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HIST 105-03, China's Cultural Revolution

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HIST 105 INTRO SEMINAR

CHINA'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Fall 2009 T/Th 3:30 pm Clough 313

Instructor: Dr. Clayton D. Brown brownc@rhodes.edu

Office: Buckman 206A, T/Th 11 am-2 pm and by appointment

(this syllabus is subject to revision at the professor's discretion)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In 1966, what had once seemed the best disciplined and most stable of dictatorial states dissolved into anarchy, and those youth who under Chairman Mao's direction turned society upside down became China's "lost generation." Only after the Chairman's death did sweeping reforms allow the Chinese people to publicly reflect, recount, and even criticize. This opening of the floodgates spawned histories, memoirs, films, and novels, but each tells a different story with a different agenda. This course examines the many narratives of China's Cultural Revolution in an effort to better understand how each source engages historical memory while responding to its own times.

COURSE GOALS

The goals of this course are twofold: First, because the subject of the course is China's Cultural Revolution, students are expected to gain *factual knowledge* about this event, including names, dates, and an understanding of historical significance. But as a seminar, this course demands student *participation*, primarily through group discussion and written assignments. Students are therefore expected to *practice* and *develop skills in expressing themselves orally and in writing*.

COURSE ATTRIBUTES

This course fulfills requirements for F2 - Intensive Written Communication, F3 - Historical Forces and Humanities credits.

TEXTS (available in the Book Center in paperback, some used)

Jung Chang, *Wild Swans* (Touchstone, 2003) ISBN 0743246985

Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro, *Son of the Revolution* (Vintage: 1984). ISBN 0394722744

Gu Hua, trans. by Gladys Yang, *A Small Town Called Hibiscus* (Fredonia Books, 2003) ISBN 1410103528

ADDITIONAL READINGS (selections available digitally on Moodle)

Woei Lien Chong, *China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield); chapter 5 "The Deification of Mao" pp. 139-169.

Patricia Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Free Press, 1993).

(Fens Jacai) Feng Jicai, *Ten Years of Madness: Oral Histories of China's Cultural Revolution* (China Books and Periodicals, 2007).

(Feng Kicai) Feng Jicai, *Voices from the Whirlwind* (Random House, 1992).

Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random House, 1994).

Wen Chihua, *The Red Mirror* (Westview Press, 1995).

FILMS

The Blue Kite (available on Moodle)

Farewell My Concubine (available on Moodle)

Morning Sun

The Red Detachment of Women (available on Moodle)

Small Happiness

To Live (available on Moodle)

Yang ban xi [Eight Model Plays]

GRADES

Your final grade is based on assessment of three criteria: Participation, Quizzes, and Essays. Total points possible over the course of the semester will come to approximately 300, with each criteria equally weighted.

Participation Points: Participation comes in two forms—speaking in class and completion of occasional assignments, such as written responses to films and the poster assignment. Regarding the former, keep up on the daily readings in order to make *regular* and *informed* contributions to classroom discussions. Come prepared with questions or comments that you would like to share with the group. You will each have the opportunity to lead discussion once during the semester—this is a portion of your participation points. The consistency and quality of your contribution will be regularly assessed and rewarded with a semester total of one hundred points, fifty before midterm and fifty after. Persistent silence and unpreparedness disqualify one from participation credits. This is a seminar, so if you have any issues with public speaking please notify me *in private* ASAP!

Quizzes: We will regularly have brief (usually multiple-choice or fill in the blank) quizzes. These are content-based and are designed to include simple questions on the readings assigned for that day, so that those who have carefully and thoughtfully considered the material will receive full credit. Expect eleven quizzes worth ten points apiece over the course of the semester, with the lowest score dropped at the end so that quiz points total one hundred.

