

Spring 2023, History 295-01: China from the Margins

Tuesday: 10:00-11:50 AM and Thursday 10-10:50 AM

HSSC S3321

Instructor: Jomo Smith, smithjomo@grinnell.edu

Office: HSSC N3148

Office Hours: Schedule a time with me or just drop by. I'm usually in my office, even after 5pm. *referring to previous emails. I will do my best to respond to your inquires within 24 hours. Naturally, you can always grab me after class or visit me during office hours*

China on the Margins. What do we mean by marginality? Certainly, the margins can include those who are different in terms of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, and political ideology. Throughout recent Chinese history, we can find ample examples of all of the above. Marginality also comes from not taking part in what some scholars call the "cultural master narrative." In our case, those living on the margins are not seen as central or essential to the grand narrative of history in China and thus can be easily ignored. Their stories, we have often thought, do not matter, and perhaps their futures matter even less. In recent decades, Western scholars of Chinese history have been showing how those on China's periphery, or margins, have been key to how dynasties (and the current nation-state) understand themselves. In other words, we now seek to make the periphery the center and bring the margins into the core. If the tail end of last dynasty is any guide, what happens in China's less populated western regions can threaten

How to Read

- x Survey: Reading to survey main ideas; OK to skip entire portions of text
- x Understand: Reading to understand the meaning of each sentence
- x Engage: Reading while also working out problems, drawing inferences, questioning, and evaluating

While reading to “engage” with the text is the slowest form of reading, it is also the manner that will provide you with the deepest level of understanding and expand your mind.

Learning Objectives

1. Develop the ability to read and write by analyzing sources and supporting one’s arguments through evidence
2. Increase awareness, knowledge and sensitivity toward non-western cultures and societies
3. Demonstrate that the “past” is not static, but it is continuously being reconstructed according to present and often competing interests

Assessments and Grading: Your grade for this course consists of the following categories

Attendance and Participation: 5%

Music and art as cultural expression: 5%

Map Quiz (Week 4): 5%

Weekly Reaction Papers (1 pg.): 25%

Film Review: 10%

Uyghur music and poetry (Week 8): 10%

Tibet policy brief (Week 10): 15%

Research Paper: 25%

You are being graded on a standard spread, where an A is 94-100%.

Music/Cultural Expression: The purpose of this assignment is to further expose you to aspects of Chinese cultural production. While the course will be addressing very complicated and thorny topics, this first assignment dovetails with the scholarly articles that examine China from a wider lens. Music, art, and other forms of cultural production also allow us to take a 30,000 foot view of society and consider what the various forms of art tell us about values, interests, and preoccupations.

You are tasked with finding a piece of music, film, visual art, etc. where the Chinese creator expresses broad views about China or what it means to be Chinese. The assignment is designed for you to engage in intercultural communication with Chinese friends on campus if you are not

familiar with where to look. We will look at an example in class. Your presentation will be oral and with visuals as necessary. No written portion is required.

Map Quiz: The map quiz is designed to familiarize you with relevant regions in western China and a few select cities in China's heartland. The professor will provide a list of places before the quiz. Date: Week 4

Reaction Papers: This weekly assignment is designed to provide you with a space where you can cogitate on the readings for the week. In no more than one single-

find other examples of Uyghur contemporary music, poetry, and other forms of expression that speak to issues of identity and history.

Tibet Policy Brief: Policy briefs are quite common in government and foreign affairs circles. To put your growing knowledge of thorny historical issues to use, you will write a policy brief

Selection from Thum, Rian. "The sacred routes of Uyghur history." In *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*. Harvard University Press, 2014.

Kardos, Amy. "A Rock and a Hard Place: Chinese soldiers in Xinjiang caught between center and periphery after 1949" in

Week 9

Tuesday April 4 and Thurs April 6: Tibet beyond Lhasa

My Tibetan Childhood (second half)

Films: *Summer Pasture* (a documentary), dir. Lynn True and Nelson Walker III (2011)

The Horse Thief, 1986 (dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang) <https://youtu.be/LZSjjOQUtHY>

Week 10

Tues April 11 and Thurs April 13: *Persecuted and Marginalized Han Chinese*

Films: *The Blue Kite*, dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang (1993)

Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl, dir. Joan Chen (1998)

