

CET Syllabus of Record

Program: Chinese Studies and Internship in Beijing

Course Title: Understanding Modern China: History, Culture and Politics

Course Code: CS250

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Suggested Cross Listings: Chinese Studies, Cultural Studies, Political Science, History

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites/Requirements: None

Description

This is a broad survey course designed to provide students with an essential framework for understanding the complex and constantly shifting forces shaping contemporary China. As current events unfold, the course flexibly directs the focus of attention to the developments and background issues needed to make sense of changes happening as the course takes place.

Each semester the class examines the main social, political and economic issues facing China in the 21st century, through the lens of Beijing as political and cultural capital of the country. Topics touched on include: the demographic and architectural evolution of Beijing from dynastic times to the present; problems of urban destruction/reconstruction and social migration; the intellectual and social currents leading from the May Fourth Movement to Mao's revolution; the path of reform and opening up; the control mechanisms of the Chinese mass media and how the Internet is transforming China; Chinese language and script reform; the legacy of Chinese philosophy, the "Chinese mind" as reflected in current society, and the official resurrection of Confucianism; the rise of Chinese nationalism pre- and post-Beijing Olympics; problems and possibilities for China in the 21st century.

Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students should have acquired: (1) a basic historical knowledge of the history and development of Beijing as city and capital, (2) familiarity with the many of the core defining concepts of Chinese culture, (2) a good grasp of the major historical events and personalities that shaped Chinese politics and society in the 20th century, (3) a clearer understanding of the complex system of information control and censorship in the Chinese print media, broadcast media, and the Internet, (4) an overall picture of the demographic, economic, and environmental and global realities that will determine China's future in the next decade.

Course Requirements

Students should complete all reading assignments before coming to class, and should be prepared to participate actively in class discussions. Coursebook readings average about 50 pages per class session. Classes consist of a combination of lecture and discussion, with some lectures delivered by guest experts residing in Beijing.

Students submit a final paper with the following parameters:

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- The final paper must be a substantial treatment (10 pages double spaced) of any aspect of the material covered, or any aspect of contemporary China that the student wishes to investigate in more detail.
- Great leeway is given for choice of topic, but students should confer with the teacher well in advance to approve the subject and method of the project.
- Students are expected to show original thinking and independent analysis of the issues in question, and should preferably make use of the Beijing environment and Chinese language skills whenever possible.
- Students present a brief 10-minute presentation or summary of their final project in class. This gives them a chance to get feedback and comments from the students and teacher before finishing the project. This presentation counts as 20% of the final paper grade.

Finally, as there is now a large, varied selection English-language blogs covering China, all students are required to regularly visit China-related blogs. Specific blog addresses are provided in class. At the beginning of each class, a student gives a 5- to 10- minute report on a topic s/he has been monitoring in the Chinese-related blogosphere. These topics can include areas such as corruption, media, markets, scandals, education, US-China relations, economics, social trends, urban reconstruction, political leaders, language or language policy, the housing bubble, crime, law, technology, etc. Topics must be approved by the professor at least one day in advance, and must be clear and specific.

Methods of Evaluation

The final grade is determined as follows:

Blog reports 10%

Midterm exam 20%

Final exam 20%

Final paper/presentation (presentation 20% + paper 30%) = 50%

Primary Texts

Li, Lillian M., Alison J Dray-Novey, Haili Kong (2007) *Beijing: From Imperial City to Olympic City*.
New York: Palgrave McMillan.

Supplementary Materials

Optional readings are selections from *China Today, China Tomorrow* (Joseph Fewsmith, ed.) or other various articles.

Outline of Course Content

Note: Fall/Spring students cover approximately 1 to 2 topics per week. During the summer, when class periods are longer, students cover approximately 2 to 3 topics per week.

Topic 1 – Overview of Beijing

Brief history, geography and topology

Beijing as political and cultural capital

Urban organizational structure, the *hutongs*, 21st century architecture

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Beijing city wall

Topic 2 - Beijing urban reconstruction
Urban space and development in the reform era
Olympic development.

Wangfujing as model of urban development
The teahouse and the evolution of Beijing popular arts and entertainment. (*Xiangsheng, pingshu*, Peking Opera, acrobatics, etc.)

Topic 3 – Hutongs, dislocation, historic preservation
History of urban reconstruction
Liang Sicheng and the efforts to preserve the city

Topic 4 - Forbidden City, Yuanmingyuan, The Great Wall

Topic 5 - A Brief Survey of modern Chinese history: the end of the Qing Dynasty
Opium Wars
Taiping and Boxer Rebellions

Topic 6 - May Fourth Movement, Republican China
Unequal Treaties
New Culture and May 4th Movements
China in chaos: the Anti-Japanese War, warlordism, KMT and birth of the CCP

Topic 7 - China under Mao
Social and economic restructuring, rural communes, danwei
The Great Leap Forward

Topic 8 - The Cultural Revolution, Fall of the Gang of Four
Effects on the economy, society, education, politics
The legacy of Mao

Topic 9 - Reform and Opening Up: the Deng Era
Deng's economic 180-turn
Special Economic Zones (SEZ), social unrest

Topic 10 - Tiananmen Square Massacre
Background
Crackdown

Topic 11 - Tiananmen Aftermath: the 90s
Human rights policy
Shift in global China relation

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US-China relations

Topic 12 - The Chinese environment
Environmental degradation under Mao
The environmental cost of economic modernization

Topic 13 - China's energy crisis; regional aspects, food safety
Coal, hydroelectric, nuclear power
China's energy policy and specific environmental impacts
Green solutions

Topic 14 - The One-Child Policy
History and present status of the policy
The coming demographic crunch and the economic implications

Topic 15 - The Chinese mind
Understanding deep Chinese-Western cultural differences through cross-cultural psychology
Chinese concepts of nature, the body
Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the mind
Interpersonal relationships, family

Topic 16 - Search for Chinese values
The new Confucianism
Revival of Buddhism, Daoism; resurgent Christianity, Falungong

Topic 17 - The Chinese Language and Public Policy
Issues of language policy, script reform, dialect use, literacy rates
Problems of Chinese character processing in the information age

Topic 18 – China's Future
China in the 21st Century: Optimism or pessimism?
The debate over China's future: *Hexie shehui* or impending collapse?