

Course title:

Anthropology of Contemporary Chinese Societies

Dates:

24 November to 4 December 2014

Venue:

Center for Chinese Studies,
Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Lecturers:

Mr Stuart Thompson

Dr Fang-long Shih

Taiwan Research Programme
London School of Economics and Political Science
United Kingdom

Course Description

This course is served in the same spirit as a taster menu at an expensive restaurant. Our intention is not to inundate you with bytes of information about contemporary Chinese societies. But, equally, we do not want to serve up a reductionist and therefore over-simplified and potentially stereotyping menu. Instead, we hope to provide something which equates in some ways to the novelist Yu Hua's evocative "China in Ten Words." Through our "China in ten bite-size pieces", we aim to stimulate your appetite for further sampling and exploring some key questions about contemporary Chinese societies.

Each topic will be approached as a triangulation of three aspects: an appraisal of the historical situation, context and legacy, together with an examination and interrogation of the contemporary state of affairs in both Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. The scope of the pre-contemporary portrayal will vary depending on the topic, and will not necessarily hinge around 'the 1949 barrier'. The triangulation will tend toward being equilateral with respect to the weighting given to the three 'sides' (historical, Taiwan, PRC), but will not necessarily treat each in equal measure for all topics.

Our approach is deliberately comparative in at least three ways. Most deliberately, we hope to generate comparisons between China in the past and its contemporary configurations – what has continued and what has changed? Secondly there is material for making comparisons between the PRC and Taiwan. Thirdly, though more implicitly, there will be the opportunity for you to compare contemporary Chinese societies with other post-socialist societies, including the Czech Republic.

As a discipline, anthropology's particular strength is its capacity to 'get inside another culture'. Fieldwork is anthropology's iconic approach, generating knowledge of a society or culture through 'being there', conversing in their language, trying to experience the world from their point of view. The practice of fieldwork, and the writing up of the results of fieldwork, are both referred to as 'ethnography'. Anthropological knowledge is, in this sense, peculiarly 'grounded'. But 'writing culture' is, ultimately, a kind of writing. As such, we need to be aware of 'the poetics and politics of ethnography' (Clifford & Marcus) and that as a form of cultural translation it involves a dialogic process. In other words, writing (about) Chinese culture is not a neutral and objective approach, but always partial in both senses of that English word. What is seen, what is paid attention to, how it is viewed and analysed, is partially a product of the preconceptions and paradigms of the researcher.

People have different reasons for being interested in contemporary Chinese societies and, indeed, for following this course. You will be alert or attuned to different 'readings' depending on whether, for instance, you see China as a land of business opportunity, or as significantly different from your own society so that you can learn about the diversity of the human condition. A 'theory' is a 'way of seeing'. As a dialogic process, anthropology should be reflexively and critically aware of its theoretical perspectives. Students and researchers should be duly wary of imposing key (Western) sociological concepts or categorizations onto Chinese contexts without due scrutiny of their applicability.

For this course, we urge you to recognize, hold in critical abeyance and then re-consider the views you have and the theories you hold about Chinese culture and society. Allow those views to be challenged. Rather than stick with familiar fare, use the opportunity of this taster course to sample and savour a more complex and satiating cuisine.

Course Assessment

Students are expected to prepare themselves adequately for participation in the seminar sessions which accompany each lecture. A record will be kept of attendance and the overall calibre of each student's input in the seminars.

Each student will be required to write an essay of between 1,750 and 2,250 words on an issue related to the course. The tutors will suggest a number of essay titles, but we want to encourage students to devise a title of their own. If a student devises his or her own title, then it needs to be approved by the tutors. ***The deadline for submission of the essays will be 17.00 hours on Monday 2nd February 2015.***

Course Outline

Lecture 1: Food Forethought: Chinese Studies and Taiwan Studies from a food perspective

Lecture 2: Family Resemblances

Lecture 3: Gender and Generational Issues

Lecture 4: Education Matters

Lecture 5: Place-making, Language and Imagined Communities

Lecture 6: Inequality, Mobility and Globalization

Lecture 7: Consumerism, Media and Cinema

Lecture 8: Civil Society and Protest

Lecture 9: Selective Tradition, the Past and Collective Memory

Final Session: *students make short presentations on their prospective essays, with follow-up discussion from the tutors and other students*

Lecture 1: Food Forethought: Chinese Studies and Taiwan Studies from a food perspective

Time: **Monday 24 November 2014, 14:10–17:25**

Venue: **M12**

Readings

Chang Kwang-chih 1977 'Introduction' to *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp.1-21

