
HS/AS220 INTRODUCTION TO CHINESE HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION
IES Beijing—Contemporary Issues Syllabus

DESCRIPTION: This course is an intensive introduction to Chinese history, literature, culture, and modern politics taught over two weeks. It is required for all students in the Contemporary Issues in China Program, so that they can all participate in the selection of advanced-level classes on Chinese history, literature, politics, and economics that follows the introductory course. The course relies on two solid, survey textbooks, combined with Beijing-area field trips, to provide students with a framework for understanding contemporary China. The major assessment for the course is a final research project due at the end of the semester.

The first week involves reading a series of thoughtful and challenging essays by some of the most important Western scholars of China. Each essay tackles a different element of premodern China – ancient history, early models of government, the important schools of philosophy, religions, social structure and literature. The emphasis of discussions will be on helping the students identify what is “Chinese” about China’s history, government, religions and literature.

The second week turns to the history of the 20th century, specifically China’s experience with colonialism and nationalism, the Second World War and Mao’s rise to power, the Communist experiments, as well as the roots of the modern economic liberalizations and the Tiananmen Square Uprising of 1989. Seminar discussions build on the background of the first week and engage students in an examination of modern China, helping them to understand and analyze their daily first-hand observations of China. (2 credits)

INSTRUCTOR: Center Director or designated faculty member

METHOD OF PRESENTATION: Seminar with active class discussions

LANGUAGE OF PRESENTATION: English, with introduction of relevant Chinese terms

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

Class Participation—20%
Response Paper*—20%
Research Project**—60%

CONTENT:

Week 1: The Heritage of China

M: **Introduction to the course and expectations**

T **Discussion: How did China become “Chinese?”**
Readings: Ropp, pp. 15-54
David Keightley: “Early Civilization in China”

W **Discussion: Power, Politics and Government in China**
Readings: Ropp, pp. 55-85 and 112-137
Jack Dull, “The Evolution of Government in China”
Tu Weiming, “The Confucian Tradition”

T **Discussion: Traditional Chinese Social Organization and Daily Life**
Readings: Ropp, pp. 197-223, 242-262
Patricia Ebrey: “Women, Marriage, and the Family in Chinese History”
William Rowe, “Modern Chinese Social History”

- F **Field Explorations: Chinese Art and Literature**
Students divide into small groups to visit important cultural sites in Beijing, and then prepare an analytical presentation on the cultural site(s) they visited for Monday.
Readings: Ropp, pp. 263-334
Michael Sullivan, "Chinese Art and Its Impact on the West"
Stephen Owen, "Poetry in the Chinese Tradition"
Paul Ropp, "The Distinctive Art of Chinese Fiction"

Week 2: The 20th Century

- M **Presentations: Observations and Analysis of Chinese Culture**
- T **Discussion: Why did China Collapse?**
Readings: Spence: pp. 194-215, 245-262, 271-281, 300-333
"Restoration through Reform"
"The End of the Dynasty"
"The New Republic"
"A Road is Made"
- W **Discussion: World War II in China**
Readings: Spence: pp. 361-379, 388-396, 403-483
"Experiments in Government"
"The Drift to War"
"World War II"
- T **Discussion: The People's Republic of China – Mao's Successes and Failures**
Readings: Spence: pp. 514-618
"The Birth of the People's Republic"
"Planning the New Society"
"Deepening the Revolution"
- F **Discussion: How has the PRC changed in the past 20 years?**
Readings: Spence: 653-747
"Redefining Revolution"
"Levels of Power"
"Testing the Limits"

PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH PROJECT DUE

Individual discussion sessions with instructor to discuss research project.

Final Day of Program: Research Symposium

Full-day presentation of individual research projects

Each student presents for 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for Q&A.

Required Readings:

Ropp, Paul S., ed. Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Spence, Jonathan. The Search for Modern China. New York: Norton, 1990.

Details of required work:

***Group Response Presentation:** One group presentation is due on the second Monday of the course. Students are given a choice of questions to answer based on the first week's readings. Emphasis is on relating the assigned readings on traditional China to questions and issues faced in contemporary China. This exercise is a way of preparing for the major learning mode of the Contemporary Issues in China

Program: group research and presentations through the integration of reading assignments and personal field observations.

**Research Project: *Due at the end of the semester*, this research project topic is developed during the second week of the class in consultation with the instructor. The ideal project is a theme or substantive question that can be further investigated both as part of the learning process for the three subsequent course modules and as independent research. A one-page paper proposal is due on the second Friday of the course—which should include a thesis question and a proposal of the kind of continuing investigation to be undertaken during the following 12 weeks of the program. The instructor is available to meet with students at various points through the semester to review progress on the research project. The final project takes the form of a 30-minute oral presentation, complete with hand-outs and appropriate audio and visual aids. The final academic day of the program is an academic forum in which all student participants present their research to an audience of classmates and faculty members.

Possible Subject Areas for the Research Project (though a student is free to choose any topic, subject to approval by the course instructor):

- Gender and Family Issues: Children and the 1-child policy, Gender Roles and Stereotypes, Sexual Orientation, Home and Family Life
- Politics and Government: The Press and Official Media, Local Government, The Role of the Communist Party, International Relations
- Economics and Business: Foreign Trade, Domestic Trade, Consumerism, Monetary Policy and its Impact, Socio-Economic Class Structure, Economic Development and its Impact
- Literature and the Arts: Images and Issues in Modern Arts/Lit/or Film, Funding Sources and Structures, Popular Culture
- Religion and Philosophy: Official Policy towards Religion and Philosophy, Popular Practice and Faith, Modern Philosophical Trends and Topics