This course aims to help students better understand globalization in the context of China’s development over the last 6 decades. We will review the political and social changes that have shaped and reshaped Chinese society as a whole, with a particular focus on developments during both the Maoist era (1949-77) and the reform era (1978-present), examining their impacts on the everyday life of the Chinese people. We hope to achieve a measure of understanding of how the Chinese case is implicated in the general process of globalization and modernization.

A course reader will be available once the students arrive in Shanghai. A short essay (4 pages, double space) on a field trip is due on July 16 and final exam will be on July 19. Exam questions will be based on materials drawn from both assigned readings and lectures. Grading will be based on class participation (10%), the short essay (30%), and final exam (60%).

Weekly Topics and Readings

Week 1. Maoism and the Transformation of Chinese Society (June 26 &28)

Important themes:
1. Understanding contemporary China in the context of PRC history
2. Political campaigns and social changes that transformed the Chinese society in the 1950s and 1960s
3. The making of a new socialist society and the implications of the socialist hierarchy


Week 2. The Politics of Economic Reform and New Patterns of Social Mobility and Hierarchy (July 3 & 5)

Important themes:
1. The Chinese reform as a learning process
2. Economic growth and political conservatism
3. The increased mobility and changing structure of social inequality
4. The role of global consumerism


Week 3. The Individual, Society, and State in Post-Reform China (July 10 & 12)

Important themes:
1. The changing social structure: 1980 to present
2. The impacts of market economy on urban space
3. The global influences in lifestyle and family life
4. The rise of the individual and the decline of collectivism
5. The individualization of Chinese society and its implications


Week 4. The Rise of China and Its Global Implications (July 17 & 19)

(A 50-minute final exam on July 19)

Important themes:
1. China’s rise of a global player since the 1990s;
2. The Chinese strategies of development and Chinese perspective of its rise
3. The notion of cultural China, Chinese societies outside China, and the soft power of China.


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