Modern Chinese History, China since the Reforms of Deng Xiaoping

Meeting time: Tuesday 1:00 to 3:45 p.m.
Location: WRB 3006
Office hours: Wednesday, 2:00-4:00 p.m. (MSS 201)

Note: Supplemental information regarding course requirements is posted on the course WebCampus site. Students should read the material on WebCampus as well as this syllabus in the first week of class and check the site at least once a week for new information and announcements that will be added during the semester.

Course Description and Core Objectives

With the death of Chairman Mao in 1976 and the subsequent end of the Cultural Revolution and twenty years of radical Maoist mass movement politics, China began to reconstruct virtually every part of economic, civil, and political life. Deng Xiaoping, a survivor of three purges by Chairman Mao, announced the end of “politics and ideology in command” with his now famous dictums, “enough empty talk, do something of substance” and “it doesn’t matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches the mouse.” Beginning in 1978, Deng Xiaoping launched the era of “reform and openness” (gaige kaifeng), which has transformed nearly every aspect of national and daily life in China, while transforming China’s relations with its regional neighbors and its place in the international economic, political, and environmental order. Deng’s reforms sought to reestablish normalcy by rebuilding virtually every major political and economic institution that sustained radical Maoism had dismantled. This course aims to grapple with the roiling transformations experienced in China over the course of the thirty-seven years, analyzing changes in almost every facet of daily life within China while examining China’s transformed relationship with the United States, Europe, Africa, and other East and Southeast Asian nations.

Key to the transformative power of the nearly four decades of economic reforms, (“reform and openness,” gaige kaifeng), is the totalistic engagement with the “foreign community.” Ground zero of the early reforms in the late 1970s was the SEZ (Special Economic Zone), literally a vacant lot with a fence around it, as far from the capital of Beijing as territorially possible, just across the border with Hong Kong. The SEZ shows the CCP’s (Chinese Communist Party) anxiety about various types of “pollution” from its early tentative engagement with global capitalism. However, as China’s capitalist tsunami built momentum, the SEZ disappeared, and now China is transforming global
history, not least of all by impressing a large environmental footprint on the world, and by extensive, long-term investments in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and the United States.

This course analyses China’s reentry into the capitalist global order, after thirty years of Cold War isolation, charting how China has been transformed by its myriad and diverse engagement with global culture and the international political-economy, while contemplating how China is now broadly impinging of global habitats, economies, political systems, and imaginations. Integral to this analysis is the behavior of China’s large urban consumer, which influences global taste and drives international economic trends.

This course satisfies Core Objective 11 of the Silver Core Curriculum:

**CO11. Global Contexts:** Students will apply and evaluate modes of academic inquiry, creative expression, or results of research to problems in historical and contemporary global contexts. Students will articulate connections among local, national, and international contexts and evaluate the ways that historical and contemporary global influences affect their current situations.

In addition, HIST 450a helps students to develop the skills described in Core Objective 1 (Effective Composition and Communication) and Core Objective 3 (Critical Analysis and Use of Information). These objectives are reinforced throughout the curriculum in other courses students take to fulfill core and major requirements. Through the assigned readings, essays, class discussions, presentations, and written assignments, students will practice critical thinking and communication skills that can be applied in other academic and professional contexts. In their research and written work, students will adhere to ethical principles that govern scholarly inquiry, including the accurate representation of evidence, proper citation of sources, and respectful interactions with colleagues.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Correlation to Core Objectives (COs)**

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:
1. identify key transformations in Chinese social, political, economic, and environmental life in the post-Mao era, studying how China has been transformed by its myriad and diverse engagement with the global culture and its political-economy, while contemplating how China is now broadly impinging on global habitats, economies, political systems, and imaginations, including the behavior of China’s large urban consumer, which influences global taste and drives international economic trends (CO11).
2. analyze and synthesize primary, secondary, and cultural sources (CO3).
3. find and use historical scholarship and sources to answer a research question (CO3).
4. present ideas in a clear and persuasive manner both orally and in writing, in accordance with the ethical principles governing scholarly inquiry (CO1, CO3).
5. analyze how post-Mao transformations have changed China’s relationship with the broader international community, in particular how China is transforming global history, not least of all by impressing a large environmental footprint on the world, and by extensive, long-term investments in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and the United States (CO11).

**Required texts:**


Articles, videos, and links posted to Webcampus.

The History Department is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. If you have a documented disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact me or the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

Academic Success Services: Your student fees cover usage of the Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or, www.unr.edu/writing_center/). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services.

The Department of History Writing Center is available to all students enrolled in history courses at UNR to provide help with assignments and to hone writing
skills. Unlike the ASUN Writing Center, our center is discipline specific. During one-on-one consultations students can work on specific issues related to historical writing such as organization, argument, style, evidence, analysis, and citations. Don't know how to get started on a specific assignment? The center can help with that too. The Center is open Monday-Thursday 1 p.m.-6 p.m. and by appointment. Contact Amy Ghilieri (aghilieri@mac.com) to set up an appointment.

Statement on Audio and Video Recording: “Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.”

