

HIST 233/EALC 141/URBS 260

Cities in Chinese History

Tue 5:15-8-15 PM / Coll 318

Prof. Siyen Fei

Office: College Hall 319A

Office number: 215-898-5125

Email: siyen@sas.upenn.edu

Office hours: Tue 2-3 PM or by appointment

What can cities tell us about China? China has always been considered a prime example of agricultural civilization. Focus on the dominant majority of the population, the rural peasants, often obscures the role cities played in China's historical development. This seminar will challenge the conventional image of China and ask: when China's past is filtered through the lens of cities, what is the history that emerges?

To these ends, we will move beyond the conventional dynasty model, one that evolves around the interplay between the emperor, mandarins, and peasants, to a new temporal scheme based on urban developments. From this urban perspective, the seminar presents Chinese history as a series of urban revolutions that marked critical moments of Chinese society, each accompanied with primary accounts (novels, essays, paintings, or films) that shaped contemporary experiences and perceptions of urban space. This arrangement will allow us to address two main issues of this seminar: How did various forces (economic, political, or international) affect the definitions and identities of Chinese cities? How did these changes in turn re-shape the living experiences and identities of the people who lived in urban areas? To further explore the "urban" dimension of Chinese experiences, we will also situate the evolution of Chinese cities in the context of changing configurations of domestic and rural spaces.

Topics include: The origin and morphology of Chinese cities; the medieval urban revolution and the subsequent collapse of classic city plans; the late imperial urbanization and the development of public/private space in cities; the role of cities in the building of a modern Chinese nation state; the anti-city experiment under the communist regime; urban citizenship in the reform era as well as the post-socialist cityscape, with a special focus on 2008 Olympics in Beijing and the ongoing "Great Uprooting" movement.

Course Outline:

Schedule	Central Topics	Timeline	Assignments and paper due
Week 1	Overviews and issues		
Week 2	From City States to Imperial Capitals	Zhou-Han	
Week 3	Medieval urban revolution	Tang-Song transition	
Week 4	Urban experiences revolutionized	8 th -12 th centuries	
Week 5	The spatial structure of late imperial China---The Skinner Thesis	Late imperial China	
Week 6	Sex and the City	16 th -17 th centuries	essay #1 due
Week 7	Urban Modernity and its Consequences	Late 19 th and early 20 th centuries	
Week 8	Shanghai modern and the rise of petty urbanites	1910s-1940s	
Week 9	Cities under the communist regime	1950-1960	essay #2 due
Week 10	Cities in the Cultural Revolution	1966-1976	
Week 11	Post Socialist Cityscape: Economic Reform and Urban Citizenship	1980s and 1990s	Thesis statement due in class
Week 12	Migrant workers	2000s	Final project show and tell (I)
Week 13	Imagining Utopia	Current and ongoing	Final project show and tell (II)
Week 14	Final Paper Workshop		Draft due on Nov 29

Textbooks (textbooks are available for purchase at Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th Street and on reserve at Van Pelt Library, Rosengarten Reserve room)

1. Heng Chye Kiang, *Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats: The Development of Medieval Chinese Cityscapes*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999. Art: HT169.C6 H46 1999.
2. *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, Volume 1. Translated by David Tod Roy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. PL2698.H73 C4713 1993.
3. Eileen Chang, *Written on Water*. Translated by Andrew F. Jones. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. PL2837.E35 L5813 2005.

4. Joseph W. Esherick ed., *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950* *E-book link at library website*
5. John Friedmann, *China's Urban Transition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
6. Supplementary readings will be available on course website (<https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu>).

Assignments and Grading Policy:

1. Attendance and Participation (30 %):

Any absence should be reported before class and be made up with an extra discussion paper. Your performance—on Perusall and in-class—will be evaluated by how you contribute to class discussion.

