

HIS493: Global Communism



He Kongde: The struggle of all the people in the world against American imperialism will be victorious! (1965).

Course Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 17:00-19:00 (5pm-7pm)

Instructor: Steven McClellan

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Office Hour: Mondays, 3-4pm and Thursday 3-4pm

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Course description:

In 1985 38 percent of the world's population (1.67 billion out of 4.4 billion people) lived in a communist state. Of 162 countries, 24 were communist and 35 were liberal democracies. After the Second World War, Communism offered an alternative modernity to capitalism but is often viewed as having capitulated to pressures of the Cold War, capitalist globalization, and popular disaffection. Today there are only 5 communist states, most of them in Asia: Cuba, China, North Korea, Laos, and Vietnam (Nepal currently has a communist-led majority government). Roughly 1.57 billion people still live under communism. Of course, there is some debate about whether these countries are still communist. Indeed, a large part of the Sino-Soviet split was over the question of which nation was following the true path toward communism. This course will trace the history of communism from its European origins in the writings of Marx; to its victory in Russia under the direction of Lenin; its expansion as an international system; its Maoist iterations in China and beyond; its demise in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; its perseverance as a system of government in Asia and Cuba; and the transformation of its former political parties into more social-democratic forms in places like Germany, Italy, France, and Spain. We will examine prominent communist personalities, its key notions, and significant events. In this course we'll ask several important historical questions: What did communist revolutions, states, and movements have in common? How did they differ? What did they hope to achieve? What kind of societies did communists try to construct? What was it like for people who lived under communist rule? How was communism successful in some places, but not others? Why did it collapse where it did, when it did? Does communism have a future?

Course Objectives:

The main goal of this course is to develop advanced critical thinking in a specific historical field—global communism. This includes gaining factual familiarity with the calamities and advancements of communism across its different local and temporal iterations, but also building the skills necessary for constructing an independent project that adds to the advancement of historical knowledge. This course challenges students to develop their skills at intensive reading, writing, discussing by analyzing, contextualizing, and textual and visual sources, both primary and secondary. In this way, students will apply historical reasoning, i.e. explaining why things happened the way they did, rather than merely detailing “what happened” and formulate a manageable research topic.

Course Website: Our course website is on Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca>. You must be registered on the website with a U of T email address (@mail.utoronto.ca). If you wish to use a different email address than your utoronto address, set up forwarding to ensure that you receive course information and updates. Announcements, study sheets, lecture outlines/images and course and tutorial information are available on the Quercus site.

Course readings:

Course Textbooks:

James McAdams, [*Vanguard of the Revolution: The Global Idea of the Communist Party*](#)
Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History*

Recommended (but not required purchase): S. A. Smith, [*The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*](#)

Course requirements:

Class discussion: 20%
Presentations (at least two): 20%
Socialism on Film Assignment: 10%
Online Quiz: 20%
Subfields Assignment: 30%

Class discussion (20%):

This is a discussion-based course, and its success depends on your involvement and that of your fellow classmates. Attendance is **mandatory**, and you are expected to participate regularly. Each week, we will expect you to have critically read all assignments for the day and to discuss and raise questions about them. Always bring each week’s readings to class. Each week, two of you will be asked to help lead the discussion by developing a two or three questions to help launch the conversation.

Your participation is the key to the success of the class. Think of our discussions as lively conversations about issues of mutual interest to all of us. Our purpose is to explore, analyze, and reflect on the arguments made in the readings, the evidence they use to support those arguments, and the wisdom the authors impart (or the lack thereof). Our other purpose is to explore your

own ideas about the issues raised in the readings. Come prepared to express your ideas and have them challenged by others.

Student Presentations 20%:

Each session, following Week 1, we have two discussion leaders who will introduce the readings in a 5-10 minute presentation and then present either main points or questions for consideration by the entire class. They will prepare discussion questions in advance and post them on the course website before noon on the day of the session they'll be leading.

Socialism on Film Assignment (10%):

Socialism on Film is a collection of documentaries, newsreels and features that reveals the world as seen by Soviet, Chinese, Vietnamese, East European, British and Latin American filmmakers.

