



Issues in Contemporary Chinese Society

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 56 course hours. One course hour is 45 minutes.

Course Description

China's transition to a market economy and return to the global community have huge impacts over the lives of its people, as well as the rest of the world. While covering other fields such as anthropology, political science, gender studies and urban studies, this course mostly employs a sociological perspective to examine issues in contemporary Chinese society. Topics examined include not only these well-known aspects of Chinese society such as collectivism and family-centered culture, but also internet culture, the emerging civil society, ongoing sexual revolution, and increasing social polarization that are more likely associated with the enormous social change over the past three decades. Students will be asked to critically and creatively think about change and continuity in contemporary China in relation to the dynamic and complex interaction of local factors and global forces.

Learning Objectives

The objectives of this course are 1) to expose students to a broad overview of social issues in contemporary China; 2) to deepen students' understanding of historical change and continuity, cultural diversity and the complexity of Chinese society; 3) to enable students to analyze social issues of relevance in China and beyond from critical and comparative perspectives; 4) to familiarize students with available resources for learning about Chinese society; and 5) to facilitate students' exploration of the city life in Shanghai.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Class Participation (20%)

All assigned readings, lectures, and discussions will be the basis for examinations. Students must read the assigned readings in a timely fashion before each class meeting. I expect you to be prepared to actively participate in class discussions and share your experiences and ideas that are relevant to the class. The more you attend and participate in class, the more



prepared you will be to complete the assignments and exams. For these reasons, class attendance and participation are essential.

Based on the assigned readings, students are required to submit one discussion question to the email address **disc_ques@163.com** by **6pm each Monday**, start from week 2. Missing 2 or more discussion questions out of total 9 would lead to a grade of zero for participation.

Group Project on Urban Space Ethnography (30%)

For this exercise, you should choose a location in the city – a particular social space and observe it intensively with your group. You should visit the site no less than 3 times throughout the semester and with each visit no shorter than 1.5 hours. Detailed instruction will be provided.

Final Paper (50%)

In lieu of a final exam, students will develop and present a final paper inspired by her/his observation from the group project. Students should conduct a research on a topic of their choice that is relevant to contemporary Chinese society. Ideally, you should demonstrate a “sociological imagination” by linking what you observe in particular urban space to a social issue in today’s China. Students will present their final paper that is scheduled in the last class.

No late paper accepted.

Grading

Class Participation: Discussion Questions	20%	20 points
Group Project: Urban Ethnography	30%	30 points
Final Paper	50%	50 points
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Total	100%	100 points



Weekly Schedule

Week 1 Introduction: Chinese Society in Transition

Week 2 Gender, Marriage and Family

Sandy To, "Understanding Sheng Nu ('Leftover Women'): the Phenomenon of Late Marriage among Chinese Professional Women", *Symbolic Interaction*, 36:1, 2013.

Deborah Davis. "Privatization of marriage in post-socialist China". *Modern China* 40, 2014.

Week 3 Ethnic Relations

Ma Rong, "A New Perspective in Guiding Ethnic Relations in the Twenty first Century: 'De-politicization' of Ethnicity in China, *Asian Ethnicity*, 8:3, 2008.

Zang Xiaowei, "Affirmative Action, Economic Reforms, and Han-Uyghur Variation in Job Attainment in the State Sector in Urumchi " *The China Quarterly*, 202, 2010.

Week 4 New Class Society

■ Section 1

Deborah Davis and Wang Feng, "Poverty and Wealth in Postsocialist China: An Overview", in Davis and Wang 2009.

Ching Kwan Lee, "From Inequality to Inequity: Popular Conceptions of Social (In)justice in Beijing", in Davis and Wang 2009.

■ Section 2 (TBA) Documentary Film and Discussion

: *Last Train Home*



Week 5 Migrant Workers

Tian Xiaoli and Deng Yunxue. “Organizational Hierarchy, Deprived Masculinity, and Confrontational Practices: Men Doing Women’s Jobs in a Global Factory.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 1, 2015.

Xiong Yihan. “The Broken Ladder: Why Education Provides No Upward Mobility for Migrant Children in China” *The China Quarterly* 221, 2015.

Week 6 Internet Culture

Marcella Szablewicz. “The ‘Losers’ of China’s Internet: Memes as ‘Structures of Feeling’ for Disillusioned Young Netizens. *China Information*, 28, 2014

Rongbin Han “Defending the Authoritarian Regime Online: China's “Voluntary Fiftycent Army” *The China Quarterly* 224, 2015.

Week 7 Tomb-Sweeping Day Break, No Class

Week 8 Religion

Karrie J. Koesel, “The Rise of a Chinese House Church: The Organizational Weapon” *The China Quarterly*, 2013.

Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank, “The Politics of a Reviving Buddhist Temple: State, Association, and Religion in Southeast China”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 65, 2006.

Group Project Due and Presentation

Week 9 Urban Redevelopment

He, Shenjing and Wu Fulong. . Property-led Redevelopment in Post-reform China: A Case Study of Xintiandi Redevelopment Project in Shanghai. *Journal of Urban Affairs* (1), 2005

Amy Hanser “Street Politics: Street Vendors and Urban Governance in China” *The China Quarterly* 226, 2016



Week 10 Sexual Revolution

Everett Yuehong Zhang, “China’s Sexual Revolution”, in Kleinman et al. 2010.

Pei Yuxing and Petula Ho Sik Ying, “Gender, self and pleasure: young women’s discourse on masturbation in contemporary Shanghai”, *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 11, 200

Week 11 Social Space and Civil Mobilization

■ Section 1

Zhengxu Wang, Long Sun, Liuqing Xu and Dragan Pavličević . Leadership in China's Urban Middle Class Protest: The Movement to Protect Homeowners' Rights in Beijing. *The China Quarterly*, 214, 2013.

Anthony J. Spires,”Contingent Symbiosis and Civil Society in an Authoritarian State: Understanding the Survival of China’s Grassroots NGOs”, *American Journal of Sociology*,117, 2011

■ Section 2 (TBA) Research Talk:

Straight Men, Gay Buddies: The Changing Articulation of Heteromascularity among Chinese Urban Youth

Week 12 Final Research Paper Due and Class Presentation

Bibliography

Davis, Deborah and Wang Feng. *Creating Wealth and Poverty in Postsocialist China*. Stanford University Press, 2009.

Kleinman, Arthur, Yunxiang Yan, Jing Jun, Sing Lee, Everett Zhang, Pan Tianshu, Wu Fei and Guo Jinhua. *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person*. University of California Press, 2010.



Academic honesty

Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. Students are expected to comply with the university regulations. Failure to adhere to the rules of academic integrity and honesty will be reported and dealt with accordingly.