**History 1976N: Social Justice and Popular Protest in China, Past and Present**

CRN 25662 Cynthia Brokaw ([Cynthia\_Brokaw@brown.edu](mailto:Cynthia_Brokaw@brown.edu))

Smith-Buonanno 101 202 Peter Green House, x 3-6209

W 3:00-5:20 Office hours: Thursdays 1:30-3:00

This seminar examines changing concepts of cosmic balance, social justice, and citizenship in late imperial, modern, and contemporary China and the impact that they had (and are still having) on movements of resistance, protest, and rebellion against the state. The focus of the course is contemporary protests and the implications of these protests for the evolution of Chinese state and society; but, in order to understand the nature and significance of contemporary protests, we will devote some time to discussion of the tradition of protest in China.

The course is divided into three parts:

1) A brief exploration of early concepts of cosmic order and social justice. Here we will explore ancient ideas about the relationship between the cosmos and human society and the roles that the ruler and the individual are expected to play in maintaining cosmic harmony and social justice.

2) A study of a series of protest movements and uprisings that challenged the rule of the state in the late imperial period (specifically, the late Ming through the late Qing, the late sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries). We will pay particular attention to the ways in which the concepts mentioned in #1 above shaped these movements and uprisings.

3) An investigation of a wide range of modern and contemporary (that is, twentieth and twenty-first century) protest movements—against political repression, environmental degradation, government corruption (particularly as it affects property), religious restriction, labor exploitation, and so forth—and their social and political significance for the future development of China. To what extent have old concepts of cosmic balance and social justice been replaced by new ideas about citizenship, social contract, and legal rights? To what extent do Chinese protestors draw on traditional methods of protest and resistance? How have the new media—the Internet and Weibo in particular—changed the nature of protest? What impact have contemporary movements had on state-society relations and the concept of governance in the People’s Republic of China? These are some of the questions that we will be discussing in the course.

**Required Reading**

The following works are available for purchase at the Brown Bookstore. These and all other readings for the course are available on reserve at the Rockefeller Library, via OCRA, or online.

Paul Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth,* 1997.

Craig Calhoun, *Neither Gods nor Emperors: Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China,* 1997.

Ian Johnson, *Wild Grass: Three Portraits of Change in Modern China,* 2004.

David Ownby, *Falun Gong and the Future of China,* 2010.

Andrew Mertha, *China’s Water Warriors: Citizen Action and Policy Change*, 2008.

Kevin O’Brien and Li Lianjiang, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China,* 2006.

**Course Requirements**

1. Attendance and participation in class discussions. As this class is a seminar, regular and active participation, based on thoughtful and timely completion of all the reading assignments, is important (40%).

Part of your participation grade will be fulfilled in a group presentation. For each of five sessions (marked with an \*), a group of students will make a roughly 20-30 minute presentation relevant to the subject of that session. The group may present other cases of protest or resistance for the purposes of comparison; or present extra information that illuminates the particular case under discussion. For example, the reading for “The Environment and Social Protest” focuses on several cases of protest against water management (or mismanagement). The group for that session could investigate a different case of environmental protest—perhaps against air or soil pollution—that would form the basis of a comparison with the assigned reading. Or it might present information about efforts by the Chinese government to meet the demands of environmental protestors. In either case the purpose is to stimulate class discussion. The group would be asked to assign, in consultation with me, a brief reading to the class a week before the presentation.

Reports in class on your final projects are also included in the participation grade.

1. One short paper (3-4 pages), due in session 4 (2/12) (20%).
2. Final research paper of 15-20 pages (40%).

This assignment contains three parts:

a) a 1-page statement of your paper topic, with a bibliography of at least ten sources, due in session 6 (2/26);

b) a 3-5 page précis of your paper, due in session 10 (4/02); and

c) the final paper, due Monday, May 12.

Absences are excused and extensions are granted only in the event of personal or family emergencies and with a note from a doctor or dean. Students with a scheduled college event that conflicts with class time must notify the professor of this conflict at the time that the schedule becomes known, and the professor will determine an appropriate make-up assignment. Computers may be used in class only for the purpose of taking notes or contributing in some form to the class discussion.

Plagiarism or other offences against the Academic Code will result in a failing grade and possible disciplinary action by the University. The University’s Academic Code states, “A student’s name on any exercise (e.g., a theme, report, notebook, performance, computer program, course paper, quiz, or examination) is regarded as assurance that that exercise is the result of the student’s own thoughts and study, stated in his or her own words, and produced without assistance, except as quotation marks, references, and footnotes acknowledge the use of printed sources or other outside help.” Should you have any questions about the interpretation of the Academic Code, please see Professor Brokaw.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**1/22 1) Introduction: Cosmic Justice and the Ruler**

Brief readings distributed in class:

Excerpts from the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書): “The Canon of Yao” and “The

Numerous Regions.”

