

University of Pennsylvania / Spring 2015

Media, Culture & Society in Contemporary China

(COMM 203-405; SOCI 230-405)

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Class meets T Th 10:30-12 @ STIT B26

Office Hours: 2-4pm Thursday, McNeil 394; and by appointment

Teaching Fellows:

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Introduction

This course covers contemporary Chinese media, culture, and society (1976-present). China today is a profoundly different world from when its economic reform was launched at the end of the 1970s. We will survey some of the major changes that have taken place and analyze the causes and consequences of change, with some emphasis on media.

In our analysis, we will make use of concepts and theories from sociology, communication, and other fields. In understanding the processes of social change, we attach importance to a historical perspective. At the same time, we will develop a balanced view of social change as the outcomes of the interplay of multiple forces, both endogenous and exogenous. We will analyze the constraints of structural and institutions forces as well as the agency of the people.

Narratives about China are often contested and multiple. We embrace pluralism and openness in our discussions. This course will help you develop a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of important issues in contemporary China. The theoretical approaches we will cover will be applicable to the study of media and social change more broadly.

In short, our objectives are as follows:

- Develop skills in the informed and critical analysis of contemporary Chinese media, culture and society.
- Develop skills in social science analysis.
- Develop knowledge of the basic concepts and theories in the analysis of media, institutions, and social change.

Requirements

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1. Participation (5%). Class attendance is required.

2. Pop quizzes (10%). For class meetings with assigned readings, there will be unannounced quizzes on the readings of that day at the beginning of the class. There will be a total of 11 quizzes throughout the semester, worth 10 points. I will drop one lowest quiz result.
3. One 30-minute team presentation (15%). The presentation should be about the topics of the day of the class. For example, for Jan. 27, the presentation should be on the revival of China's private sector. You should use the assigned readings as a starting point to explore issues related to the topic. It should demonstrate critical and innovative thinking (e.g., be wary of media stereotypes), but do not try to cover everything.
4. **April 9** A take-home analytical essay on an assigned topic. (20%)
5. **March 5** Mid-term exam (20%, multiple-choice and short-essay questions)
6. **TBA** Final exam (30%, multiple-choice and short-essay questions)

Readings

Readings mainly consist of journal articles and book chapters, available on Canvas web site.

Course Calendar

January 15 Introduction

Documentary film: "China: A Century of Revolution, Part 2." (We will watch the film in class).

Part I Overview of the Reform Era, 1978-present

January 20 The end of the Mao era and the Cultural Revolution

"Revolution" in Yu Hua, *China in Ten Words* (Vintage, 2012), pp. 113-141.

January 22 Unofficial media and the Democracy Wall movement

Helen Siu and Zelda Stern, eds., *Mao's Harvest: Voices from China's New Generation*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 3-9, Pan Xiao, "Why is life's road getting narrower and narrower," and Bei Dao, "Reply."

Merle Goldman, "Democracy Wall: The First Assertion of Political Rights in the Post-Mao Era." In Merle Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen* (Harvard University Press, 2007), pp.25-50.

January 27 The revival of the private sector

Carolyn Hsu, "Cadres, Getihu, and Good Businesspeople: Making Sense of Entrepreneurs In Early Post-Socialist China." *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and*

World Economic Development Vol. 35, No. 1 (2006), pp. 1-38.

Kellee Tsai, 2007. *Capitalism without Democracy*, Chapter 3. "The Unofficial and Official Revival of China's Private Sector."

January 29 "Culture fever" in the 1980s

On Youtube, watch the first six minutes of "The East Is Red (1964)" here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbSQc6btIQc>

Then also on Youtube, listen to any song by Teresa Teng by searching for her name. Be prepared to share your impressions in class.

Su Xiaokang, Wang Luxiang, Richard Bodman and Pin Wan, *Deathsong of the River: A Reader's Guide to the Chinese TV Series Heshang*. Cornell University East Asia Program (1991), Part. 1 "Searching for a Dream," 101-116; Part 6, "Blueness" 203-221.

Feb. 3 The student movement in 1989

Study the website of the documentary film *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, especially the chronology at: <http://www.tsquare.tv/>

Study the website of "Result Zero", a photo exhibition of the student protests: http://vsw.org/exhibitions/Result_ZERO/index.php

Craig Calhoun, *Neither Gods Nor Emperors* (University of California Press, 1994), Chapter 6, "Cultural crisis," pp.213-236.

Feb. 5 Deepening of the reform in the 1990s: The rise of the middle class

Luigi Tomba, "Creating an Urban Middle Class: Social Engineering in Beijing." *The China Journal*, 51(2004), pp. 1-26.

