ANTH 223: Contemporary Chinese Society

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:30-11:30 AM; Thursdays, 12:30-1:30 PM  
Course Number: ANTH 223  
Course Location: PNE 349, Mondays and Thursdays 11:10 AM-12:20 PM

Course Description:

This course draws from anthropological and cultural-historical frameworks to explore the contemporary terrain of China in relation to an emergent “New World (Dis)Order.” While introducing students to key concepts and major historical developments in twentieth-century China, the course will focus largely on ethnographic studies of social change and everyday life betwixt and between the Mao (1949-1978) and Post-Mao (1978-Present) eras. Topics examined include nation-building, Chinese modernities, capitalist development, gendered desires, class inequalities, religious revivalism and cosmopolitan identities. Students will be asked to critically and creatively think about change and continuity in contemporary China not only in terms of the organization of Chinese political institutions, but also in relation to the role of Chinese diasporic populations and other transnational and globalizing forces in producing spatial-temporal imaginaries.

Course Objectives:

1. Heighten student appreciation of historical change and continuity, cultural diversity and the complexity of social issues in contemporary China, including China’s interconnectedness and positionality in the world order.

2. Broaden student knowledge and appreciation of anthropological approaches to the study of contemporary China, with an emphasis on ethnographic participant-observation across a diverse range of settings.

3. Develop students’ understanding and mastery of key concepts and analytical frameworks for examining China from an anthropological perspective.

4. Sharpen students’ critical listening, reading and writing skills, particularly their ability to grasp, articulate, synthesize and challenge key arguments in course readings, lectures and discussions.

5. Hone students’ ability to apply analytical skills and knowledge from this course to issues of contemporary relevance in China and beyond.
Prerequisites:

There are no prerequisites for this course. Students do not need any background in Anthropology or China/East Asian Studies to do well in this course. I will provide basic historical and social context for all topics we address in class sessions. However, while students do not need any specialized background to excel in this course, they are expected to keep up with current events (e.g. reading major news sources like the *New York Times*) during the semester as well as look critically and reflexively at their own personal histories and surroundings in order to enrich class discussions and assignments. Intellectual curiosity and critical thinking are valued and will be rewarded.

Required Readings: All books are available for purchase at the Wellesley College Bookstore. They are also on reserve at the Knapp Center in Clapp Library.


Selected Texts on E-Reserve and in the Firstclass subconference, “ANTH 223-Online Links.”

Recommended Book:
Spence, Jonathan D.

1990 *In Search For Modern China*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co.

NOTE On This Course’s Online Conference:
All students enrolled will automatically have “ANTH 223” as a Firstclass conference on their desktop. You must regularly check this online conference for weekly readings, key terms, course notices and assignments.

Course Requirements:

This course will consist of both lecture and discussion with the expectation that students come to class ready with questions and comments about the assigned readings and key concepts for each week. Students also need to be prepared to draw on readings and other course materials to critically discuss in-class screenings of films and presentations of cultural artifacts as well as for small group work, which will be a recurring feature of this course. For these reasons, class attendance and participation are essential. You will have one permissible skip day (no questions asked) and beyond that, each unexcused absence will cost you 1 point from your final total of 100. Excessive tardiness (10 minutes or more late to class) will also cost you 1/2 a point from your final grade. As far as participation, you will be expected not only to contribute comments and questions in

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class but also to post additional thoughts and concerns online via our Firstclass course conference. Particularly, I encourage you to share your reactions and questions about weekly readings prior to our discussions of them in our Monday and Thursday sessions. Evaluation of participation will be based on how engaged you are both in our class sessions and online in our Firstclass course conference.

Besides attendance and active engagement (10%), there will be several writing assignments:

1) Two short papers (5-7 pages each) chosen from assigned topics will be due after Section II and Section IV of this course (20% each).

2) Some time during the semester, each student must write a short and concise media review (2-3 pages) of newspaper or magazine coverage, television or film representation, or online sources concerning contemporary China. This review must be posted online to the ANTH 223 Firstclass conference. Other students are expected to respond to each review with comments online as part of their participation grade (15%).

3) In lieu of a final exam, students will develop a final paper (8-12 pages) on a topic of their choice, with approval of the instructor (35%).

More details on all assignments will be posted to the Firstclass subconference, ANTH 223-Assignments, as deadlines for each assignment approaches. I will also post a specific guide to grading standards for this course online in ANTH 223-Syllabus/Policies.

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<th>Course Evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and engaged class participation – 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper #1 – 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper #2 – 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Media Review – 15%</td>
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<td>Final Paper – 35%</td>
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**Course Policies and Protocol:**

All students are expected to abide by the Wellesley Honor Code. While students are encouraged to work collaboratively with each other, you are expected to develop original arguments in your written assignments and cite properly when drawing on the ideas of others (including from class lectures and discussions). A more detailed guide on proper citations for this course will be posted online as assignment deadlines approach. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any incident of dishonest work will be immediately reported to your class dean and advisor.**
Unless you have prior permission and verifiable reasons for missing deadlines for assignments, late work will be docked half a grade per day past the formal deadline. For instance, if you are one day late, your maximum grade will be A-. After two days, the maximum grade will be B+ and so forth.

