

SOC 428 Contemporary China
University of Michigan, Winter 2023

Instructor: Yun Zhou, Assistant Professor of Sociology

Lectures: Mon & Wed 2:30-4

Office Hours: LSA 3214, By appointment

1 Course Description and Learning Objectives

China after 1949 has witnessed dramatic transformations, on one hand, and enduring continuity, on the other. This course offers a sociological introduction to the key institutions and social dynamics of contemporary Chinese society. SOC 428 is intended for upper-level undergraduate students and early graduate students in the regional studies program. There are no language prerequisites for this course.

The studies of China encompass a large terrain of diverse topics and approaches. As such, rather than trying to cover everything, **the central pedagogical goal of SOC 428 is to help you build intuitions and see the “big picture.”** Depending on your interests, SOC 428 is a suitable starting point for subsequent, more specialized courses on China (e.g., *SOC 426 Gender and Family in East Asia*; *POLSCI 656 Proseminar in Chinese Government and Politics*).

To this end, we will read both canonical and new works in Chinese studies. Through critically engaging with these scholarly texts, you are expected to develop a solid knowledge foundation, hone the ability to interpret data (quantitative and qualitative), and learn to formulate arguments. Additionally, our course will draw on a collection of multimedia reportage, documentaries and films, and research talks, in order to cultivate a more concrete understanding of China today.

2 Course Material

All required readings are electronically available through either the course site, or the UM library.

3 Requirements and Assessments

3.1 Attendance (5%)

Participation is critical for a class like ours. **In-person participation is expected for SOC 428.** Of course, COVID-19 continues to bring uncertainty and disruptions. If the situation calls for, we will make adjustments to our meeting modality as needed.

Unless otherwise noted, all readings in the syllabus are **required**. You are expected to come to class having completed them. Our weekly meetings are extensions from, rather than recaps of, the readings.

Starting the second week (Jan 9th), each unexcused absence will result in the loss of 0.5 pt.

3.2 Reading response (90%)

Critically engaging with **all** course readings is crucial for our course. Starting the second week (Jan 9th), you are free to choose **any six weeks** to write a reading response, which should be submitted to the course Canvas site by **the following Wednesday 11:59pm Eastern time**.

Your reading response should be **3-6 pages in length, using double space and 12-pt font**. You are evaluated on the thoughtfulness of your response: A thoughtful response does not simply summarize/recap the readings, but reflect on them (e.g., asking questions, connecting them with world events or other readings). A thoughtful response is concise, coherent, and to-the-point.

Because there is flexibility built in already (i.e., you can choose which weeks that you want to write the response), **no extension** will be granted. In extenuating circumstances (e.g., sickness, caring for a sick loved one, etc.) that you are unable to turn in responses for multiple weeks, please reach out to me to discuss alternative plans. You are welcome to write additional responses and I am happy to engage you in discussions and provide feedback—however, only the **first six** submissions count toward your final grade.

3.3 Office hour check-in (5%)

Office hours offer a great space to build intellectual connections and get support, whether you have questions about the course or simply want to chat. I invite everybody to **at least one** brief office hour check-ins, **by the end of March**.

Office hours are not meant to be evaluative—meaning that you don't have to worry

about “sounding smart” for your professor, and you receive the full 5% as long as you show up, *before the end of March*. If you feel more comfortable setting up the meeting as a group (2-3 people), you are welcome to do so as well. In addition, you are welcome to set up any number of additional meetings beyond the first check-in.

To set up a meeting, use the link on our Canvas course site. If none of the available time slots works for you, please reach out to me to discuss alternative plans.

4 Grade Composition and Conversion

Attendance 1*5%=5%

Reading response 6*15%=90%

Office hour check-in 1*5%=5%

Letter grade conversion:

A+ 97% and above	A 92-96%	A- 88-91%
B+ 85-87%	B 81-84%	B- 78-80%
C+ 75-77%	C 71-74%	C- 68-70%
D+ 65-67%	D 61-64%	D- 58-60%
E 55-57%	F 54% and below	

5 Support, Resources, and Inclusive Learning

5.1 Writing support

I strongly encourage everyone to utilize the services provided by the Writing Center (<https://lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/about-us.html>). You could meet with a writing consultant to improve your assignments.

5.2 Inclusive learning

The university and I are committed to fully include all students. Diverse perspectives are a valuable asset in the learning process—they strengthen our engagement with and understanding of the course material.

Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) can provide support services and academic

accommodations to students with disabilities. Please inform me and contact SSD as soon as possible (<https://ssd.umich.edu/topic/our-services>) to request any accommodations.

If religious observances conflict with any course activities, please let me know early in the semester.

Additional resources on inclusive teaching can be found here:

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/home/campus-resources-2/>

Please reach out to me if you need support and resources, particularly in light of the pandemic.

5.3 Difficult and challenging topics

Some topics in this course can feel especially challenging, contentious, or frustrating to engage with. As a class and as a community, part of the learning process is finding our own path to and language for productive engagement with difficult topics. Again, please reach out to me if you need support and resources.

6 Course Schedule

PRELUDE: FINDING OUR WAY HERE

How did China become the way it is today? We find our way through a sojourn in Mao's China. We focus on two key events after 1949—the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

Week 1 Welcome to the Course

1/4 Introduction

Week 2 The Great Leap Forward

1/9 In-class Screening: *China: A Century of Revolution*

1/11 The Great Chinese Famine

- Yang, Jisheng. 2012. *Tombstone*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Read: “A Chronology of the Great Famine” and “An Everlasting Tombstone.”

Week 3 The Cultural Revolution

1/16 MLK Day No Class

1/18 In-class Screening: *Morning Sun*

- MacFarquhar, Roderick, & Michael Schoenhals. 2009. *Mao's Last Revolution*. Harvard University Press. Read: Introduction, Chapters 6 & 7.

ACT 1 AUTHORITARIAN RULE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Many scholars have written about the “resilience” of the authoritarian rule in China. How have different generations of the CCP leadership responded to the challenges—political, economic, and social—that could threaten the party’s legitimacy? We examine key crises, both acute (e.g., the 1989 Protests and COVID-19) and quotidian (e.g., sustained population aging), and in so doing, develop an understanding of the significant institutions of contemporary China.

Week 4 Governing the Market

1/23 Reform and Opening

- Shirk, Susan L. 1993. *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*. University of California Press. Read: Part 1 Introduction.

1/25 State Capitalism

- Gallagher, Mary. 2007. *Contagious Capitalism*. Princeton University Press. Read: Chapters 1 & 2.

Week 5 Governing Population

1/30 One-Child Policy

- Greenhalgh, Susan. 2008. “Science, modernity, and the making of China’s one-child policy.” *Population and Development Review* 29(2): 163-196.
- Whyte, Martin, Wang Feng, & Yong Cai. 2015. “Challenging myths about China’s one-child policy.” *China Journal* 74: 144-159.

2/1 After the One-Child Policy

- Zhou, Yun. 2019. “The dual demands: Gender equity and fertility intentions after the one-child policy.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 28(117): 367-384.
- Zhou, Yun. 2021. “Beijing wants a baby boom. Its new three-child policy probably won’t make one appen.” *The Washington Post, Monkey Cage*.

Week 6 Governing Information

2/6 Censorship

- Roberts, Margaret E. 2018. *Censored*. Princeton University Press. Read: Chapters 3 & 5.

2/8 Public Opinion

- Roberts, Margaret E. 2018. *Censored*. Princeton University Press. Read: Chapter 4.
- Gallagher, Mary. 2006. “Mobilizing the law in China: Informed disenchantment and the development of legal consciousness.” *Law and Society Review* 40(4): 783-816.

Week 7 Resistance and Repression

2/13 The 1989 Protests

- Zhao, Dingxin. 1998. “Ecologies of social movements: Student mobilization during the 1989 prodemocracy movement in Beijing.” *American Journal of Sociology* 103(6): 1493-1529.
- Optional: Rowena He. 2014. *Tiananmen Exiles*. Palgrave.

2/15 Protests in Rural China

- O’Brien, Kevin J., & Lianjiang Li. 2012. *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*. Cambridge University Press. Read: Chapter 1.
- Mattingly, Dan. 2019. *The Art of Political Control in China*. Cambridge University Press. Read: Chapter 2.

Week 8 Xi’s China

2/20 The 20th Party Congress

- Shirk, Susan. 2018. “China in Xi’s ‘new era’: The return to personalistic rule.” *Journal of Democracy*.
- Optional: Shirk, Susan. 2022. *Overreach*. Oxford University Press.
- Osnos, Evan. 2015. “Born red.” *The New Yorker*.

