

CHINESE

Fall 2022

POPULAR

University of Pennsylvania



CULTURE

Prof. Chloe Estep



潮流文化

潮流生意

Overview

This course is called Chinese Popular Culture. We will spend some time thinking about each of these concepts ("Chinese," "popular," and "culture") in turn—what you think they mean, what I and others think they mean, where and why our understandings dovetail or diverge—and then examine how these concepts are articulated in historical and contemporary media.

In this sense, the class is as much a *history of popular culture in China* as it is a class on contemporary popular culture. We will investigate questions such as: How might classical poetry be considered popular culture? How might rubbings help us understand the way information spreads in the modern world? How do we understand the role of technologies like photography, film, and radio in creating ideas about "China," both locally and globally? Please read through the topics and materials listed under "Weekly Schedule" for more details. Talk to me if you are unsure if this course meets your interests.

To answer the above questions and more, we will engage with a wide range of materials, including literature, scholarly and theoretical writing, visual art, film, television, music, dance, and the vast world of the internet. We will explore topics include folklore and nationalism, labor and capitalism, race and ethnicity, feminism and masculinity, food and medicine. I expect that by the end of the semester our communal understanding of the fundamental premise of the course will have changed significantly. In addition to gaining a more nuanced understanding of these key concepts, you will develop skills in historical and textual analysis, archival research, and writing.

Reading, writing, and discussion will take up a large proportion of work for the class, but students will also have opportunities to create their own rubbings, look through archives of early twentieth-century photographs and Socialist-era “propaganda” posters, and create their own cooking videos and blogs. Most class sessions will meet in our assigned space, but we will also visit the Penn Museum and may take other trips out of the classroom if circumstances allow.

Experience

Class will meet on Monday afternoons from 1:45-4:44 PM. During class, we will discuss: 1) the work you completed in preparation for class 2) the current week's materials, and 3) at the end of the session, I will give a brief introduction to the following week's topics. Class sessions will sometimes involve cooperative activities. Given the length of the seminar, class will always include a 10-minute break around the halfway point.

As mentioned above, some weeks will take place outside of the regular space, and the semester will include 2-3 film screenings. Film screenings will be scheduled at the beginning of the semester to ensure all students are able to attend. They are as mandatory as the rest of class, which is to say, you are strongly encouraged to attend. However, if something prevents you from attending class, do not worry! See the below section on "Expectations" for more on attendance.

In preparation for each class, you should read (or view) and reflect on all posted materials. There will be two main assignments for each week: a **weekly exercise** and a reading/viewing **journal**. The exercise will change each week (see “Schedule”) and the journal will often be a response to the exercise. Your journal will take the form of a Google Slide and will be viewable by the whole class. In addition to weekly assignments, there will be a **midterm paper** and a **final project** (see “Assignments.”)

No prerequisites and no knowledge of any Chinese languages are required for this class. However, you will (inevitably, happily, perhaps perplexingly) come across Chinese, Sinophone, and other non-English vocabulary, scripts, and references in the course of the semester. Students with knowledge of these languages should feel free to read texts in the original and bring up relevant issues, while making your contributions as accessible as possible to our course community. All are encouraged to reflect on and revel in the indeterminate, multilingual world in which we live.