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

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


January 22 Unofficial media and the Democracy Wall movement


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
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.


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


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


Feb. 10 “Red capitalists”


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.


**Feb. 17 Rural-Urban migration**

Guest lecture by Yi-Lin Chiang


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

**Feb. 19 Youth**


**Feb. 24 Environmental crisis and civil society responses**

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


**Feb. 26 Religious organization and culture**


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


**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**


**March 19 Overview of mass media reform**


**March 24 Investigative journalism**

Guest lecture by Dr. Maria Repnikova.


**March 26 Chinese media and globalization**


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

March 31 Television culture


April 2 Documentary films

Topics for analytical announced in class.


Screening of documentary film, “Silent Nu River.”

April 7 Chinese Internet culture


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


April 14 Internet activism


**April 16 Gaming, online videos, nationalism, and dissent**


Screening of online video “War of Internet Addiction.”

**April 21 Socially engaged art**


Review samples of Zheng Bo’s art here: [http://www.tigerchicken.com/](http://www.tigerchicken.com/)


**April 23 Digital labor and makerspaces**

Jon Stewart on Alibaba 'The communists have beaten us at capitalism' $baba


**April 28 Course summary (last class)**

**May 4-12 Final exam period.**

Final exam: time and day TBA.