

WOODSWORTH COLLEGE
University of Toronto
2023 Summer Program
SOC393Y0 - China from a Distance: Domestic and Global Chinese Communities
June 3 to 30th, 2023

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 Chinese people in China and elsewhere. With combination of lectures, discussions, visits and other learning activities, 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 and global Chinese communities, 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 cover 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, policy makers and other professionals 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 communities;
- 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 and Chinese communities.

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: Jun 12 (Monday), 2023 before 9:00 am¹ (Value: 10%)

Second Journal due: Jun 19 (Monday), 2023 before 9:00 am (Value: 10%)

Third Journal due: Jun 26 (Monday), 2023 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.

¹ All times refer to Singapore time (GMT +8)

Course Schedule (subject to change)

June 5 Monday	Introduction (WZ & TKT)
June 6 Tuesday	Economic History and Development (WZ)
June 7 Wednesday	Market Reforms, Inequality and Politics (WZ)
June 8 Thursday	Marriage and family (WZ)
June 10 Saturday	Seminar with Invited Guest Speaker
June 12 Monday	Transformation of village life (WZ)
June 13 Tuesday	Chinese women (WZ)
June 14 Wednesday	China's Belt and Road Initiative (WZ)
June 15 Thursday	Chinese Health System (WZ)
June 16 Friday Visit: 9:30 am Coffee Chat 8:00- 9:30 pm	Open Seminar/Visit
June 17 Saturday 8:00 – 10:30 a.m.	Seminar with Invited Guest Speaker
June 18 Sunday 8:00-9:30 pm	Social Gathering (Evening) - optional
June 19 Monday	Chinese Culture Reconsidered (TKT)
June 20 Tuesday	Social Problems and Social Services (TKT)

June 21 Wednesday	Visit to a Singaporean Organization/Corporation
June 22 Thursday 9:30am to 11:30am	Discussion with Students from a Singaporean University (to be confirmed)
June 23 Friday	Sexuality, Intimacy and Relationships (TKT)
June 24 Saturday 9:30 am -11:30 am	Open Seminar (optional) with local professionals/experts
June 26 Monday	Globalization, Rise of China and Post-Professional Era (TKT)
June 27 Tuesday	Dialogue with Invited Guest Speaker: Mental Health
June 28 Wednesday	Class: Group presentation
June 29 Thursday	Final Debrief Farewell lunch 12 pm-2 pm

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&uuiid=2922e106-88b9-4a58-bb98-64ea1ef8f8a3>

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