

ANTH/EALC324gw Contemporary China: Cultural Politics and Social Realities

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This course satisfies the GE-C (Social Analysis) and GE-G (Citizenship in a Diverse World) requirements.

Course Description

This course explores everyday life, politics, social transformations, and cultural practices in the People's Republic of China, from cultural studies and social science perspectives. At present, China is often represented by the mass media as an inscrutable, yet imminently significant, rising "superpower," a nation that cannot be ignored and yet somehow continues to elude our understanding. While this framing may be useful for politicians and others who attempt to situate China as a straw man in global affairs, it does little to aid our knowledge of what life is like for the 1.3 plus billion people living in the country. This course foregrounds a cultural and ethnographic perspective on the study of China today, emphasizing everyday experiences, changing subjectivities and identities, and shifting desires in post-1949 China. We will critically analyze the radical transformations that have occurred in rural and urban China, with a focus on the years since "Reform and Opening" in the late 1970s and the "rise" of China in the global world order. In particular, we will examine the influences of film and media, domestic and international migration, economic "liberalization," and social memory on the lives of contemporary Chinese citizens through the lenses of gender, ethnicity, imaginaries, and intimacy.

Recommended Preparation: As an advanced undergraduate course, it is recommended that students should have taken at least one or two lower-division courses in anthropology and/or Chinese cultural studies, history, or political science. Please email Professor Chio to request D-Clearance.

Required Readings, Films, and Supplementary Materials

This course requires extensive reading *and* film viewing. I strongly believe in approaching contemporary social issues through multiple lenses and perspectives, and film can be an especially potent form for addressing global social and cultural conditions. No background in film analysis or film studies is required; I ask that you engage with the readings and the films generously and thoughtfully. You are expected to complete all readings and to watch all films in advance of class meetings.