Select one video and provide a *one-page, single-spaced* review of it. While watching the film, it is a good idea to follow along with this [worksheet](#). In your review, you should provide a brief plot synopsis that assumes your reader is not familiar with the film. Describe the film in general terms. However the review should go beyond a summary of the plot and provide analysis. What does it cover? What do you see as the main purpose of the film? Relate the film's content to class discussions, readings, and themes. Is the film historically accurate? Does it challenge or contradict anything that you learned in this course?

The assignment is due on **Monday June 1**.

Online Quiz: (20%):

An open-book quiz will take place through Quercus during the weekend between Weeks 3 and 4 (**May 22-24**). Format of the quiz will be based on material covered in the class but will also test your ability to use the internet to find information.

Historiographical Subfields Assignment (30%):

The assignment asks you analyze the state of research for a particular topic that you are interested in. You will choose one of the subfields below or another thematic subfield that you clear with me. Your first step will be to identify some books and articles relevant to the topic of your interest. Use these articles and books, as well as reviews of the latter, to identify the major debates on the topic and the evidence used to support various positions. In a 5-7 page essay describe these debates and discuss the ways in which this subfield interacts with, or can inform, mainstream scholarship in the field of global communism. I will assign some readings on global history to help orient you. A good place to start for thinking about subfields within the history of communism is the *Oxford Handbook to the History of Communism* (2016).

Some specialized subfields to consider: international/diplomatic history, family history, women's or gender history, demographic history, ethnohistory, history of science or medicine, history of technology, religious history, economic history, agricultural history, history of education, environmental history, military history.

The assignment is due on Quercus by **Wednesday, June 10**.

Late Policy. Assignments must be submitted via Quercus by 5:00 pm on the due date. (The reason this deadline is set at this time, not midnight, is so that the instructor has time to help students with any technical problems with the submission system.) Late assignments will be assessed a 5% penalty per day. Late assignments or missed work due to emergency medical reasons require official UTM documentation. Students are required to declare their absence on ROSI/ACORN in order to receive academic accommodation for any course work such as missed deadlines.

Extensions can only request special consideration from the Department of Historical Studies (not the course instructor.) Instructions for Special Consideration Requests to make-up any in-class tests or extensions on assignments can be found here: <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/historical-studies/resources/specialconsideration>. The form must be sent directly to the Department, no later than THREE days from the deadline. Additionally, all requests for special consideration must be sent to the course instructor no later than 11:59 pm on the night of the original deadline.

Academic integrity:

The University of Toronto has a strict zero tolerance policy on plagiarism, as defined in section B.I.1. (d) of the University's Code of Behavior on Academic Matters. It is up to you to know the Code and understand what constitutes a violation of Academic Integrity. As such, be sure to:

- Consult the University's site on Academic Integrity:
<http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/>
- Acquaint yourself with the Code and Appendix "A" Section 2;
<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>
- Consult the site How Not to Plagiarize:
<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/usingsources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Remember: plagiarism through negligence, as distinct from deliberate intent, is still plagiarism in the eyes of the University. Take notes carefully, use quotation marks religiously when copying and pasting from digital sources (so that no one, including you, mistakes someone else's words for your own), and document your research process. And always, when in doubt, ask.

AccessAbility Centre and the Academic Skills Centre:

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and the AccessAbility Resource Centre as soon as possible. AccessAbility staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. Please call 905-569-4699 or email access.utm@utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. For more info, please see <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/access/>.

All UTM students are eligible to use the resources of the Academic Skills Centre. For information regarding, e.g., individual appointments, academic skills, such as writing, reading, and notetaking workshops, see <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/>.

Class Schedule:

Week 1: Revolution in Theory: Marx and Socialism

Meeting 1: Sebastian Conrad—“What is Global History?” (on Quercus); McAdams—chapter 1, pp. 1-18;

Meeting 2: McAdams—chapter 2, pp. 18-59; Sassoon—“On Hundred Years of Socialism’ (Selections on Quercus...NOT REQUIRED but highly recommended).