2/22 COVID-19

- Yang, Guobin. 2022. *The Wuhan Lockdown*. Columbia University Press. Read: Chapters 1 & 9.

INTERLUDE: SPRING BREAK

ACT 2 FRACTURED CITIZENSHIP

How are ordinary people’s livelihoods shaped by China’s political, economic, and social structures? Who enjoy or are excluded from the recognition and dignity of citizenship? We now turn to lives in contemporary China: We consider patterns of inequalities and distinctions along the dimensions of the rural-urban boundary, gender and sexuality, social class, and ethnicity.

Week 9 Rural-Urban Inequality

3/6 “One Country, Two Societies”

- Whyte, Martin, K. 2010. *One Countries, Two Societies*. Harvard University Press. Read: Chapter 1.
- Chuang, Julia. 2016. “Factory girls after the factory: Female return migrations in rural China.” *Gender & Society* 30(3): 467-489.
- Podcast with Scott Rozelle on his 2020 book with Natalie Hell, *Invisible China* <https://newbooksnetwork.com/invisible-china>

3/8 In-class Screening: *A Way Out*

Week 10 Gender Inequality

3/13 “Half of the Sky”?

- Robinson, Jean C. 1985. "Of women and washing machines: Employment, housework, and the reproduction of motherhood in socialist China." *The China Quarterly* 101: 32-57.
- Ji, Yingchun, et al. 2017. "Unequal care, unequal work: Toward a more comprehensive understanding of gender inequality in post-reform urban China." *Sex Roles* 77(11): 765-778.

3/15 Feminist Resistance and Nuances

- Greenhalgh, Susan. 2001. "Fresh winds in Beijing: Chinese feminists speak out on the one-child policy and women's lives." *Signs* 26(3): 847-886.
- Wang, Zheng. 2015. "Detention of the Feminist Five in China." *Feminist Studies* 41(2): 476-482.

Week 11 (Queering) Chinese Family

3/20 Hegemonic Heteronormativity

- Hong, Leta. 2012. "China's 'leftover' women." *NYT*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/12/opinion/global/chinas-leftover-women.html>
- Michelson, Ethan. 2019. "Decoupling: Marital violence and the struggle to divorce in China." *American Journal of Sociology* 125(2): 325-381.
- Zhu, Jingshu. 2018. "Unqueer kinship? Critical reflections on 'marriage fraud' in mainland China." *Sexualities* 21(7):1075-91.

3/22 In-class Screening: *All in My Family*

Week 12 Social Class Inequality

3/27 Labor Rights and Migrant Workers

- Solinger, Dorothy. 1999. *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China*. University of California Press. Read: Chapter 5.
- Gallagher, Mary. 2014. "China's workers movement & the end of the rapid-growth era." *Daedalus* 143(2): 81-95.

3/29 Gendering Labor

- Lee, Ching Kwan. 1995. “Engendering the worlds of labor: Women workers, labor markets, and production politics in the South China economic miracle.” *American Sociological Review* 60(3): 378-397.
- Otis, Eileen M. 2008. “Beyond the industrial paradigm: Market-embedded labor and the gender organization of global service work in China.” *American Sociological Review* 73(1): 15-36.

Week 13 Us and Them: Nationalism and Ethnic Exclusion

4/3 Xinjiang

- Greitens, Sheena Chestnut, Myunghee Lee, & Emir Yazici. 2020. “Counterterrorism and preventive repression: China’s changing strategy in Xinjiang.” *International Security* 44(3): 9-47.
- Millward, Jim. 2019. “Reeducating Xinjiang’s Muslims.” *New York Review of Books*.

4/5 Nationalism

- Weiss, Jessica Chen. 2014. *Powerful Patriots*. Oxford University Press. Read: Chapters 1 & 2.

CODA: FINDING OUR WAY FORWARD

How is China today trying to project its “soft power” and imagining its place in the global order? Looking forward, what are the implications of China’s rise and decline for international relations? We conclude our course by zooming out and considering China in its relations to the rest of the world.

Week 14 China and the World

4/10 In-class Screening: *American Factory*

4/12 China in Africa

- Lee, Ching Kwan. 2017. *The Specter of Global China*. The University of Chicago Press. Read Chapters 1 & 5.

Week 15 Concluding Remarks

4/17 In-class Screening: *People’s Republic of Desire*