**Cultural Anthropology of China**

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**Instructor Affiliation**: Institute of Anthropology, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

**Semester**: *Fall semester*

**Course Level**: Graduate

**Credit**: 2

**Course code：**

**Course Description** (within 150 words)

By introducing the anthropological studies of China at home and abroad，this course aims to reflect on the history and present, pluralism and symbiosis in Chinese society. It shows the observation of Chinese society in worldwide cultural anthropological researches while presenting the reflection and response of Chinese anthropologists. This course will examine anthropological research and ethnographies from social culture, economic activities, religious customs, kinship, and ethnicity to understand contemporary Chinese society from an anthropological perspective.

Major objectives:

This course addresses the major paradigms in anthropological studies of China. It examines the relationship between anthropological studies and the politico-economic circumstances within and outside China under which the knowledge about Chinese culture and society have been produced. 1)Identify basic terms, concepts and theories in cultural anthropology about Chinese cultures and societies in ethnographic writings; 2) Write critical essays on the development of particular topics anthropological studies of Chinese societies; 3) Develop appreciation and respect of fieldwork research, cultural diversity and identify the importance of cultural awareness for social interaction in contemporary daily life.

**Assessment**

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| Class participation | 20% |
| Essay | 40% |
| Final Examination | 40% |

**Textbook:**

1. **Stephan Feuchtwang & Charlotte Bruckermann 2016 (eds.) Anthropology of China : China as ethnographic and theoretical critique, London: Imperial College Press**

**Syllabus：**

**Week 1: Introduction**

*This class introduces key practical aspects of the course including the syllabus, essay writing, and final examination.*

**Week 2: Anthropology of China: The Historical and Geographical Scale of the Subject**

*This class aims to briefly delineate the immense scope of our subject – the anthropology of China – from historical and geographical dimensions. Students will be led to, firstly, acknowledge the vast complicatedness and diversity of China and, secondly, reflect upon the applicability of the classical methodology of anthropolgy in terms of China.*

**Readings:** Chap.1 & 2.1 ~ 2.4 of the course text

**Week 3: A History of the Anthropology of China: Imported and Homemade**  
*This class is a brief introduction to the key trends of our subject field since the late 19th century onward. The most influential institutes, schools, scholars, and works in this field will be summarized here.*

**Readings:** Chap. 2.5 ~ 2.8 of the course text

**Week 4: Kinship and Ancestral Worship**  
*This class aims to introduce the primary building bloc of Chinese society and culture – the kinship system. Apart from those law-like rules and ethical codes, this class will also cover the cultural values or morality Chinese people attached to their kinship system as well as its symbolic representations, i.e., the system of ancestral worship.*

**Readings:** Chap. 3 of the course text

**Week 5: Relatedness and Gender**   
*Building on the classic perspective to Chinese kinship being introduced last week, this class sets to examine more recent theoretical approaches to “relatedness”, that is, the ways in which Chinese people relate to one another.*

**Readings:** Chap. 4 of the course text

**Week 6: Love, Emotion and Sentiment**

*This class will discuss the changes and continuities in romantic love, intergenerational love, and patriotism in China. The recent anthropological discussions pertaining to the formation and performance of emotion will be introduced here.*

**Readings:** Chap. 5 of the course text

**Week 7: Guanxi: The Exchange of Money, Gifts, and Favors**

*This class examines the exchange of gifts, money, and favors in China, and how they are not just a product of, but simultaneously produce, “Guanxi” i.e., social relationships.*

**Readings:** Chap. 6 of the course text

**Week 8: Hospitality**

*This class will first expound the idea of hospitality as a basis of civilization, including civility and good manners. It will then take up the anthropology of hospitality, before moving on to imperial Chinese guest rituals and anthropologists' studies of Chinese conceptions and practices of hospitality.*

**Readings:** Chap. 10 of the course text

**Week 9: Food and Chineseness**

*This class aims to explore how the universal and globalizing processes of food production, preparation, and consumption nonetheless delineate Chinese people, whether those who staying in Chinese mainland and those who migrate abroad?*

**Readings:** Chap. 7 of the course text

**Week 10: Ritual and Etiquette**

*China has claimed itself as the “country of ritual and etiquette” for millenniums. Therefore, it is almost compulsory for anthropologists of China to know how Chinese culture has been and is now still shaped by its characteristic ritual and etiquette.*

**Readings:** Chap. 9 of the course text

**Week 11: Nature, Environment, Disaster**

*China’s ancient history of settled agriculture sustained a large population but also put long-term strain on the environment over its agrarian history and its urban centers. Hence, it’s essential for anthropologists of China to investigate how nature, natural environment, and natural disaster have been featured prominently in Chinese culture.*

**Readings:** Chap. 8 of the course text

**Week 12: “*Zhong Guo*”: The Central Empire**

*One of the key features of Chinese civilization is its having been organized as a more-or-less unified bureaucratic empire for more than two millenniums. This spectacle is arguably the outcome of the dynamics of centring deeply rooted in Chinese culture. This class thus aims to delineate the centring processes at two scales: first, the relationship between the central empire and its tributary peripheries; second, through bringing in their affinal kin and offspring.*

**Readings:** Chap. 11 of the course text

**Week 13: Modernization and the Resilience of Tradition**

*This class attempts to describe how the imperialist invasions from “the West” and Japan since the 1840s onward prompted the rise of modern nationalism in China and a whole myriad of attempts to reform Chinese culture, ranging from moderate revision to radical reshuffle, in order to “save the nation”. For the sake of brevity, this class will focus on two exemplar aspects of traditional Chinese culture that have been most harshly prosecuted by modernist revolutionaries, that is, indigenous religions and Chinese medicine.*

**Readings:** Chap. 12 of the course text

**Week 14: Socialist Culture**

*This class aims to introduce some new features that “the socialism of Chinese character” has brought to the contemporary Chinese culture, such as the higher level of integration between central government and localities, the proliferation of cultural self-consciousness and its performance for others, and the much stronger presence of central authority with its powerful discipline in people’s mind.*

**Readings:** Chap. 12 of the course text

**Week 15: “*Suzhi*” and “China Dream”**

*“Suzhi”(quality) and “China dream” are both buzzwords in today’s China. They tends to be linked up in the context of education and psychiatry in common expressions such as “Chinese people must improve their educational and/or psychological suzhi so the China dream can be realized!” This linkage, some anthropologists argue, implies an intention to modify the subjectivity or the “self” of Chinese people to fit the latest social order via a multiple of pedagogies, either educational or psychiatric. This class thus attempts to review recent anthropological works on parenting, (pre-)schooling, counselling, mindset-growth workshops in urban China.*

**Readings:** Chap. 12 of the course text

**Week 16: Final Examination**