



## Global China Program Chinese Popular Culture

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Contact Hours:** 52 course hours. One course hour is 45 minutes.

**Recommended Credit:** 3

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course takes a multi-faceted and interdisciplinary look at contemporary popular culture in China. Our mission is to not only gain a better understanding of life and culture in China, but to *experience* it as well. In addition to studying an array of popular and academic sources, students will have the opportunity to witness the themes of the class first hand, in authentic cultural settings through various field trips. We will explore food culture, sports culture, trends in music, cultures of expression in physical and digital spaces, perspectives on celebrity and fandom in China, as well as the social factors surrounding new developments in dating culture. Additionally, where applicable, the class will examine what it means to be part of a sub-culture in China today. Though the spectrum of subject matter is vast, classroom activities will be in-depth, and all topics covered have been meticulously chosen for relevance to the Shanghai/Chinese experience, so that students will leave each meeting better equipped to understand the people and society around them.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After taking the class students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate significant knowledge of Chinese pop culture trends and know the names of the leading figures of those trends.
2. Demonstrate the ability to critically think of pop culture as operating within certain social milieu.
3. Intellectually compare Chinese Popular Culture to that of their own country.
4. Qualitatively understand and discuss changing perspectives on certain facets of Chinese pop culture (when proper historical context is provided).
5. Clearly express (verbally and in writing) opinions on, and debate the meaning of, certain pieces of culture and the trends or traditions that surround them.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Course packet
2. Additional texts to be announced

Useful Website: *I recommend daily use of the following website as a way to keep updated on current events in China. The Shanghai Daily link below leads to its English-language site. It will also be used as a class resource.*

Shanghai Daily (上海日报):

<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/opinion/chinese-perspectives/>

### COURSE CONTENT

*(Subject to Change at Instructor's Discretion)*

Week 1: What Is Pop Culture?

- “What Is Pop Culture?” from *Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives* (pp.1-34)
- “Forever Pop,” from *Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives* (pp.229-246)
- “Introduction: Cultural Tradition and Popular Culture,” from *Handbook of Chinese Popular Culture* (pp.1-8)

Week 2: Food Culture

- “Food,” from *Handbook of Chinese Popular Culture* (pp.35-54)
- “Tea Drinking and Its Culture,” from *Handbook of Chinese Popular Culture* (pp.55-76)
- Screening: *A Bite of China* (Shejian shang de Zhongguo)
- Field Trip: Visit a Chinese restaurant

Week 3: Street Life and Social Space

- “Street Life,” from *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Commoners, and Local Politics, 1870-1930* (pp.68-104)
- “Leisure Time, Space, and Consumption,” from *Pop Culture China!: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle* (pp.235-264)
- “Of Hamburger and Social Space: Consuming McDonald’s in Beijing,” from *The Consumer Revolution in Urban China* (pp.201-225)
- Screening: *The King of Masks*
- Field Trip: Visit Nanjing Road and KFC

Week 4: Expressions of the Urban

- “Lifestyles: Commercialization and Concepts of Choice,” from *Handbook of Chinese Popular Culture* (pp.9-34)
  - “Face in the Crowd: The Cultural Construction of Anonymity in Urban China,” from *China Urban: Ethnographies of Contemporary Culture* (pp.274-293)
  - “The Floating Population As Subject,” from *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks Within China's Floating Population* (pp.23-46)
- Field Trip: Tianzifang

Week 5: Romance and the Dating Scene in China

- “Chinese Youth: Hot Romance and Cold Calculation,” from *Restless China* (pp.189-210)
- “*Are You the One?*: The Competing Public Voices of China’s Post-1980s Generation,” from *Restless China* (pp.127-148)
- Screening: TV show “You Are the One”
- Field Trip: Visit a “blind date fair” in Shanghai Zhongshan Park
- Field Trip: Live viewing of “You Are the One” in Nanjing

Week 6: Changing Media, New Voices

- “China’s Emerging Public Sphere: The Impact of Media Commercialization, Professionalism, and the Internet in an Era of Transition,” from *Changing Media, Changing China* (pp.38-76)
- “Media Boom and Cyber Culture,” from *Cambridge Companion to modern Chinese Culture* (pp.318-338)
- “*Undercover*: Internet Media Fandom and the Sociality of Cultural Consumption,” from *Popular Media, Social Emotion, and Public Discourse in Contemporary China* (103-123)

Week 7: Cyberspace and Public Voices

- “From Grass-Mud Equestrians to Rights-Conscious Citizens: Language and Thought on the

Chinese Internet,” from *Restless China* (pp.83-106)

- “The ‘Losers’ of China’s Internet: Memes as ‘Structures of Feeling’ for Disillusioned Young Netizens,” *China Information* 2014, Vol.28 (2) (pp.259-275)
- “Political Expression in the Chinese Blogosphere: Below the Radar.” *Asian Survey* 48, no. 5 (September/October 2008): 752-72
- “Contention in Cyberspace,” from *Popular Protest in China* (pp.126-143)

### **Midterm Paper Due**

Week 8: Internet Humor and Satire as a Subculture

- “*Shunkouliu*: Popular Satirical Sayings and Popular Thought,” from *Popular China: Unofficial Culture in a Globalizing Society* (pp.89-109)
- “Political Humor in Postsocialist China: Transnational and Still Funny,” from *Restless China* (pp.59-80)
- Christopher Rea, “Spoofing (e’gao) culture on the Chinese Internet,” from *Humour in Chinese Life and Culture* (pp.149-172)

