

## **GGS 333-001 Geography of China**

*Spring 2018, MW 10:30 – 11:45 am, 2312 Exploratory Hall*

David Wong, Professor

703-993-9260, [dwong2@gmu.edu](mailto:dwong2@gmu.edu), 2214 Exploratory Hall

**Office Hours:** Mondays 1–2 pm, 6-7 pm or by appointment

**Course Description:** The course provides an understanding of contemporary China from a geographical perspective. Several themes will be addressed systematically in detail. They include physical-geographical setting, environmental issues, population, economic, urban systems, and transportation. Coastal China, the peripheral region, and the “Greater China” region will also be studied in depth. Although cultural and political geographies of China are not dealt with individually, they transpire throughout many sections in the course.

Today’s China is of global significance in all aspects: economically, environmentally, politically and social-culturally. What this country does affects us (U.S. and the world) today and will affect us more in the future. Therefore, developing a comprehensive understanding about different aspects of this country and its relations to us are important. The primary **objective** of this course is to provide students background knowledge of China in order to understand the current and future affairs related to China. A specific contribution of this course to such an understanding is to emphasize the roles of geography/space in affecting China.

A desirable approach to learn about China is to use geography as the cross-cutting dimension to organize the study as every phenomenon has a geographical dimension. In a traditional regional geography course, the study area is divided up into sub-regions. Then the course will study different aspects (topics) in each region. The current course will take a slightly different approach. We will combine the traditional regional geography approach with a topical approach, i.e., study a topic across all regions. The course is organized around topics/themes, and each topic/theme is addressed using a geographical approach. In addition, overviews of major regions in China are also included.

The course has no subject-specific prerequisite. To achieve the learning objectives and goals, the course will rely on lectures presented by the instructor, in-class discussions, and student-led presentations.

**General Learning Outcome:** After finishing this course, students will not become an expert in China study, but are expected to have a general knowledge of China to serve as the basis to a better understanding of the current issues and development in China today. Therefore, students will be evaluated by how well they can understand and interpret current issues of China.

### **Specific Learning Objectives (LO) /Outcomes:**

- 1) Acquire the basic background knowledge about China, including history, culture, physical layout, environmental characteristics, population and political settings.

- 2) Expose to the recent development of China along major themes from a geographical perspective.
- 3) Critically analyze and interpret current phenomena and events in China, and identify the roles of geography/space in the processes.

**Text:**

Wong, D. W., K. K. Wong, H. Chung, and J. W. Wang (2018). *China: A Geographical Perspective*. Guilford.

**References:**

Dunford, M and W. Liu. 2014. *The Geographical Transformation of China*. Routledge.

Gamer, R. E. 2008. *Understanding Contemporary China* (3rd Edition). Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Hsieh, C-M. and M. Lu (et al.) 2004. *Changing China: A Geographic Appraisal* Westview Press.

Leeming, F. 1993. *The Changing Geography of China*. Blackwell.

Naughton, B. J. 2006. *The Chinese Economy*. MIT Press.

Veeck, G., C. W. Pannell, Y. Huang and S. Bao .2016. *China's Geography: Globalization and the Dynamics of Political, Economic, and Social Change*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

**Grading Policy**

Mid-term: 20% (LO1)

Take-home Final: 30% (LO2 & 3)

Class participation: 10% (LO2 & 3)

\* 3 monthly journals (Feb, March, April) @ 10%, total: 30% (LO2 & 3)

\* A list of 10 items of corrected data: 10% (LO 1, 2, 3)

\* Details of the journals and list will be elaborated further below.

Distribution of the total final scores will be used to determine the final grades.

Percentages of students receiving the corresponding grades are approximately: 20-30% (A), 35-50% (B), 20-30% (C), ??? % (D) and (F).

!! All materials submitted to meet the evaluation criteria should be completed in accordance with the student Honor Code (University Catalog).

**Incomplete** will be handled strictly according to the University policy. Make-up exams are not given unless under unusual circumstances such as serious illness. Proof (documentation) is necessary to be eligible for make-up exams. No early exams will be given.

**Academic Integrity**

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic

integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

**Outline:**

1: Introduction: The Aspiring Dragon

- provides sufficient background information of China to support other chapters

2: Environment and Resources: Diverse and Abundant

- discusses the physical layout and characteristics of the country and provide a brief assessment of its resource base and the geographical distributions of resources

3: Population: Dynamic and Diverse

- describes the demographic characteristics, racial-ethnic mixes, geographical distribution, population dynamics, and cultural and political issues

4: Agriculture, Food and Culture

- provides an overview of the agricultural development in China (in related to Chapters 2 and 3), and help readers understand and appreciate the geographical variation of Chinese food culture.

5: Economic Geography

- dissects the economic systems from an economic reform-growth perspective, focusing on non-agricultural activities, the roles played by the Government and space. The distributions of economic activities at the provincial level will be reviewed.

6: Chinese Cities: Growing in Size and Number

- provides a brief account of the growing Chinese urban system, urbanization process in China in related to the economic development process (Chapter 5), the structure of the Chinese city systems and internal city structure, and the dynamics of cities in related to migration (Chapter 3)

7: Beyond the Cities: The Chinese Countryside

- Looks at areas beyond urban/cities as part of the integrated and interdependent urban-rural system or continuum; meaning of rural and changing rural culture.

8: Transportation Geography and E-Commerce Logistics

- an overview of the recent developments of major transportation systems in China, intra-urban transportation, and the recent logistical service related to the boom of e-commerce.

#### 9: An Environmental Crisis with Chinese Characteristics

- provides an assessment of major environmental issues of China including the causes, impacts, and the future prospects of China's environment. Particularly, the focus of the chapter is to highlight the issue from the unique "characteristics" of China.

#### 10: Coastal China

- provides an geographical overview of the coastal region, variation in the level of economic development. Selected areas will be studied in detail.

#### 11: The Periphery of China

- peripheral area of China is divided into three sub-regions (southwest, west and north-northeast). Physical, population, and economic characteristics of each sub-regions are discussed.

#### 12: Beyond the Mainland: Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan

- provides the brief historical contexts for the three special territories, particularly about their geographical characteristics, their development trajectories over the past century, and their changing relationships with the Mainland

#### 13: China at the Crossroads

- assesses the state of the nation, considering tourism as a major impetus of further development

#### ***Monthly journals:***

At the end of each month submit a journal. The journal should include:

- Two (2) specific topics under the general topics covered during the month. The topics may or may not be discussed in the book or in class.
- The sources of the information – journal articles, books, *authoritative* websites
- For each topic, 1) provide a 250-300 word summary of your findings; 2) justify that the topic is relevant and important to the topics of the months; and 3) indicate how you judge that your source is reliable or accurate.
- Some examples of appropriate topics not covered in the book/class: evidence of climate change, major causes of death, health statistics of Chinese population, the trade statistics between China and major trading partners, patterns and amounts foreign direct investment, capacities of different modes of transportation.

#### ***A list of corrected data:***

The book reports large quantity of data and information. Given the fast pace development of China, much data and information need to be updated. At the end of the semester, you should provide a list of ten (10) items, correcting or updating the data or information originally reported in the book. Some examples can be air quality indices of selected cities, production levels of different types of energy source, areas of different types of agricultural land use, labor statistics of different sectors. On your list, you should include:

- 1) The new data or information.
- 2) The source of the updated data.
- 3) The data or information in the text that the new information may replace.