

HIGR 210: History and Historiography of Modern China

“RURAL CHINA REVISITED”

Instructor: Micah Muscolino (mmuscolino@ucsd.edu)

Time: Monday, 8-10:50AM; Place: HSS 6008

Office hours: Monday, 11AM-12:30PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

At the height of the Cold War, studies of modern China frequently centered on rural society as the alleged source of China’s economic “backwardness” and the locus of communist revolutionary mobilization. Since the 1990s, scholarly focus has largely shifted to cities (most notably Shanghai and Beijing) and the historical roots of China’s urban modernity. Over the past decade, however, an emerging body of scholarship has revisited the history of the villages where most of China’s populace lived and worked during the twentieth century.

How does a rural vantage point alter conventional understandings of modern China? How does the declining status of rural society, which today accounts for less than half of China’s population, shape the way we think about this question?

After introducing seminal debates in the historiography of rural China since the late nineteenth century, this graduate seminar examines recent English-language secondary sources on topics ranging from the decline of footbinding in the countryside to famine politics, socialist agricultural science, and long-term environmental change.

Students will be expected to take turns leading seminar discussions each week. Participation counts for a significant portion of your course grade, so it is imperative that you attend all seminar meetings. Participation entails actively contributing to discussion of the assigned texts and doing oral reports on several of the recommended readings over the course of the term. Students will also be required to submit, three times during the term, four-page (1,200 word) response papers based on the required readings, seminar discussions, and recommended readings. The final assignment for the course will be a fifteen-page review essay based on the assigned and recommended readings. Details of the final essay assignment will be given in class.

At least a general familiarity modern Chinese history is a prerequisite for the seminar. Competency in the Chinese language is welcome but not required.

Course goals:

1) The main purpose of this seminar is to introduce trends and debates in the historiography of modern China by surveying important recent works focusing on Chinese villages during the twentieth century.

2) The course will also encourage you to draw connections between the place of rural society in historical and contemporary China.

3) This class will familiarize you with major library holdings, digital databases, and other tools for identifying and gaining access to published materials on modern Chinese history.

4) You will learn to identify archival sources used as the basis for secondary scholarship, evaluate their applicability to specific historical questions, and create original arguments that critically respond to existing historiography.

5) Essay assignments and feedback from the instructor will provide an opportunity to strengthen your writing skills and hone your ability to construct effective historical arguments.

READINGS

You are urged to buy the following books, which everyone will read in full.

Laurel Bossen and Hill Gates, *Bound Feet, Young Hands: Tracking the Demise of Footbinding in Village China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017.

Jacob Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots: The Social History of a Community of Handicraft Papermakers in Rural Sichuan, 1920–2000*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).

Gail Hershat, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011.

Huaiyin Li, *Village China under Socialism and Reform: A Micro-History, 1948–2008*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Kate Merkel-Hess, *The Rural Modern: Reconstructing the Self and State in Republican China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Sigrid Schmalzer, *Red Revolution, Green Revolution: Scientific Farming in Socialist China*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Felix Wemheuer, *Famine Politics in Maoist China and the Soviet Union*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Course reserves

Assigned and recommended books will be placed on reserve at the Geisel Library. These titles can be found through the UCSD library catalog (<https://roger.ucsd.edu/>). Articles on the reading list can be downloaded from JSTOR.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Response papers:

You will submit three four-page (1,200 word) essays based on the required readings and seminar discussions from the preceding weeks. Due dates for the response papers will be October 22, November 19, and December 3.

These essays should make use of relevant recommended readings as appropriate. PhD students are required (and everyone else is strongly encouraged) to refer to relevant Chinese-language secondary scholarship as well. Bibliographies of the English-language books assigned for the seminar and the online databases provided by the UCSD library will be useful in searching for these sources.

Rather than simply evaluating the pros and cons of the works under review, response essays should be organized around a specific question (or set of questions). For example: What is the central historical problem that these books address? How do they contribute to our understanding that issue? Are certain books more effective than others? What is the basis of your assessment? Remember that these questions are merely suggestions and you may frame your essays in response to many others.

