Utopia and Utopianism in Modern China: Fictions, Ideas, Spaces

Course Descriptions

Utopia, broadly defined as an imaginary spatial construct that possesses nearly perfect quality, was first introduced into China at the end of the nineteenth century. It found various manifestations in fictions, political ideas, social institutions, cultural movements, and above all, revolutionary campaigns throughout China’s twentieth century. This course will inquire into the polemics and poetics of utopian imaginations in various literary and intellectual discourse from the late Qing to the millennium turn. We will explore critical questions such as: what is the relationship between utopian construct and political reality? How various genres (fiction, thought, social sciences, and spatial designs) have framed the debate on utopia in the Chinese context? How “revolution and “enlightenment” – the two intertwining themes of modern China – have profoundly shaped the affective, aesthetic, and political dimensions of utopia imaginary in Chinese modernity? Lastly, how does the rise of dystopian vision of history following the fall of the Cultural Revolution bring challenges to the theory and practice of utopian thinking?

Part I The birth of modern Chinese utopianism

Week 1 Late Qing provocations
Kang Youwei, The Book of Great Unity 大同書, excerpts
Liang Qichao, The Future of New China 新中國未來記
K.C. Hsiao, A Modern China and a New World: K'Ang Yu-Wei, Reformer and Utopian (Washington, 1975), select chapters
David Wang, Fin-de-Siecle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction (Stanford, 1997), chapter 5

Recommended:
Wang Hui, The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought 現代中國思想的興起, chapter 7
Hao Chang, Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China (Harvard, 1971), Intro and chapter 1.
張翔, 《大同立教的雙重困局與不同應對——康有為政教觀初論》

Week 2 Anarchist utopia
劉師培：《無政府主義之平等觀》《論種族革命與無政府革命之得失》（《天義報》）
The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory (Columbia, 2013), Lydia Liu, Rebecca Karl, and Dorothy Ko ed., select chapters
Arif Dirlik, Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution (Berkeley, 1991), Intro and chapter 3.

Week 3 An utopian or dystopian enlightenment?
Ye Shengtao, Ni Huanzhi 倪煥之, excerpts
Lu Xun, “Preface to Call to Arms”
Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” “Is the Human Race Continually Improving?”
T. A. Hsia, “Aspects of the Power of Darkness in Lu Hsun”
Recommended:
Lao She, *The City of Cat* 貓城記

**Week 4 A messianic revolution**
Qu Qiubai, *History of the Heart in the Red Capital* 赤都心史
Mao Zedong, “Reports on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan” 湖南農民運動考察報告
Paul Picowicz, *Marxist Literary Thought in China: The Influence of Ch' u Ch'i-u-p'ai* (California, 1981), select chapters
Maurice Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism* (Wisconsin, 1982), select chapters

**Week 5 The conservative utopia**
Dai Jitao, *The Chinese Revolution and the Nationalist Party* 國民革命與中國國民黨, excerpts
Chiang Kai-shek, *The Fate of China* 中國之命運, excerpts
Zhu Guangqian, *On Self-Cultivation* 論修養, excerpts
Maggie Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism: Fascism and Culture in China* (Duke, 2017), Intro and chapter 2
Brain Tsui, *China’s Conservative Revolution* (Columbia, 2018), chapter 5

Recommended:

**Week 6 The third way and the rural utopia**
Liang Shuming, *A Theory of Rural Reconstruction* 鄉村建設理論, excerpts
Yan Yangchu, *Civic Education and the Rural Reconstruction Movement* 平民教育與鄉村建設運動, excerpts

Recommended:

**Part II Revolutionary Utopia**

**Week 7 Youth and the birth of New China**
Wang Meng, *Long Live the Youth* 青春萬歲
Hu Feng, “Time Has Begun” 時間開始了
Mingwei Song, *Young China: National Rejuvenation and Bildungsroman* (Harvard, 2016), select chapters
Week 8 Socialist cosmopolitanism
Nicolai Volland, *Socialist Cosmopolitanism: The Chinese Literary Universe* (Columbia, 2017), select chapters

Recommended:
Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome* (Harvard, 2011), Introduction
Wang Meng, *Mourning for the Soviet Union* 蘇聯祭

Week 9 Maoist utopia and its discontents
Yang Xiguang, “Where is China going?” 中国向何處去
Yu Luoke, “On Lineage” 出身論
Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins* (Harvard, 2014), chapter 1 and chapter 5

Recommended:

Part III Contemporary Utopia

Week 9 Utopian space
Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (Chicago, 2005), Introduction and chapter 3

Recommended:
Chang-tai Hung, *Mao’s New World* (Cornell, 2011), chapter 1 and 2
Chen Kaige, dir. *Big Parade*, 1987

Week 10 Counterfactual world
Chan Koongchung, *The Second Year of Jianfeng: A Utopian History of New China* 建豐二年: 新中國烏有史
Catherine Gallagher, *Telling It Like Wasn't: The Counterfactual Imagination in History and Fiction* (Chicago, 2018), Introduction
Catherine Yeh, *The Chinese Political Novel: Migration of a World Genre* (Harvard, 2015), select chapters

Week 11 Science fiction
Cixin Liu, *The Three-Body Problem*, excerpts

Week 12 “All under heaven”
Zhao Tingyang, *The Tianxia System: An Introduction to the Philosophy of a World Institution* 天下體系：世界制度哲學導論
Liu Xiaofeng, *Essays on the Making of Republic in China* 百年共和之義

Recommended: