CHES5106 Selected Themes on Chinese Anthropology

2018-19, Term 1, Thursdays 12:30-3:15 pm
YIA 403, Yasumoto International Academic Park

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Teaching Assistant: Ms. Zhu Mengmeng (mengmengzu@cuhk.edu.hk)

Course description
This course addresses the major themes in the anthropological study of contemporary Chinese society with insights on Hong Kong. It is conceived in order to give particular attention to three elements: 1- the way in which anthropological practices and ethno graphic methodologies help understand political, social and economic processes in contemporary China; 2- the interplay between anthropology and different disciplines, among which political science and sociology; 3- the methodology and ethics of fieldwork and ethnography, and the importance of social class, gender and ethnicity in the production of anthropological understanding.

The course is structured in four thematic sections, moving from classical themes in the anthropology of China (rural China, family, gender, kinship, social interactions, and rituals) to new approaches to Chinese contemporary society (economic reforms, working class, urban China, material culture, subject making). Moreover, this course aims to show how to conduct ethnographic fieldwork and how to use the data collected during fieldwork for research in Chinese and Hong Kong studies.

Learning Activities
Students are required to attend a two-hour lecture (with discussion about the texts focusing on one aspect of contemporary China), followed by a one-hour tutorial session every week presenting the methodology of ethnographic fieldwork and a few key contextual aspects of Chinese and Hong Kong societies. They will be expected to have done the required readings before the lecture, so that they can ask informed questions. The tutorial time will be used to discuss the readings and the lecture but it will also allow students to prepare for ethnographic fieldwork in Hong Kong and develop their own research papers.

This course uses the CUHK eLearning system, which can be found at https://elearn.cuhk.edu.hk. The course readings, assignments and recent announcements are uploaded on this platform. Make sure to check it regularly.

Learning Outcomes
After taking this course, students should:
- be able to critically evaluate a range of theories and ethnographic source material on Chinese society;
- produce in-depth analysis on key issues in Chinese society and culture;
- learn ethnographic methods during a fieldtrip in Hong Kong;
- be able to locate and use secondary sources relevant to selected topics.

Assessment Scheme
Attendance and participation: 5% of the course grade is attendance and 10% goes to participation in class discussions.
Preparation questions: Students are required to prepare for the class by reading the required reading and be able to answer 4-5 questions related to the reading (10%).
The students will be asked to write an ethnographic report recollecting the fieldtrip in Hong Kong (1,000 words of on-site observation and/or interviews with photos, drawings, maps or any other method to record observations) (20%)
Research paper: The writing of the paper is divided into two steps. First, students will be required to present short presentations related to their paper topic (15%). The final research paper (3,000 words) accounts for 40% of the class grade. Students will receive an overview of how to write a good paper in the first session. The final paper should be submitted to VeriGuide by 12am (midnight) of the due date. Please also submit a hard copy of the signed VeriGuide receipt to the mailbox as soon as possible afterwards. VeriGuide can be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/veriguide. Late assignments will NOT be accepted.
Course Grading System:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for the texts</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fieldtrip report</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Oral presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
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Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at [http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/). With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of the policies, regulations and procedures.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1 (6 September): General Introduction: Theories and Methodologies in the Anthropology of China


SECTION 1: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF RURAL CHINA

WEEK 2 (13 September): Family, Gender, and Kinship


WEEK 3 (20 September): Everyday Life in Rural China


Liu, Xin, “Chapter 2: Resisting Ideology” in In One Own’s Shadow: An Ethnographic Account of the Condition of Post-reform Rural China, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000, p. 31-57.

SECTION 2: RITUALS, BELIEFS, AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

WEEK 4 (27 September): Religion, Nationalism and Ethnicity


FIELDTRIP: ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS IN SITU

WEEK 6 (6 October): Ethnographic fieldwork in practice: Fieldtrip in Hong Kong

Ethnographic fieldwork can be defined as the collection of information through face-to-face interactions with people, trying to grasp the context of their daily lives, using direct observation, participant observation, interviews, photography, etc.

This fieldtrip will take place in Hong Kong on a weekend (half a day). The date may change depending on weather conditions.

No class on 11 October and 18 October

WEEK 7 (25 October): Ethnographic report due

SECTION 3: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF POST-REFORM CHINA

WEEK 7 (25 October): Urbanization, Place (Un)making, and Everyday Life


WEEK 8 (1 November): From Communism to Post-Communism: The Making and Shattering of the Chinese Working Class


WEEK 9 (8 November): Paper outline due


**SECTION 4: THE MAKING AND SHAPING OF CHINESE SUBJECTS**

WEEK 10 (15 November): Globalization/Localization of Food and Consumption


WEEK 11 (22 November): Inventing the Self: Styles, Subjectivities, and Desires


WEEK 12 (29 November): Chinese Youth (Sub)Cultures


WEEK 13 (6 December): General Conclusion


Sunday, 9 December 2018: Final paper due

**Additional bibliography**

*Contemporary Mainland China*
Cliff, Tom, Oil and Water: Being Han in Xinjiang, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Contemporary Hong Kong
Constable, Nicole, Made to Order in Hong Kong: An Ethnography of Filipina Workers, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997.