The response papers, like everything else that you write, needs to include an argument/thesis. Your essay also needs to have a title that reflects your topic and (preferably) encapsulates your main argument.

Feedback meetings:

In the weeks after response paper are due, I will hold extended office hours to discuss your essays with you and give you individual feedback. These meetings also provide an opportunity for you to ask questions, raise concerns, and clarify your understanding of material covered in the course.

Final paper:

Instructions and guidelines for the final essay assignment will be distributed in the latter part of the term.

GRADING

Grades for the semester will be calculated according to the following formula.
Attendance and participation: 30%; response papers: 30%; final essay: 40%.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

1. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING – October 1: Presentation by Chinese Studies librarian Xi Chen.

2. OLD ISSUES: DEVELOPMENT AND REVOLUTION – October 8

Daniel Little, *Understanding Peasant China: Case Studies in the Philosophy of Social Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, Chapter 5.

Philip C.C. Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350-1988*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990. (pp. 1-18, 77-92, 305-334)

Ramon Myers, "How Did the Modern Chinese Economy Develop? —A Review Article," and Philip C.C. Huang, "A Reply to Ramon Myers," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 50, 3 (August 1991), pp. 604-628, 629-633.

Recommended

Daniel Little, *Understanding Peasant China: Case Studies in the Philosophy of Social Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, Chapter 4.

Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980.

Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

3. FOOTBINDING AND FEMALE LABOR – October 15

Laurel Bossen and Hill Gates, *Bound Feet, Young Hands: Tracking the Demise of Footbinding in Village China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017.

Recommended

Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

4. MODERNITY IN THE VILLAGE – October 22 ***First response paper due**

Kate Merkel-Hess, *The Rural Modern: Reconstructing the Self and State in Republican China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Recommended

Elizabeth R. VanderVen, *A School in Every Village: Educational Reform in a Northeast China County, 1904–31*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012.

5. MICROHISTORIES OF COLLECTIVIZATION AND REFORM – October 29

Huaiyin Li, *Village China under Socialism and Reform: A Micro-History, 1948–2008*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Recommended

Edward Friedman, Paul Pickowicz, and Mark Selden, *Chinese Village, Socialist State*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

Edward Friedman, Paul Pickowicz, and Mark Selden, *Revolution, Resistance, and Reform in Village China*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

6. FOOD AND FAMINE – November 5

Felix Wemheuer, *Famine Politics in Maoist China and the Soviet Union*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Recommended

Kimberley Ens Manning and Felix Wemheuer, *Eating Bitterness: New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011.

YANG Jisheng, *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine. 1958-1962*. Translated by Stacy Mosher and Guo Jian. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012.

Frank Dikotter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962*. New York: Walker and Company, 2010.

November 12 -- Holiday

7. GENDER AND REVOLUTION – November 19 ***Second response paper due**

Gail Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011.

Recommended

Jacob Eyferth, "Women's Work and the Politics of Homespun in Socialist China, 1949–1980." *International Review of Social History* Vol. 57, 3 (December 2012), pp. 365-391.

Susan Mann, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Yunxiang Yan, *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

8. WORK, SKILL, AND "THE RURAL" – November 26

Jacob Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots: The Social History of a Community of Handicraft Papermakers in Rural Sichuan, 1920–2000*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).

Recommended

Jeremy Brown, *City Versus Countryside in Mao's China: Negotiating the Divide*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

9. SOCIALIST SCIENCE – December 3 ***Third response paper due**

Sigrid Schmalzer, *Red Revolution, Green Revolution: Scientific Farming in Socialist China*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Recommended

Miriam Gross, *Farewell to the God of Plague: Chairman Mao's Campaign to Deworm China*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016.

David A. Pietz, *The Yellow River: The Problem of Water in Modern China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

FINAL ESSAY: DUE DATE TBA