Contemporary Chinese Society

SOC 4439/6439-091

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Sociology Graduate Student

Class Time & Location:
W 12:55 PM - 01:45 PM ARCH 127

I am available for consultation during the office hour, by appointment, or via email. E-mail will be responded within 48 hours.

Course Description
This course reviews a succinct outline of the Chinese past and surveys the post-1978 Chinese society, focusing on social issues under the market reform and conditions of increasingly globalized economy. China’s transition to a market-oriented society has brought about fundamental changes in the lives of its citizens. We will discuss a range of topics related to the contemporary Chinese society including but not limited to regional economic disparities, rural-to-urban migration, population, culture, and other social, political and economic issues.
This is a hybrid class, organized around assigned readings, films, lectures, and in-class discussions. Readings for the class are mostly from two books, supplemented with other scholarly works. We will also watch two sets of documentary videos.

The course does not assume any background in China studies.

Course Objective

The main purpose of this course is to offer students a wide exposure to a range of social, cultural, demographic, economic, and political issues in contemporary China with available resources for learning about Chinese society. Students are expected to grasp the basic knowledge about China’s major institutions such as socialist market economy, party-state politics, family, and stratification. Besides general knowledge, students are expected to have a more in-depth understanding of a specific topic related to contemporary Chinese society through working on a research paper.

Canvas

Course materials such as syllabus and lecture notes are posted on Canvas. Bi-weekly quizzes are taken on Canvas.

Required Readings

*China, Adapting the Past, Confronting the Future* edited by Thomas Buoye, Kirk Denton, Bruce Dickson, Barry Naughton, and Martin Whyte, published by Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan 2002. (Referred as TB)

*Creating Wealth and Poverty in Postsocialist China* edited by Deborah Davis and Feng Wang, published by Stanford University Press 2009. (Referred as DW)

Copies of the two books are available on reserve and additional required article readings (i.e., journal articles or book chapters) are available on E-reserve.

Quizzes

Bi-weekly quizzes will be given on Canvas. They are based on required readings and films. Missed quizzes cannot be made up, but I will drop your lowest quiz score when calculating your final grade.

Guidelines for Class Participation

In-class participation is strongly encouraged. Reading the assigned readings and engagement in discussion are essential. To ensure a respectful and productive environment in the classroom, my expectations for you are:

- To arrive to class on time, and for all class meetings. It will be difficult to do well in this class without attending regularly.
- To complete the assigned readings *before* their corresponding date.
- To follow University of Utah code for student conduct (see below).

**Exams**

There are two in-class exams closely corresponding to the readings and films. They are not cumulative. No make-up exams will be given except for emergency situations where written request with proof is required. **All make up exams are given at the testing center toward the end of the semester.**

**Research Project: Paper and Presentation**

Undergraduate students are required to work with a group of students to write a research paper and give a presentation based on your research. By **March 20th (Wednesday)**, students should have joined a group. Graduate students are required to work along on this research project.

The end product of the project is a research paper and a PowerPoint presentation. External research is necessary for the project. The paper will look like a research review paper focused on a specific topic related to contemporary Chinese society. Potential topics include predicting social, economic, or business trends within China, analyzing how China has or is likely to relate to the rest of the world, or considering how foreign individuals, businesses, or governments can engage effectively with China. Additional descriptions of this paper can be found at the end of the syllabus. You are welcome to talk with me and the TA regarding your research ideas. The research paper should be double-spaced, page-numbered, with 1-inch margin on all sides, and includes no more than 10 pages not counting the references. Please send your research paper to me by **midnight on May 1 (Wednesday)**. Late papers are not accepted. Research papers will be judged on both style and content.

**Grading**

Class participation: 10%
Quizzes: 15%
Exam 1: 30%
Exam 2: 30%
Research paper: 15% (weighted on presentation 15% and final paper 75%)

Final letter grades will be guided by the following scale based on your total score (rounded to nearest integer):

A (93-100%)  A- (90-92%)  B+ (87-89%)
B (83-86%)  B- (80-82%)  C+ (77-79%)
C (73-77%)  C- (70-73%)  D+ (67-69%)
D (63-66%)  D- (60-62%)  E (<60%)

Extra credit: you can earn up to 10 exam points by submitting a response essay to the movie **“To Live”** – You can watch this 1994 movie on YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fg1TxdzcXg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fg1TxdzcXg)
Course Schedule

Week 1: Jan 9 (W). Introduction
No reading

Week 2: Jan 16 (W). Brief Overview of Chinese Culture
Reading:

Week 3: Jan 23 (W). Brief Introduction of Pre-1949 Chinese History
Reading:
TB: Part 1 Geography and History Introduction (p3-24)
TB: Chapter 4 “History and China’s revolution” (p 52-57)
TB: Chapter 6 “The boxer uprising” (p62-74)
Video Documentary:
China in Revolution 1911-1949, Part I, “Battle for Survival,” covering the years 1911-1936, the era immediately after the fall of the last emperor.