Anderson, Eugene N. 1988 'Food in Society', in his *The Food of China*, New Haven: Yale University Press, Chap.12, pp.199-213

Thompson, Stuart E. 2006 'On (not) eating the dead: a reader's digest of a 'Chinese' funerary taboo', in Kevin Latham, Stuart Thompson & Jakob Klein (eds.) *Consuming China: Approaches to Cultural Change in Contemporary China*, London: Routledge, pp.121-149

Jing, Jun 2000 'Introduction: Food, Children, and Social Change in Contemporary China', in his (ed.) *Feeding China's Little Emperors: Food, Children, and Social Change*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp.1-26

Liu, Lucia Huwy-min 2011 'Substance, Masculinity, and Class: Betel Nut Consumption and Embarrassing Modernity in Taiwan', in Marc Moskowitz (ed.) *Popular Culture in Taiwan: Charismatic Modernity*, London: Routledge, pp.131-148

Lecture 2: Family Resemblances

Time: **Tuesday 25 November 2014, 15:50–19:05**

Venue: **C15**

Readings

Gates, Hill 1996 'Patricorporations: the State and the Household', in her *China's Motor: A Thousand Years of Petty Capitalism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp.103-120

Stockman, Norman 2000 'Chinese Family: Continuity and Change' in his *Understanding Chinese Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, Chap.5, pp.94-119

Jacka, Tamara, Andrew B. Kipnis & Sally Sargeson 2013 'Families, Kinship and Relatedness' in their (eds.) *Contemporary China: Society and Social Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Thornton, Arlin & Lin Hui-Shang 1994 'Continuity and Change' in their *Social Change and the Family in Taiwan*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chap.15, pp.396-411

Lecture 3: Gender and Generational Issues

Time: **Wednesday 26 November 2014, 14:10–17:25**

Venue: **U34**

Readings

Friedman, Sara L. 2010 'Women, Marriage and the State in Contemporary China', in Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden (eds.) *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*, London: Routledge, 3rd ed., pp.148-170

Yan, Yunxiang 2009 'Practicing Kinship, Remaking the Individual' in his *The Individualization of Chinese Society*, London: LSE Monographs on Social Anthropology, pp.85-107

Farris, Catherine S.P. 2004 'Women's Liberation Under "East Asian Modernity" in China and Taiwan: Historical, Cultural, and Comparative Perspectives' in Catherine S. Ferris, Murray A. Rubinstein & Anru Lee (eds.) *Women in the New Taiwan: Gender Roles and Gender Consciousness in a Changing Society*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp.325-375

Shih, Fang-Long 2010 'Chinese "Bad Death" Practices in Taiwan: Maidens and Modernity', *Mortality*, 15 (2): 122–137.

Lecture 4: Education Matters

Time: **Thursday 27 November 2014, 9:10–12:25**

Venue: **K22**

Readings

Kipnis, Andrew 2006 'Suzhi: a keyword approach', *China Quarterly* 186, pp 295-313

Fong, Vanessa L. 2011 *Paradise redefined: transnational Chinese students and the quest for flexible citizenship in the developed world* Stanford: Stanford University Press, Chap.1

Shaw, Thomas A. 1996 'Taiwanese Schools against Themselves: school culture versus the subjectivity of youth', in Bradley A. Levinson, Douglas E. Foley & Dorothy C. Holland (eds.) *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person*, New York: State University of New York Press, pp.187-207

Chun, Allen 2005 'The Moral Cultivation of Citizenship in a Taiwan Middle School, c.1990', in Veronique Benei (ed.) *Manufacturing Citizenship: Education, and Nationalism in Europe, South Asia and China*, London: Routledge, Chap.2

Lecture 5: Place-making, Language and Imagined Communities

Time: **Thursday 27 November 2014, 14:10–17:25**

Venue: **U35**

Readings

Chen, Ping 2007 'China', in Andrew Simpson (ed.) *Language & National Identity in Asia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.141-167

Kipnis, Andrew 2012 'Constructing commonality: standardization and modernization in Chinese nation-building', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.71 (3), pp.731-755

Weller, Robert 1996 'Matricidal Magistrates and Gambling Gods: Weak States and Strong Spirits in China', in Meir Shahar and Robert Weller (eds.) *Unruly Gods: Divinity and Society in China*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp.250-268

Shih, Fang-Long 2007 'Generation of a New Space: A Maiden Temple in the Chinese Religious Culture of Taiwan', *Culture and Religion*, 8 (1): 89–104.

