



## History 439: Communist China

- History 439
- In person, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 12:30 - 1:20 PM in GRIS 133
- 3 credit hours
- No prerequisites
- Contact me within the first week if you would like to do an honors contract

## Professor Tillman

- [mmtillman@purdue.edu](mailto:mmtillman@purdue.edu)
- OH: in-person BRNG 6154, Mondays; virtually Tuesdays 3:30-4:30 PM

*Please mask while visiting me in my office. If you are visibly ill while in my office, I reserve the right to end the meeting.*

## Course Description

China is the only state that still claims to be Communist; even North Korea has removed the word from its constitution. While the Soviet Union collapsed, China's ruling elite has remained in power, but has turned to unusual sources of inspiration, given its history of iconoclasm and revolution. This course was originated in the 1970s from a Cold War framework, and we are seeking to bring it up to speed, in the last section, with a consideration of contemporary issues: How is the Chinese government dealing with problems of socioeconomic diversity, the internet age, threats to its claims of territorial sovereignty, etc.? To what degree is a post-socialist state still socialist? The last month of the class opens up questions for us all to explore.

This course has two sets of goals: one is to familiarize you with the contemporary China and how it came to be the way that it is. The second is to build a set of skills (outlined in greater detail below). 400-level courses are focused on historiography—that is, scholarly arguments about history, rather than simply the historical narrative itself. To what degree can the discipline of history contribute to an understanding of the present (or to supplement the work of political scientists and sociologists who have studied Chinese politics and society)? In order to help you understand how historians have come to their conclusions, we will also engage in a series of workshops about primary sources and critiquing arguments.

Because this class does not have any pre-requisites, we do not assume any China-background or any history background. In order to help get us all to the same speed, we have some interspersed lectures on Mondays at the beginning of the semester. Each student will sign up for a day to serve as discussant; two students may also share a day. They will do an additional reading and prepare a paper before the class session to help lead discussion of the reading. We have some flexibility in this section of the class; students may talk to me about substituting a different reading *on the same topic* for that day. However, we should straighten out the readings in the first two weeks of class.

## Learning Outcomes

### ***Learning outcomes help you outside the classroom:***

Please note that in letters of recommendation, letter writers are often asked, “How does this person work in groups? Do they show leadership potential?” And the like.

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Identify major terms in Marxism and Chinese Communism.
2. Outline historical change in timeline projects/workshops.
3. *Correctly source* information in footnotes or endnotes, modeled in a citation exercise and practiced in writing throughout the semester.
4. *Find and select* salient quotations and information, through workshops and practiced in writing assignments, and taught by students in the Week 12 Roundtable.

5. *Connect, compare, and contrast* scholarly arguments in articles and books by means of your reflection paragraph on Joseph Fewsmith, homework and class session on reviews (Monday, January 22), the discussant review paper, class participation discussions of articles, and the first paper.
6. *Evaluate and critique* scholarly argumentation, selection of sources and analysis of sources through primary source workshops and collective blogposts and your own individual one.
7. *Develop and articulate* an understanding of the major questions of a subfield by building a paper, from class discussions and the discussant review paper to the first paper. In the class discussions, we will analyze single arguments; in the discussant review paper, students will compare scholarly questions and perspectives in an article and a book; for the first paper, they will select a second book to read and to put into conversation with the first two. Students may thus present different stages of a “rough draft” on this larger paper throughout the semester.
8. *Articulate* relevance through blog posts and/or policy briefs.
9. *Demonstrate leadership* by leading discussion on a session.
10. *Cultivate community teamwork* through group work in workshops (specified days) and leading the discussion, as a group, in Week 14.

### Assignments:

Assessments	Due	Weight
Participation and in-class activities	throughout	10%
Initial Goal-Setting Questionnaire	Week 1	1%
Homework	Multiple dates	2%
Discussant review paper	Students self-select	10%
Collective blogs or policy briefs	Multiple dates	10%
Paper	Week 9	40%
Week 12 Roundtable Discussion	Week 12	2%
Individual blog or policy brief	Week 14	20%
Final Reflection	Week 17	5%
Total		100%

- Each week, you will have the opportunity to achieve course learning outcomes through a variety of small assignments that can be completed remotely and uploaded to Brightspace. Please read the feedback that I provide for ways to enhance your learning going forward and consult with me for questions and additional support.
- Individual Reflection Paper (20 points; due xx). This assignment relates to course learning objective #2 and involves a self-analysis of your understanding and capability to complete the fundamental skills of the class.
- Project 1 (40 points; due xx). Details about this project are in Brightspace under Assignments, including the assessment rubric.
- Individual blog or policy brief (20%; due in week 14).
- Final reflection (5%). It will consist of a mix of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. More detail will be shared in the Brightspace table of contents by xx.

### Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignments
1	<i>Why revolution? What sort? What made Chinese Communism different?</i>	<p><b>Monday Jan 8:</b> Introduction to “Communism” and “China,” lecture featuring <a href="#">Engles’s Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts</a> (“wages”; “profit”; “estranged labor”; “Landed Property and Capital”) and Paul Cohen, “Ambiguities of a Watershed Date”</p> <p><i>Why should historians study the PRC?</i></p> <p><i>How is Marxism different as historical analysis, capitalist critique, and statecraft theory?</i></p> <p>Wednesday: “Anti-imperialism in China,” lecture featuring in-class clips of <a href="#">“China: War and Revolution”</a> (0-11:28); Lenin, <a href="#">“Imperialism”</a>; Sun Yat-sen, <a href="#">“Three-Peoples Principles”</a>; Mao Zedong, <a href="#">“Chinese Government”</a></p>

		<p>[Wasserstrom, 43-48]  <i>Discussion: Why was Marxism attractive to Chinese nationalists?</i></p> <p>Friday: Communist in-roads in factories and the Purge of 1927; in-class clips of "<a href="#">China: War and Revolution</a>" (11:28-25); read "BS Week 1"  <i>Discussion: From a Marxist perspective, was China "ready" for revolution?</i>  <b>Workshop 1: Materials from reformers and revolutionaries / Citations</b></p> <p><b>Due: "Initial Questionnaire"</b></p>
2	<i>Why and how is the Chinese Party State connected to the Army?</i>	<p><b>Monday, Jan 15: MLK Day, No class</b></p> <p>Wednesday: "The Agrarian Revolution," lecture featuring in-class clips of "<a href="#">China: War and Revolution</a>" (25-35). (Students: begin reading Fewsmith, <i>Forging Leninism</i>)  [Wasserstrom, 49-52]</p> <p>Friday: "Reading a monograph"; "They say/I say." Discuss: <i>Whom is Fewsmith arguing against? What questions is Fewsmith trying to answer? How are his questions different from the narrative that you heard in "China: War and Revolution"?</i>  <b>Due before class: Homework 1: Reflection on Fewsmith</b></p>
3	<i>How are our conclusions rooted in the sources that we have access to?</i>	<p>Monday, Jan 22: "Writing a review." Read Benton, "Review."  Discuss: What makes for a good review?  <b>Due before class: Homework 2: Reviews</b></p> <p>Wednesday: Discuss <a href="#">Song Shaopeng, "Gender and Class"</a>; <a href="#">Tillman, blogpost</a>  <i>Discussant reads Kay Ann Johnson</i></p> <p>Friday: Perry, "The Promise of PRC History"; Ghosh &amp; Urbanksy, "<a href="#">Intro</a>"; "BS Week 3"  <i>Discussion: How does our source base change the way that we view PRC history? What do historians bring to the table?</i>  <b>Workshop 2: Visual materials from the Jiangxi Soviet</b>  <b>Due at end of the day: Blog on the Jiangxi Soviet or policy brief (1)</b></p>
4	<i>Was War a Turning Point?</i>	<p>Monday, Jan 29: Yan'an and World War II (Lecture); featuring <i>Our Story</i>, pp. 72-101  [Wasserstrom, 54-56]</p> <p>Wednesday: Huang Daoxuan, "A Xinling History of the Rectification Campaign"  <i>Discussant reads Eddy U</i></p> <p>Friday: <i>Our Story</i>, pp. 72-101; Ho, Chapter 4; video reels and photos  <b>Workshop 3: How does the artist use visuals to depict and remember his experiences? How would you compare visuals from <i>Our Story</i> with wartime photographs?</b>  <b>Due at the end of the day: blog on wartime visuality or policy brief (2)</b></p>
5	<i>Why did the Communists "lean to one side"?</i>	<p>Monday, Feb 5: "The Postwar Conflict," lecture featuring BFO Materials [BS Week 5]; Read <i>Our Story</i> 102-211</p> <p>Wednesday: Chen Jian, <i>Mao's China</i>  <i>Discussant reads Tiejun Cheng</i></p> <p>Friday: Helena Lopes, "Smooth Transition?"  <i>Discussant reads Chalmers Johnson</i></p>

6	<i>What were the goals of New China and were they effective?</i>	<p>Monday, Feb 11: “Mao’s China,” lecture Read <i>Our Story</i>, pp. 214-249, <a href="#">Jeremy Brown</a>, <i>WENTK</i>, 56-63</p> <p>Wednesday: DeMare, “Bandits, Big Swords, and the Rebel Scholar” <i>Discussant reads Steve MacKinnon</i></p> <p>[[OR: Wednesday: DeMare, “Merchant Zha Goes to Court” <i>Discussant read Chuchn Wang</i>]]</p> <p>Friday: Discuss Yang Kuisong, <i>MATGR</i> <i>Discussant reads Ghosh</i></p>
7	<i>How did the goals of New China change?</i>	<p>Monday, Feb. 18: “The Sino-Soviet Split,” lecture Read <i>WENTK</i>, 63-71</p> <p>Wednesday: Cao Shuji, “An Overt Conspiracy,” <i>MATGR</i> <i>Discussant reads Yixin Chen</i></p> <p>Friday: Hershatter, “Introduction” <i>Discussant reads Smith</i></p>
8	<i>What was the new culture of Communist China, and how did it evolve?</i>	<p>Monday, Feb. 26: “Cultural Revolution,” featuring Carma Hinton, <i>Morning Sun</i> Read <i>WENTK</i>, Ch. 3 “What was the Cultural Revolution?”</p> <p>Wednesday: <a href="#">Hartono</a>, “Style” <i>Discussant reads Jie Li, Ying Qian, or Ho</i></p> <p>Friday: Dong Guoqiang and Andrew Walder, “Factions in a bureaucratic setting” <i>Discussant reads Bonin</i></p>
9	<i>What were the precedents for post-Socialist China?</i>	<p>Monday, March 4: Socialist Diplomacy: <a href="#">Shuman</a>, “Friendship” <i>Discussant reads Hicks or Murthy</i></p> <p>Wednesday: Hao Chen, et. al, “Dethroning the Mao-era Elite, Clearing the Way for Reform” <i>WENTK</i>, Ch. 4 “Who was Deng Xiaoping” through “How is Deng viewed now?” <i>Discussant reads Naughton</i></p> <p>Friday: <b>No class. Paper due.</b></p>
10	<i>Spring Break</i>	<i>March 11-16</i>
11	<i>How did China engineer “Post-Socialist Reform”? What were the limits of reform?</i>	<p>Monday, March 18: How did the CCP regain control? Read George Lin. <i>WENTK</i>, “How did China’s rulers avoid falling into ‘Leninist extinction?’” <i>Discussant reads Weber</i></p> <p>Wednesday: What was the purpose and effects of the One Child Policy? <a href="#">Zhang</a>, “One Child Policy” <i>WENTK</i>, “What was the One Child Policy?” <i>Discussant reads Rodriguez</i></p> <p>Friday: Read Dingxin Zhao, “Decline of Political Control in Chinese Universities and the Rise of the 1989 Chinese Student Movement.” <i>WENTK</i>, “What happened at Tiananmen Square in 1989?” <i>Discussant reads Doyon</i></p>
12	<i>Setting the stage for Sino-US conflict: trade and control</i>	<p><b>Roundtable discussions: Exploring China’s Diversity</b> Monday, April 1: Trade Wars between China and the US Read <a href="#">Philip Thai</a></p>