Fulong Wu, "Gated and packaged suburbia: Packaging and branding Chinese suburban residential development." *Cities*. 27(5), 2010, pp. 385-396.

Feb. 10 "Red capitalists"

Willy Lam, "The Rise of the Red Capitalists." *The New York Times*, October 26, 2007. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/26/opinion/26iht-edlam.1.8067870.html?pagewanted=all>

Bloomberg News, "China's Billionaire People's Congress Makes Capitol Hill Look Like Pauper." February 27, 2012. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-02-26/china-s-billionaire-lawmakers-make-u-s-peers-look-like-paupers.html>

Bruce Dickson, "China's Cooperative Capitalists: The Business End of the Middle Class," in Cheng Li, ed., *China's Emerging Middle Class: Beyond Economic Transformation* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2010).

Feb. 12 Women and women's activism

Use Google Images to search for “Women in China” and “Women in the US.” Be prepared to discuss your findings in class.

Diana Fu, “A Cage of Voices: Producing and Doing *Dagongmei* in Contemporary China.” *Modern China* 35(2009): 527-561.

Jinyan Zeng, “Politics of emotions in grassroots feminist protests.” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. Winter/spring 2014, pp.41-52.

Feb. 17 Rural-Urban migration

Guest lecture by Yi-Lin Chiang

Chiang, Yi-Lin, Emily Hannum, and Grace Kao. 2015. "It's Not Just About the Money: Gender and Youth Migration from Rural China." *Chinese Sociological Review*.

Leslie Chang TED talk on factory girls (view in class).

Feb. 19 Youth

Fengshu Liu, 2008. “Constructing the autonomous middle-class self in today’s China: The case of young-adult only-children university students.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 11(2), 193-212.

Mary Bergstrom. 2012. *All Eyes East: Lessons from the Front Lines of Marketing to China's Youth* (Palgrave MacMillan), Chapter 1, “The New (R)evolutionaries: The Post-70s, Post-80s, and Post-90s Generations.”

Marcella Szablewicz, “The 'losers' of China's Internet: Memes as 'structures of feeling' for disillusioned young netizens.” *China Information*. 28(2), 2014, pp. 259–275.

Feb. 24 Environmental crisis and civil society responses

Visit this Chinese NGO directory: http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/?page_id=908
From the directory, choose one NGO and be prepared to introduce it in class.

Guobin Yang, “Environmental NGOs and Institutional Dynamics in China.” *The China Quarterly* No. 181 (2005), pp. 46-66.

Thomas Johnson, “The Health Factor in Anti-Waste Incinerator Campaigns in Beijing and Guangzhou.” *The China Quarterly*, No. 214, 2013, pp. 356-375.

Feb. 26 Religious organization and culture

Fenggang Yang, “The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China.” *The Sociological Quarterly* 47 (2006) 93–122.

Casten Vala and Kevin O’Brien, “Recruitment to Protestant House Churches.” Pp. 108-125 in *Popular Protest in China* (Harvard Univ Press, 2008), edited by Kevin O’Brien.

March 3 The state, governance, and prospects for political change

Guobin Yang 2011. "China's Gradual Revolution." Op-ed in *The New York Times*, March 13.

Cheng Li, "The End of the CCP's Resilient Authoritarianism? A Tripartite Assessment of Shifting Power in China." *The China Quarterly* 211(2012), pp 595-623.

Chris Buckley and Andrew Jacobs, "Maoists in China, Given New Life, Attack Dissent." *New York Times*, JAN. 4, 2015.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/05/world/chinas-maoists-are-revived-as-thought-police.html>

March 5 Mid-term exam

March 7-15 Spring break. No class.

Part II Media and Culture in Contemporary China

March 17 Consumerism and commercial culture

Xiaobo Su, "Urban entrepreneurialism and the commodification of heritage in China." *Urban Stud* published online 8 April 2014. DOI: 10.1177/0042098014528998

"Bamboozle," in Yu Hua, *China in Ten Words* (Vintage, 2012).

Xinghua Li (2013) A Comparative Analysis of Hybrid Car Advertisements in the USA and China: Desire, Globalization, and Environment, *Environmental Communication*, 7:4, 512-528, DOI: 10.1080/17524032.2013.818051

March 19 Overview of mass media reform

Qian Gang and David Bandurski, "China's Emerging Public Sphere: The Impact of Media Commercialization, Professionalism, and the Internet in the Era of Transition." Pp.38-76 in Susan Shirk ed., *Changing Media, Changing China* (Oxford UP, 2011).