Week 4: Jan 30 (W). Brief Introduction of Pre-1949 Chinese History
Reading:
TB: Chapter 7 “The Chinese enlightenment” (p75-78)
TB: Chapter 8 “Sun Yat-sen opens the Whampoa Academy, 1924” (p79-82)
TB: Chapter 10. “Collapse of public morale” (p90-93)
Video Documentary:
China in Revolution 1911-1949, Part II, "Fighting for the Future", covering the years 1936-1949, which represents the period of World War II as well as China's civil war.

Week 5 Feb 6 (W). The Mao Era (1949-1976)
Reading:

Video Documentary:
The Mao Years, Part I, "Catch the Moon and Stars" covering the years 1949-1960. It begins with the establishment of the People's Republic of China and ends with the largest famine in world history.

Reading:

Video Documentary:
*The Mao Years*, Part II, "It's Right to Rebel" covering the years 1960-1976. During this time Mao instigated his most radical political campaign, the Cultural Revolution, that brought the nation to the brink of civil war.

**Week 7 Feb 20 (W). Economic Reforms (1979-present)**

Reading:
- TB: Part 4 Economy Introduction (p329-352)
- TB: Chapter 33 “China 2020: Understanding the present” (p353-360)
- TB: Chapter 34 “Is a rich man happier than a free man?” (p361-368)
- TB: Chapter 35 “How to reform a planned economy: Lessons from China” (p369-376)

Video Documentary:
*Born Under the Red Flag*, Part I, "Surviving Mao", covering the years 1976-1984 following the death of Mao Zedong. Under Deng Xiaoping’s leadership, China witnessed sweeping economic and social changes. People began to air their long-suppressed grievances, but when they criticized the Communist Party itself, the government moved to suppress them.

**Week 8: Feb 27 (W). Politics**

Reading:
- TB Part 2 Politics Introduction (p103-126)
- TB Chapter 13 “The Beijing upheaval of 1989” (p127-138)
- TB Chapter 14 “China since Tiananmen Square” (p139-146)

Video Documentary:
*Born Under the Red Flag*, Part II, "The New Generation", covering the years 1984-1997, and examines the political attitudes of young people as they began to challenge the meaning and value of communism. It chronicles the growing student movements and the government crackdown in Tiananmen Square.

**Week 9: March 6 (W). Exam I in Class**
Week 10: SPRING BREAK

Week 11: March 20 (W). Social Control
Reading:
- TB: Chapter 17 “A quiet roar: China’s leadership feels threatened” (p170-172)
- TB: Chapter 18 “China’s emerging business class: Democracy’s harbinger?” (p173-180)
- TB: Chapter 19 “Village elections: democracy from the bottom up?” (p181-189)
- TB: Chapter 20 “The virus of corruption” (p190-201)

Video Documentary:
- China From the Inside: Episode 1: Power and the People-- It isn't easy, running China, with its 1.3 billion people and 56 officially recognized ethnic nationalities. It's a vast mix of languages, living standards, beliefs and customs. Run it successfully, and you have a prosperous, innovative, powerful empire to rival any the world has seen. Make mistakes, and the chaos will be vast and terrible.

Week 12: March 27 (W). Social Stratification and Inequality
Reading:
- DW: Chapter 1 “Poverty, wealth, and stratification: The interconnections” (p3-36)
- DW: Chapter 2 “Market versus social benefits: Explaining China’s changing income inequality” (p69-84)
- DW: Chapter 10 “Regional inequality in China: Mortality and health” (p143-155)
- DW: Chapter 12 “Hierarchy, market, and networks in a mixed system” (p172-192)

Week 13: April 3 (W). Social Stratification and Gender
Reading:
- DW: Chapter 4 “The labor of luxury: Gender and generational inequality in a Beijing hotel.” (p54-68)

Video Documentary:
- China From the Inside: Episode 2: Women of the Country -- China's women have always been under pressure: from men, from family, from work. Now more and more are under new pressure -- from themselves -- to take control of their lives; to get an education; to have a career; to marry for love. It's a slow, difficult process, and it is changing China.

Week 14: April 10 (W). Consequences of the Reform
Reading:
- TB: Chapter 23 “How come you aren’t divorced yet?” (p242-249)
- TB: Chapter 30 “Hey coolie! Local migrant labor” (p293-299)
- Wen, Ming & Danan Gu. 2012. “Air pollution shortens life expectancy and health expectancy for older
Video Documentary:

*China From the Inside: Episode 3: Shifting Nature -- China is trying to feed 20 percent of the world's population on 7 percent of the world's arable land. A third of the world uses water from China's rivers. But rapid industrialization and climate change have led to bad air, polluted rivers and drought. Environmental activists, Party officials, academics and scientists are in a daily struggle over the damage to nature in China.*

**Week 15: April 17 (W). Social Justice**

Reading:

TB: Chapter 31 “Second class citizen/homosexuals in Beijing” (p300-309)

DW: Chapter 13 “The social contours of distributive injustice feelings in contemporary China” (p193-212)

DW: Chapter 14 “From inequality to inequity: Popular conceptions of social (in)justice in Beijing” (p213-231)

Video Documentary:

*China From the Inside: Episode 4: Freedom and Justice -- How free are the Chinese people? How free to worship as they please? To learn the truth from the media? To hear the truth from the Communist Party and the government? How can people with a grievance negotiate with the state?*

**Week 16: April 24 (W). Research Presentations**

**Week 17: May 1 (M). Exam II in Class & Research Paper Due at Midnight (send to TA via Canvas email)**

* Reading/Lecture schedule is subject to change

**All the videos are available online:**

*China: A Century of Revolution, Part I & II*
http://stream.scl.utah.edu/index.php/details/item/1360

*The Mao Years, Part I & II*
http://stream.scl.utah.edu/index.php/details/item/1361

*Born Under the Red Flag, Part I & II*
http://stream.scl.utah.edu/index.php/details/item/1362

*China From Inside, Power and the People*
http://stream.scl.utah.edu/index.php/details/item/1364

*China From the Inside, Women of the Country*
http://stream.scl.utah.edu/index.php?c=details&id=1365

*China From Inside, Freedom and Justice*
http://stream.scl.utah.edu/index.php/details/item/1367
**AMERICAN WITH DISABILITY ACT (ADA)**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

**ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

It is assumed that all work submitted for evaluation will be your own work. Plagiarism, cheating, misrepresenting one’s work, and falsification of information are serious offenses that warrant severe sanctions. Students should be familiar with the formal definitions of academic misconduct, as outlined in the University of Utah Student Code at [http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html](http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html).
Contemporary Chinese Society Research Paper

I. Topics
Your topic should be related to contemporary Chinese society. Possible topics are:

- Globalization and China’s development
- The causes and consequences of rural-to-urban migration
- Rural-urban inequalities
- Living arrangements of the elderly in China
- Gender inequalities in employment opportunities
- The rising trends in family dissolution
- Education and employment
- Social networks (guanxi) in China

Academic writings on the selected topics can be found in online databases such as ‘Sociological Abstracts’ and ‘web of knowledge.’ Go to www.lib.utah.edu and find databases you want to use under ‘Article Databases,’ then search for published articles on the related topics. You can also search articles by journals. Prominent journals that often publish China-related topics include but are not limited to Journal of Asian Studies, China Quarterly, China Journal, Asian Survey, or Modern China. Prominent sociological journals such as American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Social Forces, Demography, and International Migration Review also publish academic articles addressing social and demographic issues in China.

II. The Paper
A. The paper should be no more than 10 pages in length not including the title page and the reference page (typed, double spaced, one side of the page, page-numbered).

B. It will have a minimum of 10 references (no more than 5 of the required ten can be non-academic internet references meaning at least 5 of your references should be academic journal articles or book chapters).


D. Do not plagiarize
   1. Any material where an author's words are used verbatim should be enclosed in quotation marks with the appropriate reference cited.

   2. Any ideas that are taken from the works of others (books, periodicals, etc.) should be cited by using appropriate references.

E. Research papers are due by midnight on May 1 (Wednesday). Please send your paper to me via Canvas mail.

III. Presentations
PowerPoint presentations are required for your research presentation. Presentations will be evaluated based on both content and style.
Criteria for Grading the Research Paper

Research papers will be strictly graded based on the following criteria.

**Organization and Coherence (30%)**: Your research paper should begin with a question on which you want to find evidence-based answers in the literature. Your research question should be clearly introduced in the very beginning. Discussions on why the question is important and worthy of research should follow the introduction of the problem. Next, you need to explain the research method you use to do research on the question. For example, suppose you are interested in how well rural-to-urban migrants fare in urban China (e.g., in terms of health and earnings), you may want to use the Sociological Abstracts to search the literature under keywords like “rural-to-urban migrants in China, health, income, etc.”). This is your research method that needs to be described in your paper. Then in the result section, you should present the evidence you find with regard to the research question. The last section of the paper should consist of conclusions drawn from your own research and policy implications you can note based on your research findings. Overall, the paper should be coherently organized to present evidence and argument with regard to your research question.

**Literature review (20%)**: Literature review is essential to find previously existing evidence supportive of or against your hypotheses. You ought to have a critical review of the relevant literature. Discuss what other scholars have said, what they have left unanswered, and what should be further explored in the future.

**Your personal opinions (20%)**: A good paper not only presents a good summary of the literature but also provides clearly argued views the authors hold with regard to the topic being researched. I will look for your own words discussing the problem and evaluating the evidence you are presenting. It would be a plus if you discuss policy implications of the research findings you presented.

**Writing (20%)**: Clear and coherent writing is essential for a good paper. Grammar, spelling, and rhetoric will all be considered.

**Format (10%)**: Formatting citations and bibliography consistently is important. All borrowed words should be cited and references should be listed alphabetically in the bibliography separately put in the end of the paper. No reference that is not cited in the text should appear in the bibliography and vice versa. At least ten references with no more than three online non-academic references are required for the paper. The text should be 12 points, double-spaced, and single-sided. The paper should be no more than 10 pages (excluding the title and reference pages). Page numbers should be inserted.