Week 9: Stardom, Fandom, and Celebrity Culture

- “Celebrity/China,” from *Celebrity in China* (pp.1-20)
- “China’s Internet Celebrity: Furong Jiejie,” from *Celebrity in China* (pp.217-236)
  - “The Making of An Online Celebrity: A Critical Analysis of Han Han’s Blog,” *China Information* 2015, Vol. 29(3), 352-376
- “Androgynous Beauty, Virtual Sisterhood: Stardom, Fandom, and Chinese Talent Show under Globalization,” *Super Girls, Gangsters, Freeters, and Xenomaniacs* (pp.104-124)
- “Who Needs Democracy If We Can Pick Our Favorite Girl? Super Girl as Media Spectacle,” *Chinese Journal of Communication* Vol.2, No.3 (November 2009), 257-272

Week 10: Chinese Perspectives on Sports

- “Sports and Martial Arts,” from *Pop Culture China!: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle* (pp.265-298)
- “Chinese Martial Arts” from *Sinica Podcast*
- “Beijing’s Two Bids for the Olympics: The Political Games,” from *The Politicisation of Sport in Modern China: Communists and Champions* (pp.145-156)
- “The Politicisation of the Beijing Olympics,” from *The Politicisation of Sport in Modern China: Communists and Champions* (pp.157-183)
- Planned Site Visit: Beijing National Stadium (The Bird’s Nest)

Week 11: Chinese Popular Music: Then and Now

- “[Tradition, Politics and Meaning in 20th Century China’s Popular Music: Zhou Xuan--When Will the Gentleman Come Back Again?](#)” *Chime*, No. 14–15 (2000): 125–153
- “Message in a Bottle: Lyrical Laments and Emotional Expression in Mandopop,” *Songs of Sorrow: Chinese Pop Music and Its Cultural Connotations* (pp.52-68)
- “Western Style, Chinese Pop: Jay Chou’s Rap and Hip-Hop in China,” *Asian Music* Vol.39, No.1 (Winter-Spring 2008) (pp.69-80)
- “Cui Jian and the Ideology of Chinese Rock Music,” from *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music* (pp.115-143)
- Planned Field Trip: Go to a Concert

Week 12: Literature and Commercialism

- “Seduction: Reproducing the City as Femme Fatale,” from [Shanghai Literary Imaginings: A City in Transformation](#) (pp.101-154)

- “The Social Construction of A Myth: An Interpretation of Guo Jingming’s Parable,” from *Oriental Archive* 78, 2010: 397-419
- “China’s Pop Fiction”:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/04/books/review/King-t.html>
- Screening:

*Tiny Times I* (Xiao shi dai 1, 2013)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQSzAYnX\\_Uo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQSzAYnX_Uo)

Week 13: Pop Culture Cinema

- “Cinema, Film, and Video,” from *Pop Culture China!: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle* (pp.155-192)
- Screening:

*Mr. Six* (Lao pao er, 2015, 134 mins.)

*The Assassin* (Ni eying niang, 2015, 106 mins.)

### Final Paper Due

### ASSESSMENT

1. Attendance and Participation	25%
2. Weekly Blog Journal	20%
3. Midterm Paper	25%
4. Final Paper	30%

Class attendance and participation: You are expected to attend and participate fully in all classroom sessions, site visits, and field trips.

Academic honesty: Actions of dishonesty are destructive to the well-being of the academic community, and ACM staff respond to them vigorously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic theft will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may result in failure for the course.

### COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

1. **Attendance:** Since we will only be meeting once a week, there is no allowance for non-participation or absences unless there is an emergency.

**Preparation and Participation:** Class preparation and participation are mandatory. Attendance and participation includes planned field trips related to class topics. Students are expected to come to class having read and taken notes on the required readings and viewed any “required viewings” I have assigned. Participation entails giving serious critical consideration to the issue at hand and sharing the results of that consideration.

**Weekly Quizzes:** At the start of each class meeting, there will be a short quiz (no more than 10 minutes) on the reading assignment for that day. These primarily serve as a reminder of the importance of preparing for class, and will be considered as part of your participation and attendance grade.

2. **Weekly Blog Journal:** Starting with the second week of class, students will maintain an online blog journal of their experiences in China. The purpose of the assignment is to encourage and maintain constant self-reflection on the students’ activities. The requirement will be that the blogs be updated at least once a week. The format of the blog is open—Google Blogger is an easy option, but other platforms are certainly welcome.

Each entry will be expected to include the following:

- 2 or more forms of media (images, audio clips, videos, etc.)
- A complete summary of the experience(s)
- Significant reflection on the experience(s), including how it affected your perceptions of Chinese culture (reinforced, challenged, etc.), and how it added to or enriched class content (if applicable)

**3. Midterm and Final Papers:** The two major papers for this class are the midterm and final papers. They will be assigned about ten days before they are due. Students will have the option of choosing from a selection of topics or pursuing their own, instructor-approved topic. Midterm papers should be 6-8 pages in length, and final papers should reach 8-10 pages.

If a paper cannot be completed on time, the instructor must be notified, before the due date, and the circumstances explained. Without proper notification, your paper will be considered late and your score will be reduced. Late papers will be marked down 10 % for each day they are turned in late.