2. Discussion Leader (10 %):

Every student has to lead class discussion (30-40 minutes) once during the semester. A sign-up sheet will be distributed during the second class meeting. Discussion leaders will consult with the instructor in advance and post a discussion video (3 min) the day before class (no later than Monday 6 PM) on Canvas to facilitate productive class discussion. This goal could be achieved by you explaining the reasons why these issues deserve our attention and how they relate to what we have already discussed in previous meetings, or any other creative formats. It does not have to follow the reading guidelines. Discussion leader will also post a report (due on Friday 6PM) on Canvas summarizing class discussion and how the above issues are addressed in class.

Group Project (5%): Imagining Utopia

3. Short Essays (no longer than 3 pages) (20%):

- Essay #1 commentary on one piece of secondary literature (due week 6)
- Essay #2 evaluation of one piece of original source (due week 9)

Both essays should explore and develop a thesis/concept that you consider essential to the studies of Chinese cities. Use these essays to lay a solid foundation for your final project. Note the due dates are the latest days to hand in your essays. You can submit the essays as soon as we finished the readings of your choice.

4. Final Project (35%):

This includes a finished draft and active participation in the essay workshop (5 %) and a 10 page final paper due May 7th (30%).

For your final paper, you will pick one of the following topics:

- A critical review essay. Based on the course materials, this essay should choose one of main themes covered in the seminar and trace its development through time (for example, urban autonomy, urban experiences, urbanizations, urban regime...etc)
 - Imagine you are asked by a museum or a popular magazine to contribute an illustrated essay on Chinese cities. Use the sources introduced in the class to construct a proposal for a museum exhibition or an article to be published for public circulation.
 - A city walk guide for a particular Chinese city
 - Design your own topic. To be approved by the instructor in advance.
 - *Creative projects should include a short mission statement (3-5 page)*
5. No late submission will be accepted. All the course requirements listed above must be fulfilled in order to pass the course. Failure in any segment will result in failure of the whole course. Exceptions will only be made for documented emergencies.
6. Academic Integrity: please read the university guidelines carefully <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html>. Any violation will result in a failing grade and subject to disciplinary actions.

Weekly Schedule

WEEK I (Jan 18): How and Why did Cities Matter?

READINGS:

- Nicholas D. Kristof, "China, the World's Capital," *The New York Times*, May 22, 2005.

WEEK II (Jan 25): From City States to Imperial Capitals

READINGS:

- Mark Lewis, "Cities and Capitals," in *The Construction of Space in Early China*.
- Mogens Herman Hansen, "The Concepts of City State and City State Culture"
- [R] John Friedmann, "Historical Traces," in *China's Urban Transition*.

READING GUIDELINES:

- How did early Chinese cities fit into the global development of city-states? How did the transition to imperial capitals affect the life of residents? Which form of urbanism do you think represents a better way of life? For whom? What issues regarding Chinese urban development we want to focus on this semester?

WEEK III (Feb 1): The Medieval Urban Revolution

READINGS:

- Kiang Chye Heng, *Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats: The Development of Cityscapes in Medieval China*. [*out of print, either order online or use borrow direct]
 - <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/cities/china/xian/xian.html>

- [R] Heng Chye Kiang, *A Digital Reconstruction of Tang Chang'an*. (Bilingual) Version 2.1 China Building and Architectural Press, 2006

READING GUIDELINES:

- What changes did the medieval urban revolution entail? Make a comparison list between the Tang and Song cities and identify the driving forces behind this transformation.

