

Huma 3430: Reading Modern Chinese History Historically
Spring 2020

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Office Hours: Wednesday 4:30-6:30 pm, Thursday 4-5 pm, or by appointment

This course aims at introducing some of the essential skills in identifying problems in modern Chinese history texts from the late Qing to the 1940s. Its major purpose is to demonstrate how, and to examine why, different ideological persuasions have been affecting the narratives of history and, hence, our understanding of historical events in China from the Opium War to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Why historical events or famous persons were/are described in specific ways in history textbooks, and what are the problems with that in terms of our understanding of historical truth? Why were/are political parties eager to control how the history of modern China written in history textbooks? Topics covered are traditional and modern Chinese historiography, the Opium War, the Taiping Rebellion, Sun Yat-sen and the legends of his revolution, impact of western imperialism on China, warlords, the peasant revolutions of the 1920s and 1930s, and so on.

Texts for Reading

Prepared copies of articles and extracts from books and journals are used as reading for this course. Most of these materials can be found on the course's CANVAS page. In addition, a list of optional reading materials which are relevant to this course and hence useful for broadening your knowledge on the subjects and enhancing performance in tutorials and examination, are put on our library's Reserve for your consultation.

The reading list is for reference only; the actual amount of readings required to be read in this course will be adjusted realistically according to your needs.

Assessment

Due to the current social situation in Hong Kong, the following assessment schemes are for reference only. Final version of assessment scheme will be confirmed by the end of Week 2.

Attendance, participation in class (and e-class) discussion, and commenting on peers' presentation: 10%

Presentation of proposal and outline of term-end project/assignment: 30%

Term-end project/assignment: 60%

ILOs

On completion of this course, students will: 1) identify some of the major problems of historical representations in official Chinese history textbooks and nationalistic/patriotic historical writings; 2) be aware of, and to revise our conventional wisdom on the selected historical topics and issues of/in modern Chinese history discussed in this course; 3) obtain a fuller, critical and deeper understanding of the political history of modern China from the Opium War to the Chinese Communist revolution; 4) know how to read historical materials, in particular official Chinese history textbooks, critically with the basic skills that they have learned from the course; 5) have the opportunity for learning the communicative skills by writing an academic paper on a history subject appropriately, and to discuss them with their peers in classroom.

Classroom (Face-to-face) Etiquettes

1. Please do not use electronic devices such as laptop, mobile phone, tablet computer, camera, voice recorder, in lecture.
2. Please do not leave the lecture room early; if it is something important and you need to leave early, please alert me before the class starts.
3. Please make efforts to attend all the lectures in this course, because the scope of the term-end assignment/project may touch on issues and materials discussed/taught in lectures, in addition to all the required readings.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Lectures are to be held twice a week. From time to time, students are required to engage in discussions on selected topics of the course, during lecture time. Therefore, you are expected to have read all the required reading before going to classes. Your active participation and contributions to classroom discussion is expected and graded.

The following class schedule is for reference only. Actual flow of the course may vary, depending on the class composition and other pedagogical factors in this semester.

Week 1: Introduction & What is History?

Readings:

E.H. Carr, What is History (1978), chapters 1 and 2

Suggested Questions for Discussion (SQD): What is history? Is history writing always objectively done? Who are the historians? How possibly can they influence the writing of history? Try to identify the problems of history writing. Is history writing not too far from fabrication?

Week 2: Traditional Chinese Historiography, Nationalism and History Writing

Readings:

錢穆，"中國史學之特點"；
梁啟超，"新史學"，第一章及第二章；
陳立夫，"要為創造歷史而講歷史"；
戴逸，"序言"

SQD: Identify and elaborate the problems of: 1) traditional Chinese history writing, 2) modern Chinese nationalistic approach to history writing. How do these problems affect our understanding of the Chinese past?

Weeks 3 to 5: Narratives on the Opium War

A) Opium War as portrayed in two Chinese movies:

電影 "鴉片戰爭" 1958 and 1997 versions

SQD: Identify and account for the major differences between the two films in terms of their narrative techniques in presenting this historical episode. Try to explain how the two different historical contexts (i.e. 1959 and 1997) might have influenced the content of these films.

B) Opium War as portrayed in history texts

Readings :

Arthur Waley, Opium War Through Chinese Eyes, Parts 3 & 4;
黃敬華，中國近代史常識， pp. 4-25;
茅海健，天朝的崩潰， chapter 2, and pp. 293-324.

SQD: 黃敬華 gives us a "typical" Chinese nationalistic interpretation of the causes and the course of the Opium War. Identify problems of his views, and explain how these "problems" can affect our understanding of this war and its subsequent related events.

Weeks 6 & 7: Taiping Rebellion or Revolution?

Readings: Theodore Hamberg "The Visions of Hung-Siu-Tshuen, and the Origin of the Kwangsi Insurrection";

黃敬華，中國近代史常識，pp. 26-56; ;

Optional:

Immanuel Hsu, Rise of Modern China (1995), pp. 221-253;

Franz Michael, Taiping Rebellion, vol.1, Parts I & III.

SQD: Was the Taiping movement a rebellion or a revolution? Identify major problems in official PRC interpretations of the Taiping movement.

Weeks 8 & 9: Invasion of China by the West

Readings:

蔣介石，中國之命運， pp. 122-8, 130-6;

毛澤東，"中國革命與中國共產黨"， pp. 584-599;

駱清華，"五十年來之中國經濟"

羅敦衛，"十年來的中國工業"

朱義農，"十年來的中國農業"

Optional:

Immanuel Hsu, Rise of Modern China (1995), pp.419-437;

Jerome Chen, China and the West, chapter 2;

SQD: Critically assess the impact of the unequal treaties and the Western invasion on the development of China. Try to explain Chiang Kai-shek's motives behind his strong criticisms of foreign imperialism.

Week 10: "Father of the Nation": Sun Yat-sen and His Revolution

Readings:

中國國民黨中央黨史資料，"總理史蹟簡編稿";

Marie Bergere, Sun Yat-sen, chapters 2 to 6;

Optional:

李定一，中國近代史， chapters 11 and 12; Film: 孫中山; Lyon Sharman, Sun Yat-sen: His Life and Its Meanings, chapters 9 & 10

SQD: Did Sun Yat-sen deserve to be regarded as the "Father of the Country"? Why do you think the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party had promoted so actively

the cult of Sun Yat-sen? Identify and discuss problems in the two different Chinese versions of Sun's biographical history.

Week 11: Warlords

Readings: 北洋軍閥, chapters 8 and 9; 張靜如, 北洋軍閥統治時期中國社會之變遷, pp.24-55, 141-187; "The Dog-Meat General"; James E. Sheridan, China in Disintegration, chapter III "The Warlords";

Optional: James E. Sheridan, Chinese Warlord; pp.74-107; 黃敬華, 中國近代史常識, pp. 159-76

SQD: Many Chinese historians believe that warlords were responsible for the destruction of China's society, economy and political development in the period 1914 to 1930s. Do you agree?

Weeks 12 & 13: The Rural Conditions and the Peasant Revolution

Readings:

毛澤東, "湖南農民運動考察報告";

朱義農, "十年來之中國農業";

周谷城, "農村中貧富懸殊之風險";

Fei Hsiao-tung, Peasant Life in China, chapters 11, 12 & 15

(中譯本: 江村經濟).

SQD: Was Mao's analysis of the rural conditions and the peasants' grievances objective, trustworthy, and problem-free? How badly were Chinese peasants exploited by the dual forces of feudalism and foreign imperialism? Were peasants the vanguards of the Chinese revolution?