, *China's Cultural Revolution*, p. 313-39.

Session 12: 3 December 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.

- Frederick Teiwes, *The Tragedy of Lin Biao: Riding the Tiger during the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1971*, p. 161-68 (Conclusion).

- Andrew Walder, *China under Mao...*, (p. 332-341).

- Yang Jisheng, "Foreword: Blood Awakening", in Tan Hecheng, *The Killing Wind*, Oxford University Press, 2017, p. XIII-XVI.

(Final paper should be submitted in electronic form no later than Friday, 4 December)