Social Change in Contemporary China  
SOSC4270

Fall 2019  
Thursdays 13:30-16:20  
LSK1032

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Description

In this course we will examine contemporary Chinese society, looking at economic development, rural transformation, urbanization and migration, labor relations, class structure, governance, and popular protest. It will examine various aspects of social inequality in China during the Mao and post-Mao eras, including inequality within villages, the rural/urban divide, labor relations, education and health policies, gender and ethnic relations, and the social foundations of elite groups. Each of these topics will be tackled analytically, but the goal is also to understand what it was and is like to live in China as the country has undergone radical social transformations over the past seven decades. The course is writing-intensive and will be conducted as a discussion seminar.

Requirements and grading

Memos on the readings
Write brief memos (about three double-spaced pages) on the weekly readings. You are expected to write a total of five memos. You may write more than five; your final grade will be based on your best five memos. In your memos you should first concisely summarize the each of the readings, considering what the authors are attempting to explain, the arguments advanced, the evidence adduced, and the explicit or implicit normative agenda. Then comment on the group of readings, comparing explanatory and normative agendas, arguments, and evidence. Focus on the elements that most interest you. You can show how the information and arguments in one reading corroborate or contradict those in another reading, discuss how one reading sheds light on the content of another, and explain why you found an argument to be convincing (or not). Memos must be turned in at the end of class every week.

In-class reports on readings
You will select three readings to report on in class. In each report you should consider the reading in the same way you would for a memo (see above) and you should compare it with the rest of the readings for that week. The readings you select must be from different weeks and you may not turn in memos for the same week that you report on a reading.

**Research paper**
Write a research paper based on selected course readings and additional research. You are encouraged to consider how a particular form of inequality in China has changed over time and why. Your paper should be analytical rather than simply descriptive and should make an argument. It should engage the content and ideas contained in one or more of the readings; you should also find additional sources of information and analysis. The paper should be based mainly on your analysis of the data and arguments presented in other scholarly accounts; you can also use primary sources (documents, statistical data, memoirs, etc.), but you are not required to. Papers should be about ten double-spaced pages, plus bibliography. In the schedule below, please note the deadlines for turning in an initial proposal and an outline/bibliography as well as the final paper.

**Grading**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading memos:</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class reading reports:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper:</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**Attendance:**
You are expected to attend every class. After two absences, for each time you miss a class—for whatever reason—your final grade will be reduced by 0.1 (on a scale of 4). For example, if you miss three classes (including three without penalty) and you have a 3.5 (A-) average for your essays and memos, your final grade will drop to 3.4 (B+). Perfect attendance will be rewarded by increasing your grade by 0.1.

**Participation:**
Final course grades may be adjusted up or down one notch (e.g., from B+ to A-) based on your participation in class discussion.

**Cell phones and notebook computers**

Please turn off cell phones in class and use notebook computers _only_ for taking notes. Close notebook computers during class discussions.

**Books**

You are encouraged to buy the following books; they are also on reserve at the library. The other readings will be accessible through the course Canvas site.

David Goodman, *Class in Contemporary China* (Polity Press, 2014)
Reading List and Schedule

Week 1 (September 5)
**Introduction: The 1949 Chinese Revolution**
Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After*, pp. 3-73

Film: *China—A Century of Revolution. Episode 2: The Mao Years*

Week 2 (September 12)
**Rural inequality in the collective era**
Mobo Gao, *Gao Village*, pp. 1-24, 30-71

Recommended:

Week 3 (September 19)
**Urban inequality and the work unit system**

Recommended:

Week 4 (September 26)
**Rural inequality in the post-Mao era**
David Goodman, *Class in Contemporary China*, pp. 143-148, 166-172

Recommended:

Week 5 (October 3)
**The rural-urban divide**
Mobo Gao, Gao Village, pp. 25-30, 200-222

Recommended:

Week 6 (October 10)
**Industrial restructuring**
David Goodman, Class in Contemporary China, pp. 122-143, 160-166
Eli Friedman, “China in Revolt” Jacobin, August 2012
Joel Andreas, Disenfranchised: The Rise and Fall of Industrial Citizenship in China (2019), pp. 220-235

Film: China Blue

Recommended:

Week 7 (October 17)
**Gender inequality**
Mayfair Yang, “From gender erasure to gender difference: State feminism, consumer sexuality, and women’s public sphere in China,” Spaces of Their Own (1999), pp. 35-67

Film: Small Happiness
Recommended:
Jin Jiang, “Times have changed; men and women are the same,” in Xueping Zhong and Wang Zheng, eds., Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing up in the Mao Era (2001), pp. 100-119
Kay Ann Johnson, Women, the Family and Peasant Revolution in China (1983), pp. 155-207
Naihua Zhang, “In a world together yet apart: Urban and rural women coming of age in the seventies,” in Zhong and Zheng, eds., Some of Us, pp. 1-26
Tamara Jacka, Women’s Work in Rural China: Change and Continuity in an Era of Reform (1997), pp. 190-96

Week 8 (October 24)

**Ethnic minorities**
Dru Gladney, Ethnic Identity in China (1998), pp. 11-24

Recommended:
Barry Sautman, “Tibet: Myths and Realities” Current History (September 2001), pp. 278-83

Week 9 (October 31)

**Health care**
Mobo Gao, Gao Village (1999), pp. 72-91

Recommended:
Adam Jourdan and Ben Hirschler, “China healthcare costs forcing patients into crippling debt,” Reuters (July 9, 2016)
Week 10 (November 7)

**Education in the Mao era**

Film: *Breaking with Old Ideas* (决裂)

Recommended:

**Turn in an initial proposal for your research paper on Thursday November 7 (in class)**
*We will meet individually to discuss your proposals on Tuesday November 12 and Wednesday November 13*

Week 11 (November 14)

**Education in the post-Mao era**
David Goodman, *Class in Contemporary China*, pp. 92-121
Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers* (2009), 224-247

Recommended:

Week 12 (November 21)

**No class meeting**

**Turn in an outline and an initial bibliography for your research paper on Thursday Nov 21 (via Canvas)**
*We will meet individually on Tuesday November 26 and Wednesday November 27 to discuss your proposals*

Week 13 (November 28)

**Those at the top**
David Goodman, *Class in Contemporary China*, pp. 64-91

Recommended:

*Turn in your research paper on Friday December 6 (via Canvas)*