WEEK IV (Feb 8):

Urban Life before and after the Medieval Urban Revolution

READINGS:

- “The Tale of Li Wa”
 - **This is a love story that took place in an urban pleasure quarter. Look at the spatial components in the narrative—how is the plot affected by the particular urban design?
- Valerie Hansen, *The Beijing Qingming Scroll and Its Significance for the Study of Chinese History*. Published by *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies*, Dept. of East Asian Studies, The University at Albany, Humanities 210, Albany, NY, 12222.
 - You can view the whole painting at the following link http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Along_the_River_During_the_Qingming_Festival
 - Additional detailed images are also available at Canvas.
 - **How to read the traditional cityscape painting like *Qingming shanghe tu*? Translate the city landscape painting into a textual narrative.
- Valerie Hansen, “The Cosmopolitan Terminus of the Silk Road,” in *Silk Road: A New History*
- Steven West, “A Dream of the Eastern Capital,” in *Hawaii Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*
 - **What is the urban experience presented in this essay compared with what we have read before?
- Tsao Hsingyuan, 2003, “Unraveling the Mystery of the Handscroll *Qingming shanghe tu*,” *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* 33.

READING GUIDELINES

- What are the proper parameters to evaluate changes in urban experiences? Establish your criteria and use them to identify the impacts of the medieval urban revolution on everyday life.

WEEK V (Feb 15) City System in Late Imperial China: The Skinner Thesis

READINGS:

- G. William Skinner, 1977, “Introduction: Urban Development in Imperial China,” “Introduction: Urban and Rural in Chinese Society,” and “Introduction: Social Structure in

Ch'ing China," in Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Di Wang, "Street Culture: Public Space and Urban Commoners in Late-Qing Chengdu," *Modern China*, Vol. 24, No. 1. (Jan., 1998), pp. 34-72.
- [R] G. William Skinner, 1985, "Presidential Address: The Structure of Chinese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* (44): 271-292.

READING GUIDELINES

- Summarize Skinner's model and discuss its pros and cons: what kind of problems it solved and what it might have overlooked? What are the political, social, and cultural ramifications of the Skinner thesis for Chinese history at large?

WEEK VI (Feb 22)

Sex and the City: The Intersection of Public and Private Spaces in Cities

Essay #1 due in class

READINGS:

- *The Plum in the Golden Vase: Jinpingmei*, ch 1-10.

READING GUIDELINES:

- Look for the spatial components in the story. Where and how did men and women spend their days? How were the urban experiences in this novel different from before? Based on the readings, how would you define public and private spaces in late imperial Chinese cities?

WEEK VII (Mar 1): Urban Modernity and its Consequences

- Joseph W. Esherick ed., *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950*.

Select one article in the book to report to class and evaluate its contribution to the whole volume.

READING GUIDELINES:

- How did the process of modernization change Chinese cities? How to evaluate their success or failure in terms of both the underlying vision[s] and actual practice?

March 8: Spring Break, no class

WEEK VIII (Mar 15): Shanghai Modern

READINGS:

- Shanghai in the eyes of a single female writer:
Eileen Chang, translated by Andrew F. Jones, *Written on Water*. [*out of print]

**How did women experience urban life differently in this time period? [Compared with *Jinpinmei* or Li Wa's story].

- Shanghai in the eyes of petty urbanites:

Film: *Wan jia deng huo* 萬家燈火 Myriad of Twinkling Lights

** Identify clips you want to discuss in class. How the form of urban residence affected social interaction and family/gender dynamics? If we consider the film itself as a criticism on modernization/urbanization, what is the message here?

- [R] For general background of Shanghai, see Leo Lee, *Shanghai Modern* [on Canvas]
- [R] Hanchao Lu, "Away from Nanking Road: Small Stores and Neighborhood Life in Modern Shanghai," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Feb., 1995), pp. 93-123

READING GUIDELINES

- How do you think the process of modernization affected Chinese urban experiences? What ideals did cities embody at the time? Use examples from readings to support your argument.

WEEK IX (Mar 22): Cities under the Communist Regime

Essay #2 due in class

READINGS:

- James Z. Gao, "From Rural Revolution to Urban Revolutionization: A case study of Luzhongnan," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 10.27 (2001): 233-252
- James Z. Gao, *The Communist takeover of Hangzhou: the transformation of city and cadre, 1949-1954*, Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 2004.
- Duanfang Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form*, Ch 2 "Travelling Urban Form: The Neighborhood Unit in China" and Ch 3 "Work Unit Urbanism"
- Janet Salaff, 1967, "The Urban Communes and Anti-city Experiment in Communist China," *The China Quarterly* (29):82-110
- Film: *Dragon Whiskers Creek*
- [R]Janet Salaff, 1971, "Urban Residential Communities in the Wake of the Cultural Revolution," in *The City in Communist China*.

