

SOCI 490: Contemporary Chinese Society

Time: 3:30-5 PM on Wednesday & Friday, Fall 2015

Location: Buchanan B313

Pre-requisites: None

Instructor: Qiang Fu

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Class description:

The global economy and politics are increasingly influenced, if not shaped, by the rise of China. The founding father of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, noted that:

Today, China is the world's fastest developing nation, growing at rates unimaginable 50 years ago, a dramatic transformation no one predicted.... It is China's intention to be the greatest power in the world. The policies of all governments toward China, especially neighboring countries, have already taken this into account. ... China can impose economic sanctions simply by denying access to its market of 1.3 billion people, whose incomes and purchasing power are increasing. (Allison and Blackwill 2013: 2-3)

Nevertheless, China also faces chief hurdles in terms of culture, education, demography, environment and governance. It is useful for a global citizen to understand the development of China, challenges faced by this rising power and their potential impacts on the rest of the world.

By emphasizing China's tradition and transformation, this course discusses several important topics of contemporary Chinese society. In particular, these topics consist of (an introduction to) modern Chinese history and geography, demography, culture, economy, politics, market transformation, urbanization, rural-urban divide (hukou), social relations (guanxi), environment, civic engagement, social movements and international relations. Based on the instructor's field research conducted in Guangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Xi'an since the year 2009, students will be provided timely knowledge of contemporary Chinese society. This course also helps students apply key theoretical perspectives in sociology, political science, geography and urban planning to the study of contemporary China and analyses of its social problems. Class evaluation will be based on class attendance, participation in discussion, presentations, one short in-class exam and a term paper.