March 24 Investigative journalism

Guest lecture by Dr. Maria Repnikova.

Jingrong Tong, *Investigative Journalism in China: Journalism, Power, and Society* (Continuum, 2012): Chapter 3, "The flourishing of investigative journalism in the 1990s."

Maria Repnikova, "Investigative Journalists' Coping Tactics in a Restrictive Media Environment." Pp. 113-132 in *Chinese Investigative Journalists' Dreams: Autonomy, Agency, and Voice*, edited by Marina Svensson, Elin Sæther, Zhi'an Lexington Books, 2013.

March 26 Chinese media and globalization

Michael Curtin, "Introduction: Media Capital in Chinese Film and Television." In Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. Pp. 1-28.

Angela Lin Huang. 2013. "Can Beijing become a global media capital?" In Terry

Flew, *Creative Industries and Urban Development: Creative Cities in the 21st Century*. Routledge, pp. 56-67.

March 31 Television culture

Meng Bingchun, "Who needs democracy if we can pick our favorite girl? *Super Girl* as media spectacle." *Chinese Journal of Communication*. 2(3), 2009.

Geng Song, "Imagining the Others: Foreigners on the Chinese TV Screen." Pp. 107-120 in *Chinese Television in the Twenty-First Century: Entertaining the Nation*, edited by Ruoyun Bai and Geng Song. Routledge, 2014.

April 2 Documentary films

Topics for analytical announced in class.

Wanning Sun, "The cultural politics of recognition: Rural migrants and documentary films in China." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*. 7(1), 2013, pp.3-20.

Hsiu-Chuang Deppman "Reading docufiction: Jia Zhangke's 24 City." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 8(3), 2014, 188-208.

Screening of documentary film, "Silent Nu River."

April 7 Chinese Internet culture

Guobin Yang. (2010). "Chinese Internet Literature and the Changing Field of Print Culture." Pp.333-352 in *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*, edited by Cynthia Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

Heather Inwood, *Verse Going Viral: China's New Media Scene* (Univ of Washington Press, 2014), Chapter 1, "Poetry on the Web," pp. 45-80.

April 9 Internet censorship.

Hard copy of analytical essay due in class.

Guest lecture by Tim Libert.

Study this "Grass-Mud Horse Lexicon" here:
<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Grass-Mud-Horse-Lexicon>

Mackinnon, R. (2012). *Consent of the Networked: The World-wide Struggle for Internet Freedom*. Basic Books. Chapter 3, "Networked Authoritarianism."

April 14 Internet activism

Guobin Yang. (2014). "Internet Activism and the Party-State in China." *Daedalus* 143(2): 110-123.

Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China* (Columbia University Press, 2009), Chapter 1, "Online Activism in an Age of Contention."

April 16 Gaming, online videos, nationalism, and dissent

Elaine Zhao and Michael Keane, "Between Formal and Informal: The Shakeout in China's Online Video Industry." *Media, Culture & Society* 35, 2013, pp.724-741.

Hongping Nie, "Gaming, Nationalism, and Ideological Work in Contemporary China: Online games based on the War of Resistance against Japan." *Journal of Contemporary China*, 22(81), 2013.

Paola Voci, "Quasi-documentary, cellflick and web spoofs: Chinese movies' other visual pleasures." Pp. 45-54 in *China's iGeneration: Cinema and Moving Image Culture for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Matthew D. Johnson, Keith B. Wagner, Kiki Tianqi Yu, Luke Vulpiani. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2014.

Screening of online video "War of Internet Addiction."

April 21 Socially engaged art

Zheng Bo, "From Gongren to Gongmin: A Comparative Analysis of Ai Weiwei's Sunflower Seeds and Nian." *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 11(2 & 3).

Review samples of Zheng Bo's art here: <http://www.tigerchicken.com/>

Room for Debate, *The New York Times*: "Ai Weiwei and the Artist's Role in China." April 11, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/04/11/ai-weiwei-and-the-artists-role-in-china>

April 23 Digital labor and makerspaces

Jon Stewart on Alibaba 'The communists have beaten us at capitalism' \$baba
<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/zkwq3h/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-billion-dollar-baba>

Lin Zhang (In Press). "Fashioning the feminine self in 'prosumer capitalism': Women's work and the transnational reselling of Western luxury online." *Journal of Consumer Culture*.

Silvia Lindtner, 2014. "Hackerspaces and the Internet of Things in China: How Makers Are Reinventing Industrial Production, Innovation, and the Self." *China Information*. 28(2): 145-167.

April 28 Course summary (last class)

May 4-12 Final exam period.

Final exam: time and day TBA.