

GGG 317/517 Geography of China

Fall 2020

Online live sessions: Tuesdays 11 – 11:45 am

Instructor: David Wong, Professor

703-993-9260, dwong2@gmu.edu, 2214 Exploratory Hall

Off-campus phone: 703-951-3969. **Email:** dwong2@gmu.edu,

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-4 pm, or by appointment

Virtual Office: <https://gmu.webex.com/meet/dwong2>

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 better 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 and for each region, different aspects (topics) will be studied. The current course will take a slightly different approach. 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 slides, lecture videos and assessments.

Learning Outcomes:

General: After finishing the course, students will not be an expert on China, 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 much they know about the basics of China and 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 developments of China in 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.

Texts:

Required 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*. (3rd Ed). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Assessment Methods:

Mid-term (online – Tuesday Oct 13 11 – 11:45am):	10% (LO 1)
Take-home Final (Dec 9 – 10; open book and notes)	30% (LO 2 & 3)
Self-Introduction (August 24)	5%
Discussions (3)	15% (LO 2 & 3)
Applications: (detail below)	40% (LO 2 & 3)
[GGS517-specific requirements]	
A mid-length (12-15 pages of text) research paper:	30% (LO 2 & 3)
- Details of Assessments and Paper are elaborated further below.	
• Total points will be scaled back to 100	

Distribution of the total final scores will be used to determine the final grades. Percentages of students (only in GGS 317) 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.

Logistics and Technology Requirements:

This is an online course with most of the learning activities (90%) conducted in your own time, but requires an online synchronous session on Tuesdays, 11 – 11:45 am every week. As activities and assignments in this course will regularly use web-conferencing software (Blackboard Collaborate / Zoom). In addition to the requirements above, students are required to have a device with a functional camera and microphone. In an emergency, students can connect through

8/11/2020

a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm. More specific technology requirements are on Bb.

Schedule & Outline:

A brief schedule of the course is provided below. A detailed schedule including assignments is posted on Bb.

Date	Chapters/Topics	Content
	<i>Pre-course actions</i>	
Week 1 8/24-28	<i>Background</i> 1: Introduction: The Aspiring Dragon & 2: Environment & Resources: Diverse & Abundant	1) provides background information of China to support other chapters 2) discusses the physical layout and characteristics of the country and provide a brief assessment of its resource base and the geographical distributions of resources
Week 2 8/31 - 9/4	<i>Background</i> 2: Environment & Resources: Diverse & Abundant	
Week 3 9/7-11	<i>Background</i> 3: Population: Dynamic and Diverse	3) describes the demographic & racial-ethnic characteristics, geographical distribution, population dynamics, and cultural and political issues
Week 4 9/14-18	<i>Topics</i> 4: Agriculture, Food & Culture	4) 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
Week 5 9/21-25	<i>Topics</i> 5: Economic	5) 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.
Week 6 9/29		Mid-term: 11 – 11:45 am (cover up to Ch. 4: background + agr.)
Week 7 10/5 - 9	<i>Topics</i> 6: Chinese Cities: Growing in Size and Number	6) provides a brief account of the evolving Chinese urban system, Chinese urbanization process 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)

Week 8 10/12 - 17	Topics 7: Beyond the Cities: The Chinese Countryside	7) treating areas beyond urban/cities as part of the integrated and interdependent urban-rural system or continuum; meaning of rural and the changing rural culture
Week 9 10/19 – 23	Topics 8: Transportation Geography and E-Commerce Logistics	8) 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
Week 10 10/26 – 30	Topics 9: Environmental Crisis with Chinese Characteristics	9) provides an assessment of major environmental issues of China, including the causes, impacts, and the future prospects of China’s environment; particularly highlight issues with Chinese “characteristics”
Week 11 11/2 – 6	Topics 9: Environmental Crisis with Chinese Characteristics	
Week 12 11/9 – 13	Regions 10: Coastal China	10) provides a geographical overview of the coastal region, variation in the level of economic development. Selected areas will be studied in detail.
Week 13 11/16-20	Regions 11: The Periphery of China	11) 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.
Week 14 11/23-27 (Thanksgiving)	Regions 11: The Periphery of China & 12: Beyond the Mainland: Beyond the Mainland: Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan	12) 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
Week 15 11/30 – 12/4	Regions 12: Beyond the Mainland: Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan	
12/9 – 12/10		<u>Final Take-Home Exam</u>

