

GGG 333-001 Geography of China

Fall 2015, R 7:20 – 10:00 pm, L111 Exploratory Hall

David Wong, Professor

703-993-9260, dwong2@gmu.edu, 2215 Exploratory Hall

Office Hours: Tues 2–2:45 pm, Thurs 6-7 pm or by appointment

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.

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 objective and goal, the course will rely on lectures presented by the instructor, in-class discussions, and student-led presentations, and a review of a movie.

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 understand of the current issues and development in China today. Therefore, students will be evaluated by how well they can understand and interpret current issues with 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., M. Lu, H. Chung, J. W. Wang, and K. K. K. Wong (2016). *China: A Geographical Perspective*. Guilford (to be published) *

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. Pannel, C. J. Smith, and Y. Huang. 2011. *China's Geography: Globalization and the Dynamics of Political, Economic, and Social Change*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Grading Policy

Mid-term: 20% (LO1)

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

Monthly reflective journals:# 30% total, 10% @ (LO2 & 3)

Class participation: 20% (LO2 & 3)

At the end of each month (September, October and November), each student submits a journal about 750 to 1000 words, commenting on what he/she has read about China during that month. Articles may include papers in academic journals, reputable magazines (Times, Newsweek, Economist, etc.), and newspapers. Blogs and personal postings are not acceptable. Sources should be included in the journal. This is part of LO3 so that you can apply what you learn in the class.

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 done 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: what are behind the dragon?

- provides sufficient background information of China to support other chapters

2: Environment and Resources: extensive territory with abundance resources

- 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 heterogeneous

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

4: Agriculture, Food and Culture in China

- 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 a geographical perspective, focusing on non-agricultural activities, and their relationships with natural resources and population characteristics. The roles played by the Government in the economic development of China will also be scrutinized.

6: Urban System and Urbanization

- 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: rural China

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

8: Transportation

- an overview of the major transportation networks in China, their roles in supporting economic development (Chapter 5) and city development/urbanization (Chapter 6), and the movement of people at various geographical scales (Chapter 3)

9: 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: Geography of the Coastal Region

- provides an geographical overview of the coastal region, the most developed region in China

11: Geography of the Periphery

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

12: China 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