

# HIST-2817: HISTORY OF MODERN CHINA

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## Cuyahoga Community College

**Viewing:** HIST-2817 : History of Modern China

**Academic Term:**

Fall 2026

**Subject Code**

HIST - History

**Course Number:**

2817

**Title:**

History of Modern China

**Catalog Description:**

This course surveys Chinese history from its early imperial foundations through the present, beginning with a brief overview of classical and early dynastic developments before turning to its substantive focus: China from the Qing Dynasty onward (17th century to today). Students examine major political, social, and economic transformations, including the fall of empire, the rise of the Republic, the Chinese Civil War, Mao-era campaigns, and post-1970s reforms. Primary source analysis highlights diverse voices across regions and social groups. By linking past and present, the course builds a grounded understanding of modern China's complexity and global significance.

**Credit Hour(s):**

3

**Lecture Hour(s):**

3

## Requisites

**Prerequisite and Corequisite**

None.

## Outcomes

**Course Outcome(s):**

Analyze and interpret major transformations in Chinese history by integrating primary sources and scholarly research.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

**Critical/Creative Thinking:** Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to consider problems/ideas and transform them in innovative or imaginative ways.

**Information Literacy:** Demonstrate contextual awareness of the research process through the reflective discovery of the production and value of information, the use of information in the creation of new knowledge, and ethical participation in the use of information in communities of learning.

**Objective(s):**

1. Evaluate the structures of imperial governance in the Ming and Qing eras and analyze how they shaped long-term political and social developments.
2. Interpret the causes and consequences of Qing decline using primary sources such as edicts, memoirs, and foreign accounts.
3. Synthesize information on revolutionary movements, including 1911, Nationalist reforms, and Maoist ideology, to explain competing visions of modernity.
4. Assess how economic reforms after the 1970s reshaped society, governance, and China's global role.

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**Course Outcome(s):**

Communicate interpretations of Chinese history effectively in oral and written formats using appropriate disciplinary conventions.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

Oral Communication: Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication for an intended audience that is clear, organized, and delivered effectively following the standard conventions of that language.

Written Communication: Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

**Objective(s):**

1. Present clear analyses of imperial institutions, Confucian thought, and regional diversity in early modern China.
2. Explain, verbally and in writing, how foreign pressures—from the Opium Wars to Cold War geopolitics—shaped China’s internal debates.
3. Produce structured essays and presentations interpreting major events such as the May Fourth Movement, the Chinese Civil War, and the Cultural Revolution.
4. Compare contemporary policy debates in China to historical patterns through organized arguments supported by evidence.

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**Course Outcome(s):**

Evaluate how historical developments in China shaped communities, identities, and global interconnections while demonstrating cultural sensitivity.

**Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:**

Civic Responsibility: Analyze the results of actions and inactions with the likely effects on the larger local and/or global communities.

Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

**Objective(s):**

1. Analyze how governance, social hierarchy, and reform movements affected diverse groups—peasants, women, ethnic minorities, and intellectuals—across dynasties and regimes.
2. Assess the civic implications of state-led modernization, land reform, and political campaigns for local and global communities.
3. Discuss China’s global interactions—from tribute systems to modern trade—and examine their cultural and ethical dimensions.
4. Reflect on how China’s recent growth influences global civic challenges such as labor rights, environmental issues, and technology governance.

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**Methods of Evaluation:**

- I. Exams
- II. Online Modules
- III. Discussions
- IV. Research Paper & Presentation

**Course Content Outline:**

- I. Foundations through Ming China
  - A. Geographic, cultural, and philosophical foundations
    1. Confucianism, Daoism, statecraft
    2. Primary sources: Analects, imperial edicts
  - B. Ming political structures and society
    1. Economic growth and maritime ventures
    2. Zheng He’s voyages
  - C. Late Ming stresses
    1. Social mobility, local elites
    2. Cultural and artistic developments
- II. The Qing Era
  - A. Manchu conquest and consolidation
    1. Multiethnic empire governance
    2. Banner system
  - B. Social and economic life under the Qing
    1. Population growth and agrarian pressures
    2. Village perspectives from diaries and gazetteers

- C. Crisis and decline
  - 1. Opium Wars, rebellions, foreign intrusion
  - 2. Treaty texts and missionary accounts
- III. Republic through Cultural Revolution
  - A. 1911 Revolution and competing nationalist visions
    - 1. Sun Yat-sen and the Nationalist state
    - 2. Three Principles of the People
  - B. May Fourth, intellectual ferment, and social movements
    - 1. New culture, feminism, vernacular literature
    - 2. Lu Xun and women’s voices
  - C. Civil War and Communist ascendancy
    - 1. Maoist ideology and land reform
    - 2. Yan’an period writings
  - D. Cultural Revolution
    - 1. Mass campaigns and social upheaval
    - 2. Red Guard memoirs
- IV. 1970s to the Present
  - A. Reform and Opening
    - 1. Market transitions and rural/urban divides
    - 2. Household Responsibility System documents
  - B. Social change in contemporary China
    - 1. Migration, labor, and inequality
    - 2. Worker narratives
  - C. China and the world
    - 1. Technology, geopolitics, environment
    - 2. Policy speeches and media sources

