

## Syllabus History 393: Contemporary China

### HIST 393: CONTEMPORARY CHINA

3 Units

This course explores the social, political, economic, and cultural changes in China from the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the present day. Hopefully this will be a rich and multi-layered cultural and historical experience for you that will lead you to some understanding of beginnings of contemporary China and thus the world we live in today. This syllabus is the fundamental rulebook for how our class will operate but it is subject to change either as a result of either mutual decision made within and by our class and or as a result of the professional judgment of the instructor. After completing this course:

1. Students will understand and describe what constitutes the historical factors that lead to the success of the Chinese Communist Party in its bid for power in China and the creation of the People's Republic of China.
2. Students will appraise the various policies of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and particularly Mao Zedong up to the time of his death in 1976.
3. Students recognize and evaluate the various political and social trends that undergirded the rise of and "reform" policies of Deng Xiaoping.
4. Students will analyze the trends of present-day China and the current policies of its leadership.
5. Students will be able to identify some of the internal and external mechanisms that have influenced the evolution of the People's Republic of China since its inception and are bearing on it presently as it becomes a more significant and active member of a globalized planet.
6. Students will write substantial essays dealing with different variations on the contemporary political, economic and social history of the People's Republic of China.

### COURSE TEXTS

The following books are REQUIRED readings for this semester.

John Gittings, *The Changing Face of China: From Mao to Market*, ISBN-10: 019280734X [SLOs 1 – 6]

Jasper Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine*, Owl Books; Reprint edition (April 15, 1998), ISBN: 0805056688 [SLOs 2, 5 & 6].

Wu, Ningkun, *A Single Tear: A Family's Persecution, Love, and Endurance in Communist China* (Paperback), ISBN: 0316956392 [SLOs 2, 5 & 6].

Ian Johnson, *Wild Grass: Three Portraits of Change in Modern China* (Paperback)  
 ISBN-10: 0375719199

These books will constitute the major body of material and ideas that we will be discussing and dealing with this semester. They will also provide you with the raw materials of your out-of-class writing assignments and your examinations.

### READING ASSIGNMENTS

Below is a calendar of your reading assignments, class assignments, and examinations. Unless otherwise altered, this schedule will be followed. It is incumbent upon you to KNOW THESE SCHEDULES because failure to do so does not constitute a legitimate excuse for not fulfilling your responsibilities in a timely fashion.

Date	Reading	Other
January 22	Gittings 1	
January 29	Gittings 2	Map assignment due, Thought Piece 1 due
February 5	Becker, <i>Hungry Ghosts</i>	Thought Piece 2 due
February 12	Gittings, 3-4	<i>Hungry Ghosts</i> essay due
February 19	Wu, <i>Single Tear</i>	Thought piece 3 due
February 26	Gittings, 5	<i>Single Tear</i> essay due
March 5	Gittings, 6	Mid-Term Exam due
March 12	Gittings, 7	Thought Piece 4 (on Gittings 6) due
March 19	Gittings, 8	Thought Piece 5 due
April 2	Gittings 9 - 10	Thought Piece 6 due
April 9	Gittings, 11	Thought Piece 7 due
April 16	Gittings, 12	Thought Piece 8 due
April 23	Gittings, 13	Thought Piece 9 due
April 30	<i>Wild Grass</i>	Thought Piece 10 due
May 7	Gittings, 14	<i>Wild Grass</i> essay due
May 14	Final Exam	Final Exam

### WEEKLY JOURNAL ESSAYS

As a way to draw out of you some thoughtful reflections regarding our collective class work, you will be expected to complete a one page (or so) “thought piece” about each week’s readings and lecture material. These reflections can range a bit in scope, content and style but they should be meaningful and thoughtful commentary on what you learned and how you connect that to other things you are learning or how you perceive China, our contemporary times or the world as a whole. These pieces will be worth 10 points each and they will be due no later than the week after we collectively work through a particular topic and our material. A schedule for when the Thought Pieces are due is above in conjunction with our reading schedule. It is important that these pieces be done

and handed in as we go along, as it is also a way for me to monitor our collective and your individual progress in this class.

### OUT-OF-CLASS WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

You will have to write three (3) essays based the three outside readings. These essays will be graded on a 100 point scale. An essay can be defined as a short written composition focusing on a single subject in which the author presents a viewpoint supported logic, factual data or both. An essay is also characterized by a clear and appropriate flow of ideas all related to and augmenting both the topic and the author's point of view. Finally, it is expected that these out-of-class essays will conform to the standard technical rules governing the use of written English including those pertaining to spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

For each separate essay, you must focus on one (1) of the questions that I provide pertaining to that particular book and do your best, using the book itself and any other material (especially the text book) you care to, to fully and completely answer the question or address the issue presented you. If you wander off the topic, select your own book, develop your own question or questions to answer -- you will most assuredly do poorly on the assignment!

In recent times a problem has arisen as a result of students waiting until very late in the semester or even the very last minute to complete and turn in their work. We will discuss this in class and decide what ought to be our policy on such late work.

### EXAMINATIONS

There will be two (2) Take-home examinations during the course of the semester a mid-term and a final. These examinations will ask you to address issues developed in your readings, assignments and class material. You are responsible for topics and themes not discussed in class, but are in your readings. The questions, topics and issues will be posted at the website in plenty of time to allow you to gather your best thinking and do your best on these exercises.

### GRADING SCALE

In all cases superior scores (A's) will be awarded to students who find original and creative ways of melding the information the read with an analytical approach to the questions posed to them. The prompt questions for the essays and the examinations will try to focus on the Student Learning Outcomes to achieve some unity of focus and purpose between and among all sources of information and your own critical thinking. Assignments that are predominately descriptive in nature and offer no original thought or analysis will most likely earn grades of C or lower.

The grading scale of this class is really very simple. There may or may not be options for students to earn "Class Participation Points" during our class sessions. Each exam is

worth 100 points and each writing assignment is worth 100 points. At the end of the semester I take the student who has earned the highest number of points to set the upper range of the grading scale. From there, I will calculate As, Bs, Cs, etc. according to the following ratio: 90% of the top score creates the range of As, 80% creates the range for Bs, 70% for Cs, and 60% for Ds.

To help you know where you are in the class, I shall post grades on the WebPages as we go along. Identities will be protected, but you can monitor your progress and get a good idea of where you are in the "race" as we proceed.

### CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Honesty and truthfulness are very important concepts to me and therefore I take dishonesty very seriously. Any student found cheating on an examination will receive an automatic F for the course. Any student guilty of plagiarism on a written assignment will receive an automatic F on that assignment. Plagiarism shall be defined as the act of taking the ideas, thoughts, or words of another and passing them off as your own original ideas, thoughts or words. A good rule of thumb to follow to avoid any possible problem with plagiarism is that any time you copy or use three consecutive words from some other author, you had better use quotation marks and provide a full footnote citation to clearly designate that you are using someone else's ideas.

### CLASS ATTENDANCE

I expect you to attend class regularly.

### EXTRA CREDIT

Traditionally, I am quite open minded about the creation of extra-credit options for students who care to expand on their learning, further plumb their interests and/or simply improve their grades. I have one absolute requirement, though, that must be adhered to regarding all extra-credit options. The work and the focus of attention must be specifically pertinent to this class. No topics or themes relating to other classes, other periods of history, or other national experiences will be considered acceptable. Therefore, a report on the reign of Ivan the Terrible in Moscow, though perhaps very good and riveting history, would not be acceptable as extra-credit in this class.