

Urban Issues in Contemporary China
IES/UIC Program in Beijing
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Introduction

This summer course provides a selective introduction to and overview on some of the most important issues in urban China with a central focus on Beijing and comparative references to other Chinese and non-Chinese cities. We will begin by introducing an integrated conceptualization of place and different theoretical perspectives on urban studies. Then we will examine the treatment of a variety of urban topics and issues in China through a global and comparative lens. The third approach will involve looking at some more specific cases and phenomena of urban dynamics and transformations in the context of Beijing. An ancient city with a long history and rich culture, Beijing has been modernizing rapidly and will host the 2008 Summer Olympics. This combination of the old and new and the local and global renders Beijing an ideal milieu for studying the continuities and changes in the varied urban landscape in China's capital city. Students will be expected to take full advantage of the study setting to explore different urban topics (urban being broadly defined to include urban economics and urban culture) in groups and individually and present their reports and a short final paper (see requirements below).

Method of Instruction

The class will meet for three hours twice a week (2-5 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays). Lectures by Professor Chen and guest speakers will be integrated with class discussions. There will also be regular small group meetings and local field trips, which generally take place on Mondays or Wednesdays. We will also be taking a longer weekend field trip to Chengde, a small old city located about three hours from Beijing.

Required Readings

Main text:

Anthony Orum and Xiangming Chen (2003). *The World of Cities: Places in Historical and Comparative Perspective*. Blackwell Publishers.

Articles and book chapters:

- Chang, Sen-Dou. 1998. "Beijing: Perspectives on preservation, environment, and development." *Cities* Vol. 15:13-25.

- Gaubatz, Piper Rae. 1999. "China's urban transformation: Patterns and processes of morphological change in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou." *Urban Studies* Vol. 36:1451-1521.
- Gu, Chaolin and Jianfa Shen. 2003. "Transformation of urban socio-spatial structure in socialist market economies: The case of Beijing." *Habitat International* Vol. 27:107-122.
- Ma, Laurence J.C. 2000. "Urban transformation in China, 1949-2000: A review and research agenda." *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 34: 1545-69.
- Ma, Laurence J.C. and Biao Xiang. 1998. "Native place, migration and the emergence of peasant enclaves in Beijing." *The China Quarterly* No. 155:546-581.
- Presas, L. Melchert Saguas. 2004. "Transnational urban spaces and urban environmental reforms: Analyzing Beijing's environmental restructuring in the light of globalization." *Cities* Vol. 21:321-328.
- Wang, Donggen and Si-ming Li. 2004. "Housing preferences in a transitional housing system: The case of Beijing, China." *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 36:69-87.
- Wu, Fulong and Klaire Webber. 2004. "The rise of "foreign gated communities" in Beijing: Between economic globalization and local institutions." *Cities* Vol. 21:203-213.
- Wu, Weiping. 2004. "Sources of migrant housing disadvantage in urban China." *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 36:1285-1304.
- Yan, Yunxiang. 2000. "Of hamburgers and social space: Consuming McDonald's in Beijing." Pp. 201-225 in *The Consumer Revolution in Urban China*, edited by Deborah Davis. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Tang, Wenfang and William L. Parish. 2000. Chapter 2 "The urban social world" in *Chinese Urban Life under Reform: The Changing Social Contract*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Requirements and Grading

Your grade will be based on three components/activities. The first is a short research paper approximately 10 pages due at the end of the course, accounting for 50% of your grade. The paper could focus on any topic concerning urban issues in the Chinese or a comparative context involving China, based on your reading of the class material and field observations and interviews. The second requirement is an oral presentation based on a small group project to be conducted jointly by 3-4 students. Professor Chen will work with the groups to identify the projects that should draw from the readings, guest lectures, personal experience, and most importantly, field observations. The oral presentation will account for 30% of your grade. Thirdly, your participation in class discussions will account for the remaining 20% of your grade. **The graduate students in the class are required to produce a longer and more substantial paper based on more research and extra consultation with the instructor.**

Schedule (tentative)

June 23 Prof. Chen introduces the topics and provides an overview for the class.
 *Students read Chapter 1-3 in Orum and Chen (2003).

- June 28 Prof. Chen presents theoretical and historical perspectives on urban studies, followed by discussion.
*Students read Ma (2000) and Chapter 2 in Tang and Parish (2000).
- June 29 Field trip (to ?)
- June 30 Prof. Chen lectures on research on urban China, followed by discussion.
*Students read Chang (1998) and Gaubatz (1999).
- July 5 Prof. Zhang Jie, School of Architecture at Tsinghua University, lectures on historical preservation and other urban issues in Beijing, followed by discussion.
*Students read Gu and Shen (2003) and Ma and Xiang (1998).
- July 6 Field trip (to a school for migrant children?)
- July 7 Prof. Li Qiang, Department of Sociology at Tsinghua University, lectures on migrant labor in Chinese cities with a focus on Beijing, followed by discussion.
*Students read Presas (2004).
- July 12 Guest(?) or Prof. Chen lectures on planning and environmental protection issues in the Beijing context, followed by discussion.
*Students read Wang and Li (2004) and Wu (2004).
- July 13 Field trip (to see old Beijing courtyard and new housing development?).
- July 14 Prof. Chen lectures on housing development and urban renewal, followed by discussion.
*Students read Chapter 4 in Orum and Chen (2003) and Wu and Webber (2004).
- July 19 Prof. Chen lectures on globalization and Chinese cities with a focus on Beijing and Shanghai, followed by discussion.
*Students read Yan (2000).
- July 20 Field trip (to the 2008 Olympics site and ?).
- July 21 Prof. Chen lectures on consumption in Chinese cities with a focus on Beijing and Shanghai, followed by discussion.
- July 26 Prof. Chen meets with students individually to guide them to finish their group and individual projects
- July 28 Students give group presentations and wrap up.
- July 29 Program officially ends.