Essays: An essay is due at the completion of each of the three books, with a specific topic assigned for you to address in each case. The first two essays are three pages worth thirty points apiece, while the third essay will be five pages worth forty points, for a total of one hundred essay points. This final essay will be a five page synthesis of our sources (using the three books and at least two articles). Feel free to draw from your earlier papers, but make this essay unique. Use either Chicago style citations or in-text MLA citations. Refer to the *Rhodes College Guide to Effective Writing* for assistance, and if necessary use the Rhodes Writing Center in Barret 122 in the process of drafting and revising papers.

In general, papers are graded according to the following schema:

Thesis statement—A clear, concise statement of no more than one sentence that posits your argument.

Introduction—Opening paragraph of your essay introduces the topic, states your thesis, and provides a preview of the paper’s main points.

Conclusion—Last paragraph of the essay recapitulates your thesis, summarizes the main points and ties the essay together.

Mechanics—Paragraphs, spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. must adhere to academic standards.

Persuasiveness—Is your argument clear and logical and does your evidence support your conclusion?

Organization—Follow the trajectory outlined in your introduction. Is there natural progression? Or is it a jumble of unrelated ideas?

Focus—Stick to the topic, no rambling. Leave out extraneous or irrelevant material, even if it is true. Whatever you say must clearly support your argument.

Aesthetics—Is the language of your paper engaging, informative, and reliant on active rather than passive voice? AVOID LINKING VERBS AND THE VERNACULAR!

Evidence/support—Refer to specific examples covered in the lectures or readings to support your argument. Be sure your information is correct, and properly cite your sources.

Be sure to begin the first paragraph with a thesis statement. What I don’t want is free association writing without any forethought, or unsubstantiated opinion, such as “I think.”

Remember, your essay is argument-driven, not a summary of the book(s). Refrain from recapitulating the story; rather, be selective about which examples you cite in supporting your main point. This is the FOCUS portion of your grade as stated in the essay study guide above. Please review this study guide and the *Rhodes College Guide to Effective Writing* for assistance. This may save you time and effort and will certainly produce better essays.

POLICIES

In this course we are committed to Rhodes standards: “Freedom of thought, a civil exchange of ideas, and an appreciation of diverse perspectives are fundamental characteristics of a community that is committed to critical inquiry. To promote such an academic and social environment we expect integrity and honesty in our relationships with each other and openness to learning about and experiencing cultural diversity” (Student Handbook 27). In this spirit, this class is to provide a safe space for critical thinking and the free exchange of ideas.

The Honor System: As a Rhodes student you are committed to the Honor Code. Students should be clear about what constitutes plagiarism and cheating, and should refrain entirely from engaging in either. Please review the *Rhodes College Guide to Effective Writing* pages 37-40. Any violation will be reported to the Honor Council which will then take appropriate action.

Disabilities: Any documented disabilities will be accommodated. This should be done through the Student Disability Services Office who will then work with the instructor to make any recommended accommodations for the student. See www.rhodes.edu/disability or the *Student Handbook* page 8. Note that it is the responsibility of the student to obtain any necessary documentation and work through the Disability Office; the instructor merely complies with requests from the office.

Attendance: “Students enrolled at the institution make a commitment to participate fully in their education, which includes attending classes. Absenteeism is not to be taken lightly” (Student Handbook 12). Besides missing participation points, chronic absences will be noted by the instructor and your grade will suffer.

In-class behavior: Any disrespectful utterances or actions, whether directed at the instructor or fellow students, will not be tolerated. Use of cell phones for speaking or texting, newspapers or other unrelated readings, and other distractions such as private conversations ARE NOT ALLOWED in the classroom. During class time, your classmates and the instructor expect that you will be engaged in the course and not serve as a hindrance to teaching or learning.

Making up work: As a policy I do not allow the “making up” of assignments, papers, exams, or even classroom participation. In *documented* cases of extenuating circumstances (i.e. emergency hospitalization) the instructor will make reasonable accommodations.

