

History 600--War and Society in Modern China

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Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, China was a country ravaged by incessant warfare. Regional rebellions, warlord conflicts, civil war, the Japanese invasion, and China's participation in the Korean War left deep scars across all levels of society. Yet narratives of war and resistance were also key ingredients in the birth of modern Chinese nationalism. In this seminar, we will examine the impact of warfare on Chinese society during the first half of the twentieth century. How did constant warfare affect people's lives? Some of the themes to be covered include its impact on family life, on youth culture, on the nature of work and the shape of labor unrest, and its role in creating new roles for women in society. What impact did constant war have on popular culture, and on art and literature? What were the effects of war on intellectual life, and on Chinese nationalism? We will also explore the experiences of life under Japanese military occupation, including the complicated issue of collaboration and resistance in both urban and rural settings. While we will pay some attention to the political and economic costs and consequences of war, our primary focus is its impact on Chinese society and culture.

Each week we will read and discuss secondary works, along with various kinds of primary sources including memoirs, fiction, film, translations of government and military documents, newspaper reports, and accounts from foreign observers. Students will be responsible for writing a two-page book review, leading a discussion section, and writing and presenting a final research paper (12 to 15 pages). The research paper will be based on primary and secondary sources on a topic of your choosing related to the overall theme of the course.