Summer Session SOZ 440 Contemporary Chinese Society

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This class presents an overview of contemporary Chinese life in reform-era China (1978-present). We will examine many aspects of Chinese society such as “migration”, “urbanization”, “media and popular culture”, “family and reproduction”, “marriage”, “Gender and sexuality”, “feminism”, “civil society and social work”, etc, with a particular emphasis on the global angle: the impact of “globalization” on China and China’s impact on the rest of the world. The analysis will help students to understand better the lived experiences of the Chinese people, as well as the causes and consequences of social inequality, social conflicts, and social change. Movie clips, social media account, controversial current events, popular TV program including readings will be used in the class for students to understand more about the changing society of China.

Course requirements and grading

There will be a mid-term group presentation (30%) and a final exam (70%), to determine grading.

Students are required to do group discussions and presentations focusing on one of the topics covered in the course. Students are also required to write short essays that express their understanding and interpretation of theories and phenomenon related to Chinese society. Class discussions are also encouraged to check up on the progress and comprehension of reading.

Content

I. Migration and urbanization
   a. Economic reform and open door policy since 1978
   b. Floating population and Hukou (Household registration) systems of urban and rural areas
   c. Migrant workers and left-behind Children
   d. Skyrocketing housing prices in the large cities and social inequality

II. Media and popular culture
   a. Censorship and social media boom
   b. Popularity of Japan and Korea Soap operas in China
   c. Fan culture

III. Family and reproduction
   a. Family planning policy
   b. Rich second generation
   c. Filial piety and intergenerational relationships
   d. Domestic violence

IV. Marriage
   a. Leftover women and 相親 (matchmaking)
   b. Polyamory or extra marital affairs
   c. Divorce

V. Gender and Sexuality
   a. Virginity discourses and gendered sexual rights
b. Commercial sex work  
c. LGBTQ issues  

VI. Feminism  
a. State, market and feminism  
b. Vagina monologues in China  
c. Detention of five feminist activists in 2015  

VII. Civil society and social work  
a. NGOs and civil society as sensitive words  
d. Social work and social administration  
e. Democracy dreams  

Schedule  

July 8  Orientation  

July 9  Introduction  

July 10  Migration and urbanization (1)  


July 11  Migration and urbanization (2)  


July 12  Media and popular culture (1)  


July 15  Media and popular culture (2)  

July 16  Family and reproduction (1)


July 17  Mid-term group presentation

July 18  Family and reproduction (2)


July 19  Marriage (1)


July 22  Marriage (2)


July 23  Gender and Sexuality


July 24 Feminism


July 25  Civil society and social work


July 26 Final exam