



Chinese Society and Culture

Professor: LI, Limei

Email: lmli@soci.ecnu.edu.cn

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 30 hours

Class Time: 13:30-16:15 Mon. Wed. Fri.

Course Description

Chinese society is undergoing unprecedented reform and transformations. The course will focus on understanding major changes that occurred after 1949 and during the reform era, and are underway now. China's recent transition to a market economy and return to the global community have huge impacts over the lives of its people. This course will discuss different aspects that China is making the transition, such as the demographic transition, transition from one of the most egalitarian societies to one of the most unequal societies, transition from low to high population mobility, transition from an elite to mass education, transition from "the end of religion" to "religious revival", and transition from collectivism to individualism. The course will also examine the most fundamental institutions and forms of organization that shape the everyday lives and social relations of Chinese citizens. Thirdly, this course will discuss various kinds of inequalities, division and contention in the Chinese society.

The course will be grounded on a basic understanding of China's regional geography and modern history. The class will combine lectures, readings, documentaries, and field trips. Students will be engaged in active learning activities, such as class discussion, synthesizing reading materials, writing essays, field observation, and writing a research paper.

Learning Objectives

It is hoped that this course can provide a starting point to learn about the transformations Chinese society has undergone. At the end of this course, students will:

- ✓ Be familiar with the recent literature on social and cultural issues in contemporary China
- ✓ Understand the structures, institutions and processes shaping contemporary Chinese cultural and society
- ✓ Be able to discuss Chinese society and the major issues it faces in historical and comparative perspective



- ✓ Draw on theoretical perspectives to evaluate debates about the nature of contemporary Chinese culture and society
- ✓ Produce an argument and marshal evidence for it

Required readings

Jacka, T., Kipnis, A.B.and Sargeson,S.2013. Contemporary China: society and social change, Cambridge University Press.

There are additional pieces of required readings, as listed by topics at the end of the syllabus, which will be sent to you via email.

Assessments and grading

Attendance and class participation	15%
Assignment I on one-child policy	15%
Assignment II on Marriage Corner	15%
Assignment III on Migrant Workers	15%
Final project	40%
Proposal	5%
Presentation	10%
Final paper	25%

Final class grades will be based on the following scale:

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	70-76
D	60-69
F	0-59

Course Requirements

Attendance and class participation (15%)

Attendance in all classes, including field trips, is expected. I also expect you to be prepared to participate in class discussions and share your ideas and experiences that are



relevant to the class. You should read the assigned readings before attending class. You also need to browse the China-related websites and share one piece of news/report/article that is relevant to this course in class. I provide several useful websites at the end of the syllabus. Please check them out before you attend the class. You are also welcome to share other useful sources about China with the class.

Starting from the second week, the class will start with a short discussion about China. Every student should introduce one piece of news/report/article about China.

China is changing rapidly and in many cases the scholarly literature is somewhat behind developments there. Through this exercise, students can learn about what's going on in contemporary China. It might give you some ideas about your final project.

Your contributions to class discussions are an important aspect of your overall performance in the course, which will be recorded and credited. In order to get a full mark for class attendance, you need to attend the class least 10 times out of total 12. In other words, you have two quotas for missing class (except for the final presentation) without affecting your grade.

If you cannot attend a specific class, please notify the instructor in advance.

Assignment I on One-Child policy in China (15%)

Please write an essay about China's one-child policy. What are the major implications of this policy for Chinese population and society? Which of these do you consider the most important, and why? Would you change the policy? If so, how? You need to consult the two articles below for you essay. The essay will be 600-800 and it is due on Sep 28.

Wang, F.2011. The future of a demographic overachiever: long-term implications of the demographic transition in China, *Population and Development Review*, 37:173-190.

Basten S. and Jiang, Q. 2014. China's family planning policies: recent reforms and future prospects, *Studies in Family Planning*

Assignment II on Marriage Corner (15%)

If the weather permits, we will have our first course field trip to the marriage corner at the People's Park on Sep 24, Saturday. Based on field observation and personal interviews, students will conduct a small research and write a short essay on the changing



Gender/Marriage/Family in contemporary Chinese society. The essay will be 800-1,000 and it is due on Oct 10.

Here are the questions you can address in your essay.

1. During your field trip to the Marriage Corner, what does SURPRISE / SHOCK / INTEREST / BOTHER you most? Please describe it as in-depth as possible, and also provide the context of how such feeling arises.
2. How do Chinese people think about it? Conduct an informal interview with a Chinese friend in Shanghai. First share your observation with him/her, and then ask for your friend's own experiences and thoughts regarding this matter.
3. Provide a SOCIOLOGICAL account to help people understand this particular phenomenon you encounter at the Marriage Corner. You could either discuss the social factors that have shaped it, or focus on exploring the different reactions between your Chinese friend and yourself.

Assignment III on Migrant Workers (15%)

We will watch a documentary, *The Last Train Home*, on National Holiday. The assignment III will be based on this film and the assigned readings. Students must demonstrate a clear grasp of issues raised in the film and offer critical discussions by engaging the course materials. The essay will be 800-1,000 and it is due on Oct 19.

