This class explores the social history of the communist movement in Asia from the emergence of the first communist groups in the 1910s to the much heralded collapse of state socialism in Europe and the USSR in 1989. State socialism survived, most notably, in East Asia. How did people understand communism a century ago? What is the popular memory of communism and how does it shape our today’s understandings of it? What was the role of intellectual networks in the communist movement? How did ideas of communism change in processes of travel and translation across cultures? What tensions developed between communist internationalism and national liberation movements? We will address these questions through seminar discussion, as well as through oral and written assignments. Readings include both primary and secondary sources, especially memoir, fiction, and revolutionary arts.

Learning Goals
The goal of this course is to provide intensive small-group study and discussion environment. This course seeks to help students develop skills in reading history, researching history, and writing history. We will do this by reading, researching, and writing about communists in East Asia and about their world. The course will introduce students to the main themes in the world of East Asian communists, as well as to the main historiographical and source interpretation problems.

Course Requirements
Students in this course will have a series of reading, writing, and group assignments to help them achieve these goals. There will be no lectures; this is a seminar. This syllabus lays out the course plan and the course readings. The details of the assignments will be provided in additional handouts. Readings will average about 200-300 pages a week. Many readings will be provided by the instructor, some are on reserve in the Library. Writing assignments will include primary source (memoir) interpretation (5 pages), scholarly book review (5 pages), and final research paper (approximately 20 pp.). Group and class work will include one group assignment (film discussion) and individual assigned discussion leadership. Attendance is expected; unexcused absences will lower a student’s grade. Active participation is necessary for this course to achieve its goals.

Assessment
Source Interpretation (memoir or fiction) 15%
Scholarly book review 15%
Film assignment, discussion leading & participation 30%
Final paper 40%

Assignments

*Additional points, up to 10%, will be awarded for working with second language sources.

1. Memoir or fiction analysis (15%):

A five-page paper (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point) analyzing a memoir of an individual living or born in (or born into a family from) East Asia whose life was effected in any way by communism. You can also choose to write a fictional memoir written by them or about them. There will be additional hand-out for this assignment. You can use memoirs or novels from our reading list, but only before we discuss them in class! That means that this paper is due at the class when the readings you are analyzing is assigned. You have to use two secondary sources (scholarly books or articles) to contextualize the memoir or novel you analyze.

2. Scholarly book review (15%)

A five-page paper (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point), that is a review of a scholarly work related to the history of communism in East Asia. A hand-out for this assignment will be provided. You can either choose a source from our reading list (you will have to read the whole book if only selections were assigned for the class) or you can find another book. You will have to read more than just this book -- both by the same author and other scholars -- in order to write this assignment. In the same way as the memoir & fiction analysis, this paper is due at the class when the readings you are analyzing is assigned.

Final research paper (40%).

An approximately ten to fifteen page paper (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point) should explore a theme in the history of the communism in East Asia and to address one of the questions that we discuss in this class. You can find these questions in the course description and in the topics of the weekly discussions. You are welcome, if you like, to write a paper that will contain a more extensive and in-depth analysis of the primary source you wrote about in your first paper, or on the topic you wrote your second paper on. If the primary source you analyzed and the scholarly book you wrote the second paper about are thematically connected, you are welcome to write your final paper on the same theme.

Individual or group presentations and film assignment ( & participation, 30%):

There will be additional hand-outs provided for these two assignments. For the film assignment, you will need to think of the film as of a historical source for answering the questions we pose in
our course in regard to the specific historical context portrayed in the film.

Note regarding your class readings presentations: your presentation cannot be from the same source that you wrote about in either of your first or second paper.