Lecture 6: Inequality, Mobility and Globalization

Time: **Monday 1 December 2014, 14:10–17:25**

Venue: **M12**

Readings

Rubinstein, Murray A. 1999 'Taiwan's Socioeconomic Modernization, 1971-1996' in his (ed.) *Taiwan: A New History*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp.366-402

Goodman, David S.G. 2014 'Introduction: Understanding Class in Contemporary China', in his *Class in Contemporary China*, Cambridge: Polity, pp.1-33

Whyte, Martin King 2010 'The paradoxes of rural-urban inequality in contemporary China' in his (ed.) *One Country, Two Societies: Rural-Urban Inequality in Contemporary China*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp.1-21

Sutton, Donald 1996 'Transmission in Popular Religion: The Jiajiang Festival Troupe of Southern Taiwan', in Meir Shahar and Robert Weller (eds.) *Unruly Gods: Divinity and Society in China*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp.212-249

Shih, Fang-long Forthcoming 'From Politics to Culture: Taiwanization Discourses and the Techno Nazha Performance,' in Jan Knoerich (ed.) *Cross-Strait Relations in an Era of Technological Change: Security, Economic and Cultural Dimensions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lecture 7: Consumerism, Media and Cinema

Time: **Tuesday 2 December 2014, 15:50–19:05**

Venue: **C15**

Readings

Croll, Elisabeth J. 2006 'Conjuring goods, identities and cultures', in Kevin Latham, Stuart Thompson & Jakob Klein (eds.) *Consuming China: Approaches to Cultural Change in Contemporary China*, London: Routledge, pp.22-41

Herold, David Kurt 2011 'Introduction: Noise, Spectacle, Politics: carnival in Chinese cyberspace', in his & Peter Marolt (eds.) *Online Society in China: creating, celebrating, and instrumentalising the online carnival* New York: Routledge, pp.1-20

Yip, June 2004 'Remembering and Forgetting, Part II: Hou Hsiao-hsien's Taiwan Trilogy' in her *Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary*, London: Duke University Press, Chap. 4, pp.85-130

Berry, Chris 2009 'Re-writing cinema: markets, languages, cultures in Taiwan', in Fang-long Shih, Stuart Thompson & Paul-Francois Tremlett (eds.) *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, London: Routledge, pp.140-153

Lecture 8: Civil Society and Protest

Time: **Wednesday 3 December 2014, 14:10–17:25**

Venue: **U34**

Readings

Hilton, Isabel 2013 'The return of Chinese civil society' in Sam Geall (ed.) *China and the Environment: The Green Revolution*, London: Zed Books, pp.1-14

Perry, Elizabeth J. 2008 'Permanent Rebellion? Continuities and Discontinuities in Chinese Protest' in Kevin O'Brien (ed.) *Popular Protest in China* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press

Shih, Fang-Long 2012 'Generating Power in Taiwan: Nuclear, Political, and Religious Power', *Culture and Religion*, 13 (3): 309–327

Lupke, Christopher 2012 'Documenting Environmental Protest: Taiwan's Gongliao Fourth Nuclear Power Plant and the Cultural Politics of Dialogic Artifice', in Sylvia Li-chun Lin and Tze-lan Sang (eds.) *Documenting Taiwan on Film: Issues and Methods in New Documentaries*, London: Routledge, pp.155-182

Lecture 9: Selective Tradition, the Past and Collective Memory

Time: Thursday 4 December 2014, 9:10–12:25

Venue: K22

Readings

Anagnost, Ann 1997 'Making History Speak' in her *National Past-times. Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China*, Durham: Duke University Press, Chap 1, pp.17-44

Gao, Mobo 2008 'Constructing History: memories, values, and identities', in his *The Battle for China's Past: Mao & the Cultural Revolution*, London: Pluto Press, pp.31-47

Shih, Fang-Long 2011 'Memory, Partial Truth and Reconciliation without Justice: The White Terror Luku Incident in Taiwan', *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective*, 3: 140–151

Lin, Sylvia Li-chun 2012 'Recreating the White Terror on the Screen', in Sylvia Li-chun Lin and Tze-lan Sang (eds.) *Documenting Taiwan on Film: Issues and Methods in New Documentaries*, London: Routledge, pp.38-59

Final Session: Student Presentations and Discussions

Time: Thursday 4 December 2014, 14:10–17:25

Venue: U35

Each student will give a short presentation (5 minutes maximum) in which they sketch or try out ideas for their prospective essays. Each presentation will be followed by feedback from tutors and their fellow students (also for a maximum of 5 minutes).