

WOODSWORTH COLLEGE
University of Toronto
2022 Summer Program
SOC393Y0 - Contemporary Chinese Society
May 14th to June 10th, 2022

Instructors: Professor Weiguo ZHANG, Sociology
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Course Description

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Seeing it once is better than being told a hundred times

This course aims to enhance students' understanding of Chinese politics, economy, and culture, and of the impacts of the market oriented reforms on the lived experiences of the people in contemporary China. With combination of online lectures and discussions, students will have the opportunity to learn various aspects of social, economic and political changes in contemporary China, regarding such important issues like its population, ethnicity, internal migration, stratification and inequality in education, health, employment and gender, family organization and family formulation, social network, poverty, social welfare, sexuality and intimacy, China's future role in the new global context, etc.

The focus of this course is to understand social change and development in contemporary Chinese society, particularly the roles of societal institutions and individual actions in social change, and how social change affects the nature of people's lives. It will concern such theoretical and methodological issues regarding state-society relations (state in society, state as society), structure and agency, context and behavior, and macro-micro linkages. We will examine, particularly, how macro state policies (including market reforms, population policy, and democratic election), mediated by societal institutions, influence individual behavior, and on the other hand, how individual actions shape the characteristics of the society in which they live.

In addition to the formal lectures and classroom discussions co-taught by two University of Toronto professors, namely Weiguo Zhang (Sociology), and Ka Tat Tsang (Social Work), we will invite Chinese scholars and students, villagers, migrant workers, women, elderly, and policy makers for guest lectures and informants discussions.

By the end of the course, students should:

- have deeper understanding of the characteristics of Chinese politics, economy, culture, and society, and how they intertwine and work together in Chinese society;
- have better understanding of the relevant theories and concepts of social change and development, and particularly the roles of societal institutions and individual action in social change, and how social change affects the nature of people's lives;

- be able to apply theoretical knowledge and methodological skills in the critical analysis of empirical issues pertinent to Chinese society.

Course Requirements & Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based on the following activities:

Journal (Value: 30%): Based on class participation and readings, keep a written journal of your own reflections on the issues discussed. The journal is to be submitted to the instructor three times over the course. 3 pages for each journal entry (typed, double spaced, excluding references).

The journal exercise is intended to facilitate your own learning and integration of scholarly exploration and personal experience. Journal writing, therefore, does not have to conform rigidly to academic writing conventions. The key idea is for you to demonstrate how you have processed the materials covered in this course and made them relevant to your own personal learning and development.

First Journal due: May 23 (Monday), 2022 before 9:00 am (Value: 10%)

Second Journal due: July 30 (Monday), 2022 before 9:00 am (Value: 10%)

Third Journal due: June 6 (Monday), 2022 before 9:00 am (Value: 10%)

Student-Led Seminar (Value: 25%): Students will work in small groups. Each group will lead a seminar (30 minutes) on a topic related to this course. The group will be responsible for making a 20-minute presentation on the chosen topic, and facilitating a 10-minute Q&A and/or discussion on the topic.

Participation (Value: 15%): Attendance, participation in classroom discussion and preparation of questions for discussion with informants will be counted towards participation of the course. Innovative ideas, inquisitive questions, and sharing of information and experience helpful to the learning of other students will be particularly valued.

Research Essay (Value: 30%): Each student is required to write an individual essay based on either one of the discussions with informants in class, or one of the fieldwork visits in Beijing or Tianjin. Student needs to submit three elements for this essay assignment at the different stages of the course: (a) a brief research topic with rudimentary research ideas submitted in the first week of the course; (b) a list of interview questions for informants pertinent to the research topic before the actual meetings or fieldwork visits; (c) final essay of 12 page (typed, double spaced, excluding references), submitted at the end of the course. The instructions regarding the specific dates for submission, formants of the essay, and a marking scheme will be discussed in class.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Day 1 – May 16, 2022 Introduction

Day 2 – May 17, 2022 Economic History and Development

Day 3 – May 18, 2022	Market Reforms, Inequality and Politics
Day 4 – May 19, 2022	Population: “One-Child” Policy and Demographic Change
Day 5 – May 23, 2022	Kin, Family, and Marriage Dynamics
Day 6 – May 24, 2022	Women’s Participation in Labor and Politics
Day 7 – May 25, 2022	
Morning:	Village Life
Afternoon:	Discussion with professors and students on higher education
Day 8 – May 26, 2022	
Morning:	Life Course, Aging, and Social Support
Afternoon:	Discussion with students on love, marriage and sexuality
Day 10 – May 31, 2022	Chinese Culture
Day 11 – June 1, 2022	Sexuality, Intimacy and Relationships
Day 12 – June 2, 2022	Social Problems and Social Service
Day 13 – June 3, 2022	Visit (TBA)
Day 14 – June 6, 2022	Globalization and the Rise of China
Day 15 – June 7, 2022	Group presentation
Day 16 – June 8, 2022	Final Debrief

Course Materials

Zang, X. (Ed.). (2016). Understanding Chinese Society. Routledge.

It is available electronically from the University of Toronto Libraries:

<http://search.library.utoronto.ca/details?8940692&uuid=2922e106-88b9-4a58-bb98-64ea1ef8f8a3>