“The Theory of Portents” from the writings of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (fl. 2nd c. BC,

Han dynasty).

From the *Mencius* 孟子 (ca. 3rd c. BC)

From Huang Liuhong 黃六鴻, *A Complete Book Concerning Happiness and Benevolence*

(*Fuhui quanshu* 福惠全書), published in 1699*.*

**Challenging the Mandate of Heaven in Late Imperial China**

**1/29 2) Protest against State Policies**

Tsing Yuan, “Urban Riots and Disturbances,” in Jonathan Spence, *From Ming*

*to Ch’ing: Conquest, Region, and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century China* (DS753.F74 1979)*,* pp. 277-320. [On reserve at the Rock.]

Ho-fung Hung, “Resistance and Petitions, 1820-1839” in *Protest with Chinese*

*Characteristics: Demonstrations, Riots, and Petitions in the Mid-Qing Dynasty*, pp. 135-167. [OCRA]

Elizabeth J. Perry, Protective Rebellion: Tax Protest in Late Qing China” in

*Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China* (DS761.2 .P47 2002), pp. 47-75. [On reserve at the Rock.]

**2/05 3) Millenarian Rebellion: The Taiping Rebellion**

Jonathan Spence, *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*

(DS758.23.H85 1996), pp. 3-95. [On reserve at the Rock.]

“The Taiping Heavenly Chronicle” and “The Land System of the Heavenly

Dynasty” in Franz Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents,* vol. 2 (DS759 .M57 v. 2), pp. 51-76 and 309-320. [On reserve at the Rock.]

**2/12 4) The Boxer Uprising**

Paul Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth,*

pp. 3-208.

**Short paper due in class.**

**Protest and Rebellion in Modern and Contemporary China**

**2/19 5) From Subjects to Citizens**

Keith Schoppa, “Constructing a New Cultural Identity: The May Fourth

Movement,” in *Revolution and Its Past* (DS755 .S294 2002), pp. 162-180. [On

reserve at the Rock.]

Sun Yat-sen, “The Three People’s Principles” [OCRA]

Rebecca Nedostup and Liang Hong-ming, “’Begging the Sages of the Party-

State’: Citizenship and Government in Transition in Nationalist China, 1927 – 1937,” *International Review of Social History* 46 (2001), Supplement, pp. 185-207. [Available online through Josiah.]

One other reading TBA.

**2/26 6) The Proletariat and the Chinese Communist Party: Labor Strikes and Protests\***

Elizabeth J. Perry, “Skilled Workers and the Chinese Revolution: Strikes Among

Shanghai Silk Weavers, 1927-1937” and “Contradictions under Socialism: Shanghai’s Strike Wave of 1957,” in *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China* (DS761.2 .P47 2002), pp. 134-169 and 206-237. [On reserve at the Rock.]

Ching Kwan Lee, “The Unmaking of Mao’s Working Class in the Rustbelt” and

“The Making of New Labor in the Sunbelt,” in *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China’s Rustbelt and Sunbelt*, pp. 69-122 and 157-203. [Available online through Josiah.]

One other reading TBA.

**Statement of Final Paper Topic, with Bibliography, due.**

**3/05 7) The Democracy Movement: Tiananmen, 1989\***

Craig Calhoun, *Neither Gods Nor Emperors*: *Students and the Struggle for*

*Democracy in China*, entire.

Elizabeth J. Perry, “Casting a Chinese ‘Democracy’ Movement: Legacies of Social

Fragmentation” in *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China* (DS761.2 .P47 2002), pp. 309-331. [On reserve at the Rock.]

**3/12 8) Religion and Resistance\***

David Ownby, *Falun Gong and the Future of China,* pp. 23-124 and 161-235.

Ian Johnson, “Turning the Wheel,” in *Wild Grass,* pp. 183-292.

**3/19 9) The Law and Property Disputes\***

Johnson, “The Peasant Champion” and “Dream of a Vanished Capital” in *Wild*

*Grass,* pp. 5-182.

**Spring Break**

**4/02 10) The Environment and Social Protest \***

Andrew Mertha, *China’s Water Warriors: Citizen Action and Policy Change*,

entire.

**Précis of Final Paper due (to be posted on the Canvas site).**

**4/09** **11) Reports on Final Papers**

**4/16 12) Reports on Final Papers**

**4/23 13) Conclusion**

Kevin O’Brien, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China,* entire.

Elizabeth J. Perry, “Permanent Rebellion? Continuities and Discontinuities in

Chinese Protest,” in Kevin O’Brien, ed., *Popular Protest in China,* pp. 205-215. [Available online through Josiah.]

**Final paper due on Monday, May 12, 2014.**