		<p>Wednesday: How did China Covid-19 differently from the US?  Read <a href="#">Wayne Soon</a>  Friday: Working groups  <b>Due at the end of Friday: Reading assignments for next week</b></p>
13	<i>How do we take account of China's immense diversity?</i>	<p><b>Roundtable discussions</b>  Monday, March 25: Diversity of experiences  WENTK, "Why is China's diversity overlooked?"  Group 1: Read <i>China Candid</i>  Wednesday: Socioeconomic and regional diversity  WENTK, "Are age divides important in China?"  Group 2: Read <i>Silent Voices</i>  Friday: Religious diversity  WENTK, "Is China still truly an atheist state?"  Group 3: Read <i>God is Red</i></p>
14	<i>What will the intersection of youth and the internet bring?</i>	<p><b>Roundtable discussions</b>  Monday: How did the Internet change China's political activism?  Read Shiru Wang, "Internet Exposure."  WENTK, "What is the role of the Internet...?"; "What does the digital divide mean...?" "Is the great Firewall..."  Wednesday: How does the CCP try to cultivate or harness nationalism among Chinese youth?  WENTK, "How powerful is Chinese nationalism?"  Friday: What was the umbrella movement?  Read <a href="#">voices</a> and <a href="#">Lassester</a> [For more information, read Daniel Garrett]  WENTK, "Why are corruption and credibility concerns for the CCP?"  <b>Due at the end of Friday: Blogpost or policy brief building on one of the discussion topics in weeks 12-14</b></p>
15	<i>What challenges could we predict for Sino-US relations in the future?</i>	<p><b>Roundtable discussions</b>  Monday: Why do China and the US misunderstand each other, and what hope is there for better understanding?  Wednesday: Will there be war?  WENTK, "Why do the US and Chinese views on Tibet differ?"; "Is China bent on world domination?"; "How likely is war with Taiwan?"  Friday: What big challenges face the US and China?  Read <a href="#">Covell Meyskens</a></p>
16	<i>Dead week</i>	<i>April 22-27</i>
17	<i>Finals week</i>	<b>Due: Final Reflection due April 29</b>

\* Schedule and assignments subject to change. Any changes will be posted in the learning management system.

- Bonnin, Michel Krystyna Horko trans. *The Lost Generation: The Rustication of China's Educated Youth (1968-1980)*. English ed. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2013. [https://purdue-primo-prod.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/vjfdl/PURDUE\\_ALMA51786148710001081](https://purdue-primo-prod.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/vjfdl/PURDUE_ALMA51786148710001081)
- Chen, Yixin. *When Food Became Scarce: How Chinese Peasants Survived The Great Leap Forward Famine*. S.L.: Cornell University Press, 2024.
- Cheng, Tiejun, Bulag, Uradyn E., and Mark Selden. *A Chinese Rebel beyond the Great Wall: The Cultural Revolution and Ethnic Pogrom in Inner Mongolia*. Silk Roads (Chicago, Ill). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023.
- Doyon, Jérôme. *Rejuvenating Communism: Youth Organizations and Elite Renewal in Post-Mao China*. University of Michigan Press, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12291596>
- Engman, Puck, and Daniel Leese, eds. *Victims, Perpetrators, and the Role of Law in Maoist China: A Case-Study Approach*. Transformations of Modern China. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2020.
- Ghosh, Arunabh. *Making It Count: Statistics and Statecraft in the Early People's Republic of China*. Histories of Economic Life. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/73139/>.
- He, Qiliang. *The People's West Lake: Propaganda, Nature, and Agency in Mao's China, 1949-1976*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2023.
- Hicks, Michael "China's Third World Policy with Africans and African Americans."
- Ho, Denise Y. *Curating Revolution: Politics on Display in Mao's China*. Cambridge Studies in the History of the People's Republic of China. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.



- Ingleson, Elizabeth O'Brien. *Made in China: How China and the United States Transformed Global Capitalism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2024.
- Jie Li, *Cinematic Guerrillas: Propaganda, Projectionists, and Audiences in Socialist China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2023.
- Johnson, Kay Ann. *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China*. University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Leese, Daniel, and Amanda Shuman, eds. *Justice after Mao the Politics of Historical Truth in the People's Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023.
- MacKinnon, Steve *Chen Hansheng: China's Last Romantic Revolutionary*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2023.
- Murthy Viren, *Pan-Asianism and the Legacy of the Chinese Revolution*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023.
- Naughton, Barry. *The Rise of China's Industrial Policy 1978 to 2020*. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Economía, 2021.
- Qian, Ying. *Revolutionary Becomings: Documentary Media in Twentieth-Century China* New York: Columbia University Press, 2024.
- Rodriguez, Sarah Mellors. *Reproductive Realities in Modern China Birth Control and Abortion, 1911-2021*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023.
- Smith, Aminda M. *Thought Reform and China's Dangerous Classes Reeducation, Resistance, and the People*. Asia/Pacific/Perspectives. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.
- Thompson-Brusstar, Mike. "Building a Supervision Science: Bureaucratic Control in China from Mao to Xi." Ph.D. dissertation
- Wang, Chuchu "Revolution on a Budget: Finance, Politics, Urban-Rural Divide, Gender, and Individuals in the Local Education System in Mao's China, 1949-1975." Ph.D. dissertation.
- Wang, Tao. *Isolating the Enemy: Diplomatic Strategy in China and the United States, 1953-1956*. Studies of the East Asian Institute. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021.
- Weber, Isabella *How China Escaped Shock Therapy: The Market Reform Debate*. Routledge, 2021.