**Religious Accommodation**

Before reviewing the course schedule, students should carefully review the following religious accommodation policy and other required instructional policies:

**Religious Accommodation:**

Students seeking an accommodation for absences permitted under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act must provide the instructor with written notice of the specific dates for which the student requires an accommodation and must do so not later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of instruction. Please submit requests for accommodations at this link: [https://portal2.tri-c.edu/ReligiousAccommodation/Religious Accommodation Form](https://portal2.tri-c.edu/ReligiousAccommodation/ReligiousAccommodationForm). Students with questions about their religious accommodations under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act may contact the College's Office of General Counsel and Legal Services by phone at 216.987.4856 or via email at [legal@tri-c.edu](mailto:legal@tri-c.edu).

**Other Required Instructional Policies:**

<https://www.tri-c.edu/student-resources/curriculum/documents/syllabus-part-b.pdf>

**Weekly Schedule**

	Topics
Week 1	Geographic and cultural foundations
Week 2	Classical philosophies and imperial models
Week 3	The rise of the Ming dynasty
Week 4	Ming society, economy, and global connections
Week 5	Manchu conquest and Qing formation
Week 6	Qing governance and multiethnic empire
Week 7	Economic expansion and social change under the Qing
Week 8	Crises: Opium Wars, rebellions, foreign intrusion
Week 9	1911 Revolution and the early Republic
Week 10	May Fourth Movement and cultural change
Week 11	Nationalists, Communists, and civil war

Week 12	Maoist state-building and the Cultural Revolution
Week 13	Reform and Opening after 1978
Week 14	Urbanization, migration, and changing social structures
Week 15	China in the global economy and international politics
Week 16	Contemporary challenges: technology, environment, and the future of China

The Course Schedule is subject to change due to pedagogical needs, instructor discretion, parts of term, and unexpected events.

### Required/Recommended Readings

#### Textbooks

- Benjamin, Craig. *Foundations of Eastern Civilization*. The Great Courses, 2013. Video series.
- Kenley, David. *Modern Chinese History*. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 2020.
- Schoppa, R. Keith. *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History*. 4th ed. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2013.

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#### Supplemental Works

- Chang, Jung. *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.
- Cheng, Nien. *Life and Death in Shanghai*. New York: Grove Press, 1987.
- Dai, Sijie. *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*. New York: Anchor Books, 2002.
- He, Liyi. *Mr. China's Son: A Villager's Life*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993.
- Yu, Hua. *To Live*. Translated by Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

#### Additional Resources for the Instructor

##### Print

- Bickers, Robert. *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832–1914*. New York: Penguin, 2011.
- Chang, Jung. *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.
- Cheng, Nien. *Life and Death in Shanghai*. New York: Grove Press, 1987.
- Dai, Sijie. *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*. New York: Anchor Books, 2002.
- Dikötter, Frank. *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945–1957*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- He, Liyi. *Mr. China's Son: A Villager's Life*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993.
- Hershatter, Gail. *Women and China's Revolutions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.
- Kenley, David. *Modern Chinese History*. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 2020.
- MacFarquhar, Roderick, and Michael Schoenhals. *Mao's Last Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Mitter, Rana. *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937–1945*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.
- Mühlhahn, Klaus. *Making China Modern: From the Great Qing to Xi Jinping*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
- Platt, Stephen R. *Imperial Twilight: The Opium War and the End of China's Last Golden Age*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018.
- Rowe, William T. *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Schell, Orville, and John Delury. *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Random House, 2013.
- Schoppa, R. Keith. *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History*. 4th ed. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2013.
- Wasserstrom, Jeffrey N., and Maura Elizabeth Cunningham. *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Wasserstrom, Jeffrey N., ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern China*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Yang, Jisheng. *The World Turned Upside Down: A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*. Translated by Stacy Mosher and Guo Jian. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.
- Yu, Hua. *To Live*. Translated by Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

##### Video

- Henderson, Andrew R. *Understanding Imperial China: Dynasties, Life, and Culture*. The Great Courses, 2020. Video series.
- Mitter, Rana. *The China Century*. BBC Studios, 2017. Video.
- Ideas Roadshow. *Looking at China: Ideas Roadshow Compilation*. Ideas Roadshow, 2021. Video.

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