Required texts:

Richard King, Heroes of China Great Leap Forward (University of Hawaii Press, 2010)
Chen Guanzhong, Fat Years, Nan A. Talese, 2012

or


Class Schedule

Week 1: Perspectives

1. Introduction

   Reading in class: Communist Manifesto (selections)

2 History and memory: history as event, experience, and myth.

   Cheek, A Critical Introduction to Mao, Introduction

   Film: Doctor Strangelove (selections)

Week 2: The early transnational networks of intellectuals and its legacies


   Readings: Jose Rizal The reign of creed (El Filibusterismo)(1891), ch. 7, 18, 21, 22
   B. Anderson Under Three Flags ch 2, pp. 27-53

2. Anarchism in East Asia
Readings: Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese political culture* (selections)

Dong youn Hwang, “Korean anarchism before 1945: a regional and transnational approach,” Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940 ...in ed. by Steven Hirsch, Lucien van der Walt

**Week 3: Becoming a communist and living the revolution**

1. **Old elites between modern schools and modern jails. Methodology: reading memoirs.**

   Reading: Yu Dafu “Modern school”

   Tan Malaka *From Jail to Jail* (selections)

   Peter Zinoman. “Reading Revolutionary prison memoirs,” in *Remaking the past in post-socialist Vietnam*.


   **Film: The Battle of Algiers (1966)**

2. **The 1930s: Living and aspiring communism**

   Readings: Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: ordinary life in extraordinary times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (two chapters of your choice)


   Visual material in class: Revolutionary arts

**Week 4: Revolution and nations in Asia**

1. **Marxism, Leninism, and anti-colonialism**

   Readings: J. Esherick, “Making revolution in 20th century China” in *Critical introduction to Mao*

   Lenin “Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions to the Second congress of the Communist International”

2. **Liberating the oppressed**

   Readings: Goscha, *Vietnamese revolutionary networks in Thailand*(ch.2)

   Sun Yat-Sen: “Pan-Asianism,” 1924
Week 5: The Comintern

1. **Comintern globalization**


   A letter of the Comintern to the Taiwanese communists

2. **“Local conditions”**


   Tony Saich, the Chinese communist Party during the era of the Comintern. (1919-1943)

Week 6: **“The masses”**

1. **Students and peasants**

   *Readings:* Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom *Student Protests in Twentieth-century China: The View from Shanghai*, ch. May 4th


2. **Workers**


Week 7: **East Asian communists in the world**

1. **Japanese communists in the United States**


   [http://ia600301.us.archive.org/23/items/labormovementinj00kataiala/labormovementinj00kataiala.pdf](http://ia600301.us.archive.org/23/items/labormovementinj00kataiala/labormovementinj00kataiala.pdf)


2. **Chinese communists in Asia and Americas**

   *Readings:* Benton, Overseas communists and internationalism (two chapters) Routledge, 2007

Week 8: **Women’s revolution in China, Taiwan, Malaya in their own words and in film**

1. **Women making revolution**

History in Three Keys, chapter 9

Agnes Khoo, Life as the river flows: Women in the Malayan anti-colonial struggle (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development [SIRD], 2004 (selections))

A letter by Xie Xuehong to the Comintern

2. Film assignment

Assignment Due: Group discussion of a variant socialist film (i.e., from China, India, North Korea, Vietnam, etc.). Compare experiences of state socialism or find a movie that speaks to the themes discussed in the course.

Some suggested films:

White Haired Girl (China, 1950)
Troubled Laughter (China, 1979)
Women Basketball Team Member No.5 (China, 1957)

*Additional points will be granted for reporting about second language movies

Week 9: Fighting for communism

1. Vietnam and Korea

Readings: Kim, Dong-Choon, The Unending Korean War: A Social History, U Hawaii P, 2009 (selections)


or


Film: Selections from “Unsung heroes” (North Korea) (online)

2. China

Readings: Richard King Heroes of China Great Leap Forward (2010)

Week 10: Living socialism and thinking of the future

1. Intellectuals in socialism


2. Imagining the future

Readings: Chen Guanzhong Fat years

Visual Arts in class: Political art of Chinese “avant-guard”, socialist realism

Assignment Details: Most of the assignments in this course have explanatory handouts to help students get the most out of each exercise. These will be distributed in class well before each assignment. However, students should be sure they understand in some detail what is expected of them by consulting these notes, their classmates, and the instructor well before assignment due dates. It is reasonable for students to ask themselves on a regular basis, “Am I making progress toward the course goals and my own study goals? If not, why not? What needs to change?” It is the instructor’s job to help you answer these questions for yourself and to find solutions for problems in the course.