Marx—[Communist Manifesto](#) (Only Preface, Preamble, Sections I, II and IV required);
Marx—Additional Selections (On Quercus).

Recommendations for further reading:

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (edited by David McLellan)

[Marx: Later Political Writings](#)

Sven-Eric Liedman, *A World to Win: The Life and Works of Karl Marx*

Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion*

Gregory Claeys, *Marx and Marxism*

Michael Heinrich, *Karl Marx and the Birth of Modern Society*

Rachel Holmes, *Eleanor Marx: A Life*

Terrell Carver (ed.), [The Cambridge Companion to Karl Marx](#)

Terrell Carver (ed.), [The Cambridge Companion to the Communist Manifesto](#)

Terrell Carver, [Engels: A Very Short Introduction](#)

Julia Nicholls, [Revolutionary Thought After the Paris Commune, 1871-1885](#)

Week 2: Revolution in Practice: From Lenin to Stalin

Meeting 1: McAdams—chapters 3 & 4, pp. 59-140.

[Rosa Luxemburg—What Does the Spartacus League Want?;](#)

[Lenin—The ‘April Theses’;](#)

[Emma Goldman—My Disillusionment in Russia](#)

Meeting 2: McAdams—chapters 5 & 7, pp. 141-182, 222-267.

[Nikolai Bukharin—The New Economic Policy of Soviet Russia;](#)

[Lenin—Last Testament;](#) ‘A Soviet Teenager Grapples with Violence in Stalin’s Russia’ (Quercus);

Recommendations for further reading:

Neil Harding, *Leninism*

Victor Sebestyen, *Lenin: The Man, The Dictator, and the Master of Terror*

Tariq Ali, *The Dilemmas of Lenin*

Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*

Sheila Fitzpatrick, [The Russian Revolution](#)

Sheila Fitzpatrick, [On Stalin’s Team](#)

Oleg Khlevniuk, [Stalin: A New Biography of a Dictator](#)

Yuri Slezkine, [The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution](#)

Jochen Hellbeck, [Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin](#)

James Harris, [The Great Fear: Stalin’s Terror of the 1930s](#)

Brandenberger and Zelenov (eds.) [Stalin’s Master Narrative: A Critical Edition of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union \(Bolsheviks\) Short Course](#)

Serhy Yekelchuk, [Stalin’s Citizens: Everyday Politics in the Wake of Total War](#)

Juliane Fürst, [Stalin’s Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism](#)

Week 3: Maoism

Meeting 1: Lovell—intro, chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-87; McAdams—chapter. 6, pp. 183-221. ‘A Chinese Student in the USSR’ (Quercus); [Mao—The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party](#).

Meeting 2: Lovell—chapters 3 & 4, pp. 88-124; McAdams—chapter 10, pp. 337-379. ‘Xiao Ke Writes His Life into the Marxist Understanding of History’; ‘Recollections of a Local Cadre and His Wife’; ‘Contesting the Official Meaning of China’s Cultural Revolution’ (Quercus); *Recommended*: [Mao—On Khrushchev’s Phony Communism](#).

Recommendations for further reading:

Rebecca Karl, [Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-century World](#)

Pantsov and Levine, [Mao: The Real Story](#)

Daniel Leese, [Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in China’s Cultural Revolution](#)

Robert Bickers, [Out of China: How the Chinese Ended the Era of Western Domination](#)

Chen Jian, [Mao’s China and the Cold War](#)

Andrew Walder, [China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed](#)

Andrew Walder, [Agents of Disorder: Inside China’s Cultural Revolution](#)

Yang Jisheng, [Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958-1962](#)

Sigrid Schmalzer, [Red Revolution, Green Revolution: Scientific Farming in Socialist China](#)

MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, [Mao’s Last Revolution](#)

Yiching Wu, [The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis](#)

Joel Andreas, [Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China’s New Class](#)

Guobin Yang, [The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China](#)

Ezra Vogel, [Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China](#)

Week 4: The Expansion of Communism in Asia

Meeting 1: Lovell—chapter 5 (Indonesia) & 10 (India), pp. 151-184; 347-383. [Tan Malaka—Communism and Pan-Islamism](#); ‘Hold Aloft the Reputation and Honor of the Communist’; [Manabendra Nath Roy—Awakening of the East](#); [Charu Mazumdar—Our Tasks in the Present Situation](#)

Meeting 2: Lovell—chapter 7 (Vietnam and Cambodia), pp. 223-266; Vu on Vietnam (on Quercus).