READING GUIDELINES

- What are the features of the Chinese communist urban regime? To what end was it conceived? What functions and roles were assigned to cities? How did it alter the urbanization process?

WEEK X (Mar 29): Cities in the Cultural Revolution

- ❑ Liang Heng, *Son of the Revolution*
- ❑ Film: *Ku Nao ren de xiao* (The troubled laughter)

WEEK XI (April 5): Post Socialist Cityscape, Economic Reform and Urban Citizenship

Final Paper Thesis Statement Due in Class

READINGS:

- ❑ Helen Siu, "Grounding the Displacement" *American Ethnologist*, 34.2 (2007): 329-50.
- ❑ Chung and Unger, "The Guangdong model of Urbanization: Collective Village Land the Making of a new middle class," *China Perspective*, 2013 (3): 33-41.
- ❑ John Friedmann, "New Spatial Motilities" in *China's Urban Transition*,
- ❑ Gao, Helen. 2010. "Migrant Villages within a City Ignite Debate," in *New York Times*, October 3.
- ❑ Guang, Lei. 2005. "Guerrilla Workfare: Migrant Renovators, State Power, and Informal Work in Urban China," in *Politics & Society* 33(3): 481-506.
- ❑ Pow, Choon-Piew. 2007. "Securing the Civilized Enclaves: Gated Communities and the Moral Geographies of Exclusion in (Post-) socialist Shanghai," in *Urban Studies*, 44(8), 1539-1558
- ❑ [R] Li Zhang, 2008, "Private Homes, Distinct Lifestyles: Performing a New Middle-Class," in *Privatizing China, Socialism from Afar*, edited by Li Zhang and Aihwa Ong, Cornell University Press
- ❑ [R] Xuefei Ren, *Building Globalization: Ttransnational Architecture Production in Urban China*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- ❑ [R] Campanella, Thomas J. *The Concrete Dragon: China's Urban Revolution and What It Means for the World*. New York : Princeton Architectural Press, 2008.

READING GUIDELINES

- ❑ In comparison with the previous urban revolutions (early, medieval, late imperial modern), how significant do you think the economic reform has been in the development of Chinese cities?

WEEK XII (April 12): Migrant Workers

Final project show and tell (I)

READINGS:

- ❑ Leslie Chang, *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China*
- ❑ Wang Xiaoshuai, [Beijing Bicycle](#)
- ❑ Shanghai: Shu Haolun's documentary
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6616570>
- ❑ [R] Wu Hong, 1991, "Tiananmen Square: A Political History of Monuments," *Representations* (35): 84-117.
- ❑ [R] Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen square and the creation of a political space*, Chicago : University of Chicago Press ; London : Reaktion Books, 2005.

WEEK XIII (April 19) Imagining Utopia: Envisioning the Future by Way of the Past

Final project show and tell (II)

READINGS:

- ❑ Duanfang Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form*, Ch 5 “Modernity as Utopia: Planning the People’s Commune, 1958-1960”
- ❑ You-tian Hsing, Part III “Urbanization of the Rural Fringe,” in *The Great Urban Transformation: Politics of Land and Property in China*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp 155-227.
- ❑ John Friedmann, intro and conclusion, “Urbanization of the Countryside,” “The Governance of City-Building,” and “Expanding Space for Personal Autonomy” in *China’s Urban Transition*
- ❑ New York Times series: “Leaving the Land.”
- ❑ [R] Ding Lu ed, *The Great Urbanization of China*

Week XIV (April 26) : Final Paper Workshop

****Draft due on April 24****

Final Paper Due May 7 on Canvas