Learning Objective

- To become familiar with the key themes and debates in modern Chinese thought
- To be able to analyze key issues and develop arguments
- To communicate complex ideas
- To synthesize, contextualize, and evaluate gained knowledge

Content

In order to understand past events, it is also important to understand why certain actors did what they did to influence the course of events. In other words, how did they understand the world around them? Using an intellectual history framework, this course looks at the main themes and debates of twentieth-century China through some of its main thinkers, thereby paying attention to the specific contexts in which intellectuals put forward and discussed ideas. The various themes and debates we will study address the nature of Chinese modernity and its economic, political, and cultural tenets—which cannot be neatly divided into socialism, liberalism, or conservatism—as well as how this modernity relates to the Chinese past. The readings will include translated selections of writings of major Chinese intellectuals, which will allow us to evaluate the various interpretations put forward in secondary sources.

Starting in the late nineteenth century, when exchange programs and contact with foreigners in China led intellectuals to question their existing worldviews, this course moves chronologically and thematically across the twentieth century. We start in the late 1800s, where we look into some important thinkers who were influenced by Western notions of progress, but who merged this with interpretations of Confucianism and Buddhism. Here, we discuss the famous reformers Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao (1873-1929), but we will also look into the system of thought of the lesser-known revolutionary figure of Zhang Taiyan (1868-1936). From there, we move on to intellectuals of the Republican era, with a focus on the main intellectuals and features of the May Fourth Movement, but we will also pay attention to those who questioned the tenets of a liberal modernity based on scientism, such as Liang Shuming (1893-1988). For the post-1949 period, given the specifics of this historical period, our main focus is on Maoism and on the reworking of Marxism in a Chinese context. In a final section, we relate the intellectual developments in modern China to contemporary outgrowths. We will briefly discuss liberal thinkers of the so-called “second Enlightenment” period, the 1980s, after which the course will conclude with the rise of New Confucianism and debates between the so-called New Left and liberal intellectuals during the 1990s. In our final session, we will ponder the question of the nature and future of modern and contemporary Chinese thought.
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<th>Weeks</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>General introduction to the course theme</td>
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<td>Chapter</td>
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| 5       | The Late Nineteenth Century (III)  
| 6       | The Republican Period (I)  
| 7       | The Republican Period (II)  
Furth, Charlotte, ed. *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, ed. C. Furth. Cambridge, |
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<th>Page</th>
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| 8 | The Republican Period (III) | Chou, M. *Hu Shih and Intellectual Choice in Modern China*. Ann Arbor, Univ. of Michigan Press, 1984. [chapter]  
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<th>Chapter</th>
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Metzger, Thomas. *A Cloud across the Pacific:*  
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Learning Outcome

As a result of this course, students will:

- Be able to identify the key themes and debates in modern Chinese thought
- Be able to analyze these issues and develop arguments
- Be able to communicate complex ideas (both in the form of individual presentations and group discussions)
- Be able to synthesize, contextualize, and evaluate gained knowledge (both in the form of response briefs and the development of a research project)

Student Assessment: 100% Continuous Assessment

Weightage of CA components:

30 % Research paper
20 % Individual Presentations
20 % Response Briefs
10 % Leading Group Discussion
10 % Two Quizzes
10 % Class Participation and Discussion

30 % Research paper
The research paper (5000 words) must demonstrate synthesis and evaluation of a thinker, idea, school, or debate in modern China.

20 % Individual Presentations (3 in total; 30 mins. each)
Students will present a relevant work in modern Chinese intellectual history to the class through a focus on (1) the main ideas and arguments and (2) contextualizing these ideas and arguments and placing them in the context of the course.

20 % Response Briefs to selected quotes from readings (3 in total)
Students will reflect on readings in the form of response briefs (500 words) to selected quotes.

10 % Group Discussion Leading and Reporting
Students will discuss main ideas in groups; the leader will guide the discussion in the groups, report to the class, and defend the group’s perspective in consequent class debate.

10 % Two quizzes
Throughout the course, two short quizzes will be held to test understanding of and critical engagement with course content.

10 % Class attendance and discussion
Class attendance and participation in discussion will be worth 10 % of the final mark.