Course title: Issues in Chinese Society
Course code: EAST 3005 SCGC / SOCI 3001 SCGC
Programs offering course: Accelerated Chinese Language, Business, Language and Culture, China in a Global Context
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring 2021

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 guanxi, collectivism and family-centered culture, but also 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

By completing this course, students will:

- Investigate a broad array of social issues in contemporary China.
- Develop a critical understanding of historical change and continuity, cultural diversity and the complexity of Chinese society.
- Analyze issues of social relevance in China and beyond from critical and comparative perspectives.
- Identify and use available resources for learning about Chinese society.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

The class will combine lectures, academic readings, class discussions, films and field trips.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Group Project on Urban Space 30%
2. Research Proposal 10%
3. Final Paper Presentation 20%
4. Final Paper 20%
5. Class Participation: Discussion Questions 20%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Group Project on Urban Space

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. An essay-type report should be submitted after group presentation in classroom.
Research Proposal

Develop a research proposal inspired by her/his observation from the group project. Students should first identify a research topic of their choice, and then conduct a literature research on this topic. The paper should include the discussion of at least five scholarly articles not included on this syllabus and can also include references to non-academic sources.

Final Paper Presentation

Scheduled in the last class meeting, the presentation should highlight important findings and major critiques of the final paper. Stay within an 8-minutes time frame.

Final Paper

Conduct further research on the topic of choice. The paper must demonstrate a “sociological imagination” by linking what you observe in particular urban space to a social issue in today’s China. After incorporating feedback from the instructor, the final paper will be due on the day one week from the last class meeting.

Class Participation: Discussion Questions

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@126.com by 10pm each Sunday, starting from Week 3. Missing 2 or more discussion questions out of total 10 would lead to a grade of zero for participation.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:
Weekly Schedule

Week 1
Class: Introduction: Chinese Society in Transition

After reviewing the syllabus and discussing course requirements with the students, the instructor will provide a brief introduction of the course, with a focus on the major paradigms developed in the China studies.

No-reading is needed.

Week 2
Class: Gender, Marriage and Family

This lecture looks at the rapid transformation of gender, marriage and family in the Chinese society. Besides the key features of Chinese families, some related issues including one-child policy, left-over women and unbalanced sex ratio will also be discussed.

(1) To 2013, 1-20
(2) Davis 2014, 551-577

Week 3
Class: Ethnic Relations

After introducing key models in ethnic relations from a comparative perspective, the lecture will examine the change of PRC’s ethnic policies as well as its impacts.

(1) Rong 2008, 8:199-217
(2) Joniak-Lüthi 2013, 849-871

Week 4
Class: New Class Society

Students will be first introduced major theoretical perspectives on class. The pattern of social stratification, as well as the changing class structure, in contemporary China will be focus of this class.

(1) Davis 2009, 3-19

N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.
Week 5
Class: Migrant Workers

The images of rural-to-urban migrant workers serve as a major metaphor of the contemporary China. Some critical issues related to this group will be introduced. The recent policy from the government will also be examined.

(1) Xiaoli 2015, 464-489
(2) Yihan 2015, 161-184

Week 6
Class: Urban Redevelopment

Employing the theoretical perspective of new urban sociology, this class critically examines Chinese urbanization in recent decades driven by the interacted forces between state, market and society.

(1) He 2005, 1-23
(2) Hanser 2016, 363-382

Week 7
Class: Religion

In relation to these key sociological theories on modern religion, the class takes a look at important features of Chinese religion, as well as how they have been shaped by polices of the state.

(1) Koesel 2013, 572-589
(2) Ashiwa 2006, 337-359

Group Project Due and Presentation

Week 8
Class: Internet Culture

In this class, students will be introduced with these features of Chinese Internet culture, with a particular attention to the dynamic interactions between the state and the society.

(1) Nip 2015, 1006-1025
(2) Szablewicz 2014, 259-275

Week 9
Class: Individualization

China is known as a collectivism-oriented society. The recent individualization of Chinese society signified an important departure from its long tradition. Some critical issues arising from the process will also be examined.

(1) Yunxiang 2009, 9-24, 2009
(2) Hansen 2013, 60-77

Research Proposal Due

Week 10
Class: Social Space and Civil Mobilization

The past 30 years witnessed the expanded social space in the Chinese society, which has contributed to the development of various social activism and civil mobilization. Taking home-owner activism and grassroots feminist movement as the examples, the lecture introduces important features of social movement in today’s China.
Week 11
Class: Sexual Revolution

This class examines the changing relationship between sex, love and marriage in contemporary China, which arguably led to the rise of Chinese sexual revolution. The comparison between China and the US regarding this topic will also be discussed.

(1) Zhang 2009, 515-528

Week 12
Class:  

Final Paper Presentation Due and Final Paper due one week after this day.

Course Materials
Readings


