

# Humanities Seminar Program

## Modern China and Its Literary Reflections

### Spring 2018

**Instructor:** Dian Li, East Asian Studies, [dianl@email.arizona.edu](mailto:dianl@email.arizona.edu).

**Place and Time:** The Rubel Room, Tuesday mornings from 10am-12pm: 1/30, 2/06, 13, 20, 27, 2018.

#### **Course Description:**

Modern China begins with China's reconsidered relationships with both its past and the west. It is a discourse of change that has shaken up its cultural foundations and transformed the country in depth and in speed unrivalled in recent world history. In this connection, "modern" is more than a chronological marker but a new conceptualization of the self and the world. To understand modern China then is to understand the rationalization and the execution of this change and its resistance. We will focus our attention on significant moments of rupture in 20<sup>th</sup> century history and explore their political and social implications, particularly the context of revolution and utopia, and then examine their literary reflections centered on the construction of modernity and the narrative of its discontent.

**Text:** All readings will be made available at a secure UA website, except for the novel *Waiting* by Ha Jin (Vintage Books, 1999; paperback, ISBN-10: 0375706410) that you may purchase at the UA bookstore or other places.

#### **Schedule:**

##### Week 1, 1/30:

Lecture theme: How does the "Modern" Begin for China?

Keywords: tradition, cyclical history, scholar-intellectual, other

Reading: "New Year's Sacrifice," a short story by Lu Xun

##### Week 2, 2/6:

Lecture theme: The Re-Orientation of the Self

Keywords: desire, repression, marriage, unconsciousness

Reading: "One Evening in the Rainy Season," a short story by Shi Zecun

##### Week 3, 2/13:

Lecture theme: The Utopia of the Collective

Keywords: rurality, hunger, cooperatives, family,

Reading: "Dogshit Food," a short story by Liu Heng

##### Week 4, 2/20:

Lecture theme: The Regulated Life Under Mao

Keywords: love, subjectivity, law, absurdity

Reading: *Waiting*, a novel by Ha Jin

##### Week 5, 2/27:

Lecture theme: The Cost of Economic Progressivism

Keywords: Chinese Dream, happiness index, corruption, redemption

Reading: *A World Without Thieves*, a film by Feng Xiaogang