

17.547/8: The Government and Politics of China

Midterm Examination

Note: Read over the entire exam before beginning. Be sure that your essays in Parts II and III do not overlap extensively in content.

Part I. Identifications (20 points)

Please identify **FOUR** of the following. In your answer, briefly explain “what,” “when,” and “why important.” Use approximately 15 minutes for this part of the exam.

- a. Anti-Rightist Movement
- b. Household Responsibility System
- c. *danwei* (work unit)
- d. Zhao Ziyang
- e. Liu Shaoqi
- f. Deng Xiaoping

Part II. Focused Essay (40 points)

Please write an essay on **ONE** of the following questions. Take some time to organize your thoughts before writing, and be sure to stake out a clear position in your answer. Provide evidence to support your argument, and refer to assigned readings whenever possible. Spend about 40 minutes on this section.

- a. Should we understand the Tiananmen protests of 1989 as something universal to humankind (a cry for democracy and individualism in the face of authoritarianism) or as something more specific to China (a collectivist effort to push goals of national modernization)? Why? How does your answer affect your judgment about the government’s response?
- b. Experts estimate that 20 million people died as a result of the Great Leap Forward. What exactly was the Great Leap Forward, and why did presumably smart policy makers like Liu Shaoqi or Deng Xiaoping – command planners, basically -- go along with it?
- c. What do you think Mao Zedong meant at the start of the Cultural Revolution when he declared ominously that key people within the Chinese Communist Party were “taking the capitalist road”? How did that assertion trigger so much chaos across Chinese society?

Part III. General Essay (40 points)

Please write an essay on the following question (see attached page). Again, be sure to organize your thoughts first, stake out a clear position in your answer, and use evidence to support your argument. Use about 40 minutes.

When Mao Zedong stood atop Tiananmen Gate in 1949 and proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic, millions of Chinese citizens appeared filled with hope for the future. By the time of Mao's death some two and a half decades later, the country had endured a series of political, economic, and social catastrophes. Why in your opinion had things gone so horribly wrong? Can the answer be found in the nature of the political leader, the nature of Chinese society, the nature of communist ideology, or the nature of China's 20th century modernizing mission more broadly?