## Learning Resources

- [Wasserstrom, Jeffrey N., and Maura Elizabeth Cunningham. \*China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know\*. 3rd edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018.](#)
- Rao, Pingru. *Our Story: A Memoir*.
- Brown and Johnson, eds. *Maoism at the Grassroots*. If it is a hardship for students to buy this book, we can copy the relevant chapters.
- Articles and book chapters available through BrightSpace

## Attendance Policy

The university expects in-person attendance; please see the [University Academic Regulations regarding class attendance](#). With Covid and other diseases, we need to protect ourselves and other people by staying home when we are sick. If you are sick, please contact me, and make up the assignments that we are doing in class (which vary by type of day—lecture, workshop, seminar, and roundtable).

Please go through the [Office of the Dean of Students \(ODOS\)](#) for cases of grief/bereavement, military service, jury duty, parenting leave, or emergent medical care.

### General Attendance Considerations

- If you need to miss class, please email the instructor and keep up with the reading.
- Lectures should be available through BrightSpace.
- For days that we have a workshop, you will be expected to do the workshop questions yourself and to submit them by the end of the day.
- For seminar days, you will be expected to write a reflection on your reading for that day.
- If you need to miss a "roundtable day" or the class for which you are discussant due to illness, we will plan to have you zoom into the class, if possible. If that is not possible, you may have to pick another date to serve as discussant.
- Physical presence in the classroom is not the same as participation, which may manifest in different ways across our diverse student community. We encourage a focus on ways for students to demonstrate their engagement by following suggestions in the [Tips for Enhancing Student Engagement document and webpage](#).

## Academic Integrity

This course seeks to help students with critical thinking and analysis. Do not use AI for these modes of thought.

This course also seeks to help students learn how to identify where they've been influenced by other ideas, and to cite those ideas, statistics, information, and text properly. Please do so properly and also become more critical about drawing upon credible sources.

Students often have difficulty with these tasks, and there is a sliding scale of what might be considered “misconduct.” Accidentally writing the wrong page number is a forgivable offense, but just randomly making up page numbers is actually a form of “misattribution,” which is a subset of plagiarism.

Incidents of academic misconduct in this course will be addressed by the course instructor and referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for review at the university level. Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that particular assignment, and at the instructor’s discretion may result in a failing grade for the course. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university, may be considered.

## Accessibility

Ensuring that Purdue students have access to equitable learning experiences is a University-level commitment and is the responsibility of all members of the Purdue community. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is a key partner in this work and is a resource for students and instructors. Please contact the DRC for accommodations if they are appropriate: [drc@purdue.edu](mailto:drc@purdue.edu) or by phone: 765-494-1247.

You do not need to have a disability to have your needs accommodated in this class. Everyone has different learning styles, and if you are having trouble in this course, please let me know.

## Mental Health/Wellness

*Seeking help is an important life skill. We seek to foster a culture at Purdue where students are explicitly encouraged and even expected to access the resources available.*

**If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try [Therapy Assistance Online \(TAO\)](#), a new web and app-based mental health resource available courtesy of Purdue Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). TAO is available to students, faculty, and staff at any time.**

**If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact or see the [Office of the Dean of Students](#). Call 765-494-1747. Hours of operation are M-F, 8 a.m.- 5 p.m.**

**If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc., sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a [Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell](#). Student coaches can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is free and can be done on BoilerConnect.**

**If you’re struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students.** If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office on the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.