



## **Issues in Contemporary Chinese Society**

**Professor:** ZHU, Yujing

**Email:** yjzhu@soci.ecnu.edu.cn

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Contact Hours:** 48 course hours. One course hour is 45 minutes.

**Recommended Credit:** 3

**Program dates:** December 2018 – January 2019

### **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 political science, gender studies and urban studies, this course mostly employs a sociological and anthropological 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 four 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 my email address [yjzhu@soci.ecnu.edu.cn](mailto:yjzhu@soci.ecnu.edu.cn) one day before the class, starting from Unit 2. Missing 2 or more discussion questions out of total 10 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 2 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 on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

No late paper accepted.

**Grading**

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

**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.

## **Schedule**

### **Week 1**

#### **Unit 1 Introduction: Chinese Society in Transition**

#### **Unit 2 New Class Society**

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.

#### **Unit 3 Religion**

Yanfei Sun, “The Rise of Protestantism in Post-Mao China: State and Religion in Historical Perspective”, *American Journal of Sociology* 122, 2017.

### **Week 2**

#### **Unit 4 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.

Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi. “The Han Minzu, Fragmented Identities, and Ethnicity” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72:4, 2013.

#### **Unit 5 Urban Redevelopment**

Shenjing He and George CS Lin. “Producing and consuming China’s new urban space: State, market and society.” *Urban Studies* 52, 2015.

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

#### **Unit 6 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.

(Documentary Film: *Last Train Home* , 2009, Fan, Lixin)

### **Week 3**

#### **Unit 7 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.

#### **Unit 8 Fieldtrip**

#### **Unit 9 Gender, Marriage and Family**

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

Susanne YP Choi and Ming Luo. “Performative family: homosexuality, marriage and intergenerational dynamics in China”. *British Journal of Sociology* 67 (2), 2016.

### **Week 4**

#### **Unit 10 Individualization**

Yan, Yunxiang. “The Good Samaritan’s New Trouble: A Study of the Changing Moral Landscape in Contemporary China.” *Social Anthropology* 17 (1), 2009.

Mette Halskov Hansen, “Learning Individualism: Hesse, Confucius, and Pep-Rallies in a Chinese Rural High School” *The China Quarterly* 213, 2013.

#### **Unit 11 Sexual Revolution**

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

#### **Unit 12 Final Research Paper Due and Class Presentation**

### **Bibliography**



Charlotte Bruckermann and Stephan Feuchtwang. *The Anthropology of China: China as Ethnographic and Theoretical Critique*. Imperial College Press, 2016.

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.