Requirements and evaluation

COURSE GRADING: Attendance Mandatory
Reading Mandatory
Informed Participation: 30%
Weekly assignments: 30%
Quiz
WebCT essays
Bibliographic research
Thematic research
Leading Questions

Final Presentation: 10%
Final Paper: 30%

All course requirements must be completed. Failure to do so will result in a fail grade. Students are responsible for all material posted to WebCT.

Attendance: Mandatory.

Zero tolerance for missed class.

Exceptions: Military service.
Illness (documented by UNR physician).
Structured activity (such as athletics and other activities).

Please note: Doing favors for friends or family, such as picking people up at the airport, for example, are not legitimate exceptions. Inform your family and peer group that you cannot miss class.

Penalties.
Missing one unexcused class: Final grade lowered 5% or ½ a grade.
Missing two unexcused classes: Final grade lowered one entire grade.
Missing three unexcused classes: ‘Fail’ for the class.
On the other hand, by certain prescribed heroic actions, students will have extra credit opportunities to raise their grades.

**BYE Policy:**
Allows you to come to class when not prepared or not in the mood, and not be penalized for not participating, because you are in the classroom, absorbing what is going on.

During the course, each member will be allowed **two ‘byes’ for discussion**, meaning that they will not be required to participate by speaking.
Twice, participants can take a pass on speaking up, for whatever reason.

**During the ‘bye’ day, participants still must come to class.**
(Please inform instructor in writing if you are selecting a ‘bye’ week).

**Observe protocol:** Be punctual. Class begins at 1:00 pm sharp. Late arrivals are disruptive. If you ever must leave early or arrive late, please notify the instructor in advance.

**Cell phones must never be used inside the classroom.** This means no text messaging, retrieving messages, anything. **Before class or during class break: Cell phones can only be used outside of the classroom.**
In emergencies, please notify the instructor.

**Reasons for this:**
The early 21st-century classroom and the cell phone cannot co-exist, and bears on the Future of Civilization and the Human Mind.

**Informed Participation (30%):**
Attendance is mandatory. This seminar is driven by informed participation. By this I mean coming to class having organized your thoughts in such a way that permits the productive exchange of ideas in class with your peers. While seminar members are required to participate energetically, this does not mean dominating discussion. Endeavor to be skillful listeners, comprehending what your classmates articulate. Perceptive listening—and response—is as important as giving voice to one’s own ideas.

**Interactive mentoring** can be extremely productive. Throughout the semester, members will be responsible for providing constructive feedback on each other’s ideas. Members will also carefully read and constructively critique work presented during the course of the semester.

**Reading:** Reading must be completed prior to the beginning of each week's session. This means not simply coming to class having done the reading, but having thought about what was read, and then organizing your thoughts in such a way that permits the exchange ideas in class. The close, critical reading of texts means
understanding what the author is expressing and entails basic work such as looking up unknown words.

Be sure to leave enough time to read with care. **Do not rush.** The close reading of texts must also entail basic acts such as looking up unknown words, in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), available on-line through the University’s webpage.

**Leading discussion and Presentations:** Seminar members will be responsible for leading class discussion. The aim of discussion leaders is to facilitate and enhance discussion, not dominate. Leaders will have five minutes to open discussion, but then it is open to the seminar.

**Weekly assignments (30%):**
Different weeks, assignments will differ.

**Each week, the class will focus on a particular theme emerging from the reading.**

**Two ‘byes’ allowed for weekly assignment. Must inform instructor on WebCT email**

**WebCT essays**
Two-hundred-fifty-word essay on that week’s reading, to be posted on WebCT. Please note: These are to be polished essays, and not journal entries, although keeping a reading journal is a good strategy for keeping track of our ideas for an essay.

**Bibliographic research**
Locate and study a relevant piece of scholarship related to the themes under discussion. This can be a scholarly article, book, dissertation, or similar item. The title will then be posted to WebCT, along with an explanation of the work’s pertinence to the themes under analysis that week.

**Leading questions**
Generate an astute, insightful, penetrating, or perceptive question based on that week’s reading. The question will be posted to WebCT.

**All work must be submitted to WebCT by noon, the Tuesday of class.**

**Weekly Quiz, to be announced in advance.**

**Final paper (30%):**
During the semester, seminar members will begin formulating topics for analysis and research. More will be said on this in class.

**Final presentation of research projects. 10% TBA.**
Hint: Keep track of your ideas as they occur to you. If you have an idea while reading, write it down immediately. Ideas/perceptions that are vividly experienced in a moment of insight can be easily forgotten.

Plagiarism or dishonest work of any form (e.g., cheating) is an automatic “F” for the course.

Grading scale

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Reading schedule:

Base Line Transformations
Weeks one and two:


Transformation of Lived and Legal Environment, New Development Paradigm
Weeks three, four, five:


Transformations in Private Live
Weeks six, seven, eight:

Transformations of China’s Role in Global Economy, Role of State and Industry
Weeks nine, ten:


Transformations of China’s Role in Global Economy, Role of Consumer
Weeks eleven, twelve:


Transformations of Global Environment by China
Weeks thirteen, fourteen, fifteen:


Articles, documents, and videos posted to Webcampus.