Course introduction

This seminar provides an in-depth analysis of media institutions, politics, and culture in modern China, with an emphasis on the contemporary scene. A main goal is to identify and explore critical new questions for advanced empirical and historical research. We will read major works on selected media genres (newspapers, television, radio, films, documentary films, and the internet) and analyze their theoretical and empirical contributions. Another goal is to understand the causes and dynamics of media control and media innovation, the formation of publics and counterpublics, and the role of media in social and political change. We will examine how the state and the market shape media practices in different media genres and how media professionals, artists, citizens, and audience negotiate change. The analysis will be linked to the current scholarly debates on the evolution of Chinese authoritarianism and a Chinese-style civil society.

Students will make at least one oral presentation on assigned readings and complete a term paper based on primary research. The research paper may be done individually or in collaboration with a classmate. A co-authored paper is expected to be more substantial than a single-author paper.

Readings:

Books are on reserve in the Annenberg Library or could be purchased from Amazon. Articles and chapters are available on Canvas course web site.

Course schedule

8/29 Introduction

Part I  Historical studies

9/5 Telegraphs in early 20th century China

Discussant:

9/12 Media and political culture in the early Republic


Discussant:

9/19 Political communication in the Cultural Revolution


Discussant:

**Part II Contemporary genres**

9/26 Perspectives on media change in contemporary China (I)

Zhao Yuezhi, Communication in China (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). Chapters 1& 2


Discussant:
10/3  Perspectives on media change in contemporary China (II)
Discussant:

10/10 Television

Ying Zhu and Chris Berry, eds., TV China (Indiana Univ. Press, 2009).
Discussant:

[Decide on topic for review essay on internet studies and topic for final research paper.]

10/17 Documentary film

Chris Berry, Xinyu Lu, and Lisa Rofel, eds., The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record (Hong Kong Univ. Press, 2010). Browse the book. Select any 4 or 5 chapters for careful reading and class discussion.
Discussant:

Part III  Digital media

10/24 Governance, censorship, privacy


10/31 Online activism and political contestation


Jian Xu, “Online weiguan in Web 2.0 China: Historical origins, characteristics, platforms and consequences.” Unpublished manuscript. No circulation beyond this class.

[I’ll be out of town today. Class still meets in my absence.]

Discussant:

11/7 Labor, industry, and culture

Jack Qiu, Working-Class Network Society: Communication Technology and the Information Have-Less in Urban China (MIT Press, 2009), Conclusion.


Discussant:

11/14 Sociality, community, and intimacy

Cara Wallis, Technomobility in China: Young Migrant Women and Mobile Phones (NYU Press, 2013), Chapter 3 “Navigating Mobile Networks of Sociality and Intimacy.”
Ning Zhang, “Movement Without Marching: Web-based Backpacking Community and New Online Activism in China.” Unpublished manuscript. No circulation beyond this class.


Discussant:

11/21 Review of state of the field (on selected subfields of communication studies in China)

Examples: Internet studies; international communication; crisis communication; cultural policy; media policy; cultural industry.


**Part IV Research projects**

11/26 (per University adjusted schedule). Presentation of projects

12/5 Presentation of projects (last class meeting)

12/7 final paper due