Availability: If I am in my office with the door open, feel free to stop in. I do teach two other courses and am not always available, but my office hours are Fridays 3:00-5:00 pm; please use that time to visit with me if at all possible. I am also willing to meet by appointment. I do check email at least once a day, and I will respond within twenty-four hours, but do not expect a response the same day. If you have a genuine emergency please contact the department secretary, Ms. Heather Holt, who can then get in touch with me.

READING SCHEDULE

August

Thursday 27th: Introduction (note *Wild Swans* has timeline and map at the end)

September

Tuesday 1st: *Wild Swans*, Intro to page 61 and “Women’s Virtues and Vices”

Thursday 3rd: *Wild Swans* 62-93 and “Widows Loyal Unto Death”

Tuesday 8th: *Wild Swans* 94-150 and “Classic of Filial Piety”

Thursday 10th: *Wild Swans* 151-203

Tuesday 15th: *Wild Swans* 204-255 and “The Great Leap Forward”

Thursday 17th: *Wild Swans* 256-307 and documentary on the Great Leap Forward

Tuesday 22nd: *Wild Swans* 308-361 and “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions”

Thursday 24th: *Wild Swans* 362-405 and “Jiang Qing”

Tuesday 29th: *Wild Swans* 406-457 and “Wei Jingsheng”

October

Thursday 1st: *Wild Swans* 458-end

*Tuesday 6th: First Essay due; 3 pages on the topic—**How did the lives of China’s women change with the Communist takeover and the advent of the Cultural Revolution? Was life for women better or worse than before?**

Thursday 8th: *Son of the Revolution* 1-39.

Tuesday 13th: *Son of the Revolution* 40-86. “Mao on Art and Literature”

*Thursday 15th: NO CLASS (Professor presenting at Berkeley). Watch *Farewell My Concubine* on Moodle or at the Media Center and write a 2 page response to the film on how the Cultural Revolution changed Peking Opera.

*Tuesday 20th: NO CLASS (Fall Recess)

Thursday 22nd: *Son of the Revolution* 87-127 and “Deification of Mao.” Turn in essay for *Farewell My Concubine*.

Tuesday 27th: *Son of the Revolution* 128-175 and “Picturing Power”

Thursday 29th: *Son of the Revolution* 176-208. Poster analysis and assignment (due 3rd).

November

Tuesday 3rd: *Son of the Revolution* 209-258 and “Mao’s Harem.” Share posters.

Thursday 5th: *Son of the Revolution* 259-end.

Tuesday 10th: Second Essay due; 3 pages on the topic—**Having read *Wild Swans*, what value did you find in reading *Son of the Revolution*? In other words, although Jung Chang and Liang Heng lived through the same tumultuous period, how do their narratives differ and why is this important to recognize?**

Thursday 12th: “Li Zhisui”

Tuesday 17th: *Hibiscus Town* 1-50 and “Was I Really Guilty”

Thursday 19th: *Hibiscus Town* 51-100; library day

Tuesday 24th: *Hibiscus Town* 101-150 and “Butterflies and Rain”

*Thursday 26th: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)

December

Tuesday 1st: *Hibiscus Town* 151-201 and “The Most Intelligent Man”

Thursday 3rd: *Hibiscus Town* 202-249 and “CR in the Eyes of a New Generation”

Tuesday 8th: Watch *To Live* on Moodle or on reserve in Barret Library Media Center and submit 2 page assessment: Discuss how you feel it compares with *Farewell My Concubine* as a portrayal of the Cultural Revolution. BE ANALYTICAL AND SUPPORT YOUR ARGUMENT WITH SPECIFIC EXAMPLES!

Final Essay Question: The work of a historian is to discover how the past relates to and informs the present. Although the Cultural Revolution occurred in China decades ago, there are still lessons we can learn from this history. If you were to write a short paper to help your peers understand the significance of the Cultural Revolution today, what would you say? Drawing on the range of sources we explored this semester, explain what they should know about the Cultural Revolution and why. (See the essay evaluation schema provided above. In addition to an assessment of these qualities, I will be most impressed with how well you employ sources and relate the Cultural Revolution to American college students.)