Applications (40%)

The second and third learning objectives of this course are:

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

Applications focus on these two learning objectives, facilitating students to learn and aware, and critically analyze recent developments related to China from a geographical perspective. Each Application session covers two or three chapters, and each session has **two parts**. I label them loosely as **Recent Development** and **Analysis-Interpretation**. The course has a total of five Application sessions and each application carries 8%.

Although the textbook was published recently (2018) and covers many recent developments, given the fast pace of developments in China and the global economy, many new developments and phenomena were not captured in the text. Therefore, for **each application session**,

1. Identify **two developments** or **phenomena** in China that were not reported in the text in the topics covered by the respective chapters. *If these developments or phenomena were described in the text, you **can** still discuss them if your discussion is **significantly beyond the text**.* These developments or phenomena need to be in **post-Qing era** (modern China). **Describe** and **explain** concisely the development or phenomenon, and demonstrate its relevancy to the respective topics.
2. **Employ** what you learn in the class about China, critically **analyze** the developments-phenomena, and **interpret** the intentions and implications. If the development or phenomenon is not triggered by human actions, you can ignore the intention.
3. **Additional research** may be needed to complete your applications write-up. An **example (template)** is provided in Bb for your references.
4. Rubrics, which are posted on Bb, are provided to guide your work.

You need to use **authoritative sources** or materials to identify the new development or phenomenon. Specifically, your sources need to be in one of the following forms:

- a) a news article from a reputable source;
- b) a scholarly article published in an academic journal;
- c) a book or a monograph; or
- d) a documentary video of educational value.

The notes and references at the end of each chapter provide some sources; you may go beyond the list. If you find a source not on this list, please check with me before your selection.

Your write up of **each development-phenomenon** should be around **400 to 600 words**. Submit your write-up in **Word or pdf**, not directly onto the **Discussion Board**. These Applications are not merely expressions of opinions in a casual setting, but require formal and precise languages. Therefore, the *quality of writing* is counted and you need to polish your language.

8/11/2020

Your reports and analyses will be shared with other students on the **Discussion Board** (peer-learning). Students will peer-review each other and rate your works. Student ratings will account for 50% of the score and instructor will provide the other 50%.

Research Paper and Presentation (GGS517):

- submit a research paper of 12-15 pages of text (12-points Times New Roman, double-spaced), plus tables, figures and references. Students should conduct research on a specific geographical topic about China using refereed journals, books, and/or government documents. Below are some potential topics, but you are encouraged to develop your own. Feel free to discuss with me on potential topics. The paper should include research question(s), results and findings.
- Impacts of flooding and urban development
- Agriculture and desertification
- Food security and urban expansion/urbanization
- Housing market and government policies
- Industrial development and air pollution
- The potentials of one-belt-one-road in reducing China's spatial disparities.
- China's foreign investment policies and globalization
- The new geopolitics due to the Chinese policy in South China Sea

Other Policies:

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.

GMU Email Accounts: Students must use their GMU email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

Office of Disability Services: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

GMU Resources:

The Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

University Libraries, Ask a Librarian: <http://library.gmu.edu/ask>

Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.gmu.edu>

University Catalog: <http://catalog.gmu.edu>

University Policies: <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu>

Academic Calendar (drop/withdrawal deadlines): <https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/>

8/11/2020

Course Materials and Student Privacy:

- All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.
- Video-recordings of class meetings that include audio or visual information from other students are private and must not be shared.
- Live Video Conference Meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household.
- Some/All of our synchronous meetings in this class will be recorded to provide necessary information for students in this class. Recordings will be stored on Blackboard [or other secure site] and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester.

*The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus, but will notify students about the change.