

CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY SYLLABUS (2009-10)

Course description

This required 3-credit hour course examines two key and inter-related aspects of modern China: Public policy and economic reforms. Public Policy covers the structure of the Chinese government, social rights and the legal system, and issues such as ethnic minorities, family planning, and education. Economic Development covers the government policies from 1949 to the present, from the commune system to the current market-oriented reforms. Other topics include foreign investment, pollution and the environment, and the World Trade Organization. Each student will also present opinions based on interviews with Chinese about a topic relating to contemporary Chinese society that is of particular interest to Americans. The goal of this course is that you will learn about China by seeking out informed Chinese perspectives.

Course text

Gamer, Robert. (2008, 3rd ed.). Understanding Contemporary China. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Course objectives

By the end of this course, students should have or be able to

- describe how Chinese economic policies have evolved from 1949 to the present, and why.
- recognize the underlying differences between Chinese and U.S. perspectives on governing
- understand the major issues on which China and the U.S. differ significantly, and why.
- recognize the successes of the current Chinese government, and the major challenges it faces.
- understand how some policies have unintended effects that work against other stated policies.
- realize the extent to which current policies relate to China's past: recent and ancient.
- be able to speak from personal knowledge about Chinese perceptions concerning a contemporary issue.
- observe and participate in a rural development project in rural China.

Course schedule

Most classes will be double-periods; i.e., 90 minutes or more, during the four weeks early in the semester that you study at Xiamen University. A variety of Chinese professors, experts in their field (and, occasionally, members of the Communist Party), will present to you their own views on China's progress and challenges. Presentation of the information you gathered for your panel

discussion will take place after the History module in Xi'an—about three-fourths the way through the semester.

Percentages of Course Components that comprise your Grade

Class Participation	10%
Quizzes	20%
Service Project	10%
Test on Lectures	35%
Panel Discussion, (total)	25%

Quizzes

All students will be quizzed on three of the assigned from *Understanding Contemporary China* (aka, "Gamer"). Each student will also take a quiz on the assigned reading (from Gamer) for the report topic that he or she selects.

Service Project

We will spend approximately a week in a rural part of China, observing, learning, and working together with others. This is a rugged experience, living conditions are generally poorer than you've had in urban China. You are expected to adapt to these circumstances and display a positive attitude. Your service here is also part of your final grade. The goal is to bring together many of the issues we have discussed in the Contemporary Society up to this point and make them more real to you.

Test on Lectures

The review test will be brief and will have a short-answer format. This test is simply to assure that you understand and remember significant information covered in lectures and discussions in class. Almost none of the information already asked in the quizzes for the assigned readings will appear on this test.

Investigative Report Topics

There are a number of topics that come up in the Contemporary Society course that appear to be of particular interest to Americans, such as the "One Child Policy" or "Sino-US Relations." These will all be addressed in your classroom lectures by Chinese professors. However, in order for you to explore these and other topics in greater depth, students will be assigned to discover for themselves Chinese perspectives on one of these topics.