Your essay can focus on one of the questions list below.

1. What forces and structures are at work underlying the couple's migration decision of leaving their children behind and working in the city?
2. As migrant workers of different cohorts, how did the daughter differ from her parents? Why did the daughter quit the school to work in the factory? For the generational conflict arising between the parents and the daughter, please present a SOCIOLOGICAL explanation to it. (Note: rather than focusing some individual traits such as personal character or particular experience, you should look at how personal trouble is shaped by the larger social forces.)
3. Based on the film, please discuss the impacts of migrant workers on their original rural community. Make sure to provide evidences from the film.



Final project (40%)

Students will develop and present a final research paper of their choice, with approval of the instructor. The final research paper may either be a literature review on a specific topic of interest, or a research project involving collection and analysis of qualitative or quantitative data. You can also develop the final paper based on one of the three assignments. The main purpose of this paper is to answer a significant research question about Chinese culture & society.

Choose a topic and write a research proposal: Your topic could directly and critically engage any one of themes discussed in class. You are encouraged to identify a research question from your learning, observation and experience. You are also encouraged to compare and contrast the Chinese experiences with that of your country. You should address questions in your proposal such as: what is the subject of your final research paper? What data do you plan to use in your paper? How are you going to collect the data? What help do you need to finish this course project? It should be between 1-2 pages, double spaced. The research proposal is due on Oct 17.

Collect literature, information and data: You should collect and analyze information on the nature of the issue, underlying processes or factors, and its implications. You may consider interviewing people in town, participating and observing an event, and citing reports from media, etc. The paper should include the discussion of at least three scholarly articles not included on this syllabus and can also include references to non-academic sources. You are welcome to talk to me about data collection and possible references.

Write and present it: The final paper should consist of an introduction, a brief review of other people's work, your major analysis and argument, and a summary or conclusion. You need to form a clear statement regarding your research question.

At the end of your paper, please list all sources of information used alphabetically. Paper should be about 8-12 double-spaced pages, with 12-point font in length. Please submit an electronic version to me. It is due on Nov 9. The presentation of final research paper is also scheduled on the last class on Nov 9. To save time and avoid all technological troubles, students must create PPT or pdf file and send them to me in advance, and I will have them ready for presentation in computer. I am looking forward to learning from you.



Please note:

Schedules, topics, readings and films may be revised at times, in which case announcements will be made in class as appropriate.

You are expected to check email frequently so as to keep posted about course announcement and access the course materials.

Please submit all the assignments and final paper in electronic version.

No late paper accepted.

Weekly Schedule

Topics	Readings
1. Chinese Society in Transition	Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, Contemporary China, Introduction
2. Understanding Chinese Society: The geographical setting and historical legacies <i>Documentary: China: Triumph and Turmoil, episode 2</i>	Naughton, B. 2007. The Chinese Economy, chapter 1
3. The demographic transition in China	Davis, D. 2014. Demographic challenges for a rising china, Daedalus, 143:2
4. The “woman question” and gender inequalities <i>Documentary: Twin Sisters: A World Apart</i>	Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, Contemporary China, chapter 12
<i>National Holiday Break, No Class</i>	
5. Marriage, intimacy, and sex <i>Documentary: The Lonely Hearts</i>	Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, Contemporary China, chapter 2
6. Ethnicity in China <i>Documentary: A Year in Tibet</i>	Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, Contemporary China, chapter 7
7. The divided society: rising inequality in China	Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, Contemporary China, chapter 10, 11



8. The hukou system, migration and family relation <i>Documentary: Last Train Home</i>	Chan, K.W. 2009. The Chinese hukou system at 50, <i>Eurasian Geography and Economics</i> , 50(2), 197-221.
9. The work unit system	Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, <i>Contemporary China</i> , chapter 4 &5
10. Religion in Chinese society	Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, <i>Contemporary China</i> , chapter 6
11. Education in China <i>Documentary: Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School</i>	Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, <i>Contemporary China</i> , chapter 8
12. Conflict and Resistance in Chinese Society <i>Documentary: The Warriors of Qiugang</i>	Jacka, Kipnis and Sargeson, <i>Contemporary China</i> , chapter 13
13. Final research paper due and class presentation	What do you learn about Chinese culture & society?

Field Trips

To complement our text reading and class learning, we will make several visits to local museums and other sites. Field trip is an important part of this course. Your attendance is expected. Here I list the possible field trips.

Sites	Themes
Marriage Corner at People's Park	Marriage market in China
Dinghaiqiao community, Hongkou	Urban communities in transition

Useful websites to learn about China

<http://www.chinafile.com/>

<http://chinafocus.us/>

<http://www.danwei.com/danwei-labs/>



<http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/>

<http://www.chinasmack.com/>

Public accounts on WeChat

Theworldofchinese

Course Instructor

Dr. Li Limei got a Ph.D. in Human Geography, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong. Currently she is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology, East China Normal University, Shanghai. She teaches courses on urban sociology, social geography, urban development in China, and social issues in Chinese society. Her research interests include urban housing, migrants and citizenship in Chinese cities. She creates a subscription account on Wechat, “CityReads”, posting notes on city reads in both Chinese and English weekly.