‘Organic Space, Human Space, and the Viet Minh’s Guerrilla War’; ‘Xuan Phuong On Her Attraction to Communism’; ‘Childhood under the Khmer Rouge’ (Quercus)

Recommendations for further reading:

Bidyut Chakrabarty, [Communism in India: Events, Processes and Ideologies](#)

Geoffrey Robinson, [The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965-66](#)

John Roosa, [Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto’s Coup d’état in Indonesia](#)

Annie Pohlman, [Women, Sexual Violence and the Indonesian Killings of 1965-66](#)

Vince Boudreau, [Resisting Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia](#)

Sophie Quinn-Judge, [Ho Chi Minh: The Missing Years, 1919-1941](#)

William Dutker, [The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam](#)

Toung Vu, [Vietnam’s Communist Revolution: The Power and Limits of Ideology](#)

Christopher Goscha, [The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam](#)

Ben Kiernan, [The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79](#)

Michael J. Seth, [North Korea: A History](#)

Week 5: Communism Insurgent: Latin America and Africa

Meeting 1: Lovell—chapter 9, pp. 306-346; McAdams—chapter 9, pp. 310-336.
'Testimonies from members of Peru's Shining Path'; 'Childhood in Castro's Cuba'
(Quercus)

Meeting 2: Lovell—chapter 6: pp. 185-222; Westad on Southern Africa (on Quercus).
[Samora Machel—The Liberation of Women is a Fundamental Necessity for the Revolution](#); [Nimrod Sejake—Workers' Power and the Crisis of Leadership](#)

Recommendations for further reading:

Lewis Taylor, *Shining Path: Guerilla War in Peru's Northern Highlands, 1980-1997*

Gustavo Gorrit, *The Shining Path: A History of the Millenarian War in Peru*

Steve Stern (ed.), *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru*

[Age of Revolutions Blog Syllabus on Cuban Revolution](#)

Piero Gleijeses, *The Cuban Drumbeat: Cuba's Foreign Policy in a Hostile World*

Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991*

Jonathan Brown, *Cuba's Revolutionary World*

Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption and Resistance, 1959-1971*

Allison Drew, *Discordant Comrades: Identities and Loyalties on the South African Left*

Allison Drew, *We are No Longer in France: Communists in Colonial Algeria*

Johan Franzen, *Red Star Over Iraq: Iraqi Communism before Saddam*

Week 6: Fall of Soviet Union and Communism in Europe, the Chinese Economic Miracle

Meeting 1: McAdams—chapters 8, 11, and 12, pp. 268-309, 380-474.

Meeting 2: McAdams—chapter 13, pp. 475-500; Lovell—chapters 8, 12 and conclusion:
pp. 266-305, 420-466.

Recommendations for further reading:

Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State*

Catherine Epstein, [The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and their Century](#)

Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*

Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989*

David Patton, *Out of the East: From the PDS to Left Party in Unified Germany*

Kieran Williams, [The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968-1970](#)

Paulina Bren, [The Greengrocer and his TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring](#)

Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*

Katherine Verdery, [What was Socialism and What Comes Next?](#)

Elidor Mëhilli, [From Stalin to Mao: Albania and the Socialist World](#)

Douglas R. Weiner, [A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev](#)

Chris Miller, *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR*

William Taubman, *Mikhail Gorbachev: His Life and Times*

Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*

Alexei Yurchak, [Everything was Forever. Until it was No More: The Last Soviet Generation](#)

Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*

Sabrina Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*

Mark Selden, [The Political Economy of Chinese Development](#)

Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation*

Karl Gerth, *Unending Capitalism: How Consumerism Negated China's Communist Revolution*