All papers must be time-dated electronically by posting online to the Firstclass conference folder, ANTH223-Student Submissions. Make sure you SAVE your email copy of student submissions in case of computer system glitches. If your paper fails to upload to the online drop box, the burden of proof is on you...

The process for discussing or contesting a grade for a particular assignment is as follows:
1. Students must wait at least 24 hours to reflect and review their assignment and the instructor’s comments before coming to discuss a grade.
2. After 24 hours, if the student still wants to contest a grade, they must write and submit a one-page explanation of why they deserve a different mark on their assignment.
3. The instructor will then meet with the student to discuss possible options for working towards a better grade in the course.

Regarding general class protocol—students are expected to come to class on time and engage in open and respectful discussion with each other and the instructor. Make sure you turn off your cell phones and other disruptive electronic devices before the start of class.

Course Schedule by Topic:

I. Introduction: Looking back and forward in Contemporary China
Session 1: Monday, 1/30
• Orientation to the class

Session 2: Thursday, 2/2
• Begin reading Anita Chan et. al., Chen Village, pp. 1-40

Session 3: Monday, 2/6
• Continue reading Anita Chan et. al., Chen Village, pp. 41-102

Session 4: Thursday, 2/9
• Continue reading Anita Chan et. al., Chen Village, pp. 103-140

Session 5: Monday, 2/13
• Continue reading Anita Chan et. al., Chen Village, pp. 141-185
• In-Class Screening: Excerpt from Morning Sun (2003), dir. Carma Hinton

Session 6: Thursday, 2/16
• Continue reading Anita Chan et. al., Chen Village, pp. 186-266

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NO CLASS on Monday, 2/20 (President’s Day)
• Finish reading Anita Chan et. al., Chen Village, pp. 267-335

II. Periodizing “Revolution”: Memory, Modernity and the State
Session 7: Thursday, 2/23: The Politics of Memory

Attend Anthro’s Departmental Lecture, PNE Atrium, 5 PM on Thurs, 2/23!
Angela Zito, New York University
“How can we be modern without religion? Mediating the bodies of Falun Gong”

Session 8: Monday, 2/27: Repetition with a Difference
• Michael Dutton, “Part V: Stories of the Fetish: Tales of Chairman Mao” in Streetlife China, pp. 238-271

Session 9: Thursday, 3/2: Modernity Deferred
• Wu Hung, “Tiananmen Square: A Political History of Monument” in Representations, no. 35 (1991)

NOTE: Short paper assignment #1 will be distributed today and must be posted in “ANTH 223-Student Submissions” by next Thursday, 12:30 PM, 3/09/06.

III. (Un)marking Chineseness: Nation and Nationalism
Session 10: Monday, 3/6—Imagining the Center

Session 11: Thursday, 3/9 (NO CLASS)—The Margins Within
Session 12: Monday, 3/13 — The Nation Unbound


**IV. Enter the Market: Exchange, Value and the Politics of Reform**

Session 13: Thursday, 3/16 — Socialism with “Chinese Characteristics”?


NO CLASS on Monday, 3/20, and Thursday, 3/23 (Spring Break) — Gift and Guanxi


Session 14: Monday 3/27 — Making Sense of “Prosperity”

- Dru Gladney, “Getting Rich is Not so Glorious: Contrasting Perspectives on Prosperity among Muslims and Han in China,” in *Market Cultures*.

**V. Stepping Out: Remaking Space and Place**

Session 15: Thursday, 3/30 — Danwei


Session 16: Monday, 4/3 — Hukou

- In-Class Screening: *Out of Phoenix Bridge* (1997), 110 min., dir. Li Hong
Session 17: Thursday, 4/6—Hukou

Session 18: Monday, 4/10—Privatizing Space
- Yan Yunxiang, “Domestic Space and the Quest for Privacy,” in *Private Life Under Socialism*, pp. 112-139.

Session 19: Thursday, 4/13—Translocal and Transnational Practices
- Xin Liu, “Space, Mobility, and Flexibility: Chinese Villagers and Scholars Negotiate Power at Home and Abroad,” in *Ungrounded Empires*, pp. 91-114

**VI. Body Politics: Population “Quality” and Gendered Appetites**

Session 20: Tuesday, 4/18 (Rescheduled Class)—Subjectifying Bodies

Session 21: Thursday, 4/20—Managing the “Population”

**NOTE:** Short paper assignment #2 will be distributed today and must be posted in “ANTH 223-Student Submissions” by next Thursday, 10:00 AM, 4/27/06.

Session 22: Monday, 4/24—Embodying Desire
VII. “Spirits” of the Times: (Re)Staging Religiosity and Ritual Life
Session 23: Thursday, 4/27
• Ann Anagnost, “The Politics of Ritual Displacement” in *Asian Vision of Authority*

Session 24: Monday, 5/1

NOTE: Final Paper Topics Must Be Emailed to the Instructor by 5 PM Today!

VII. Bridge Over Water? Chinese Cosmopolitanism and Globalization
Session 25: Thursday, 5/4
• In-Class Screening: *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (1996), dir. Peter Chan

Session 26: Monday, 5/8

NOTE: Final Papers Due By 4:30 PM on Friday, May 19th