ANTH 5250 - Seminars in the Anthropology of China I

2017 Fall Semester
Instructor: Mark Stevenson (Mark.Stevenson@cuhk.edu.hk)
Class meetings: Thursday, 6:30-9:15 pm, Mong Man Wai Bldg 715
Office Hours: NAH 411, by appointment.

RA: Wu Yuehan

“Students in this course will read and discuss the major ethnographies and other anthropological studies on China. Readings will provide students with general knowledge of the anthropology of China, but will vary year to year depending on the teacher.”

Learning Outcomes:

- Broad knowledge of a diverse range of perspectives on contemporary Chinese society.
- Focused knowledge of social science perspectives on consumption in contemporary China.
- Appreciation of the links between recent and older approaches to anthropology in China.
- Appreciation of the relationship between the anthropology of China and the wider field.
- Ability to reflect on opposing perspectives within the ongoing historical construction of the anthropology of China.

There is one question that, perhaps more than any other, motivates anthropological inquiry. Take people from different backgrounds and place them in the same situation; they are likely to differ in what they make of it. Indeed such difference is something that every anthropologist experiences in the initial phases of fieldwork. But why should this be so? (Tim Ingold, “Culture, Perception and Cognition,” 2000 [1996])

Course Requirements and Evaluation (further details at the end of this syllabus):
Students are expected to read ahead and participate actively in lecture and tutorial discussions.

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Group Assignment (500 words each: 20% + 5%)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19/10/17</td>
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<td>2. Research Bibliography (800 words)</td>
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<td>3. Final paper (1500 words)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>08/12/17</td>
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<td>4. Active Participation and Attendance</td>
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Course Outline

This semester our focus will be on the “anthropology of consumption.” This is a rather recent focus for anthropology on the whole, and anthropologists working on China and other parts of Asia have played an important role in its development. As with any anthropological activity, a major consideration will be how consumption relates to other areas of social life, as well as with the specialisations within anthropology (economy, politics, ritual, belief, kinship and marriage, etc.). Anthropological understanding also often depends on a comparative perspective, and it will be instructive to compare how consumption has evolved as a phenomenon in China while attempting
to sort out which processes have had a primarily cultural basis, and which have primarily been a
result of global/historical pressures.

A focus on consumption is also an opportunity to update our picture of anthropology and China, and
it will be possible to observe and comment “live” on stories in the news as well as recent
anthropological work. The current anthropological focus on consumption in China can be
understood as a product of our present period in history and the emergence of a global
consumption culture. We should expect to find Hong Kong’s position in China’s experience of this
trend to also be important. If we want to make these questions truly anthropological we can also
ask, “Is it true to say that consumption now governs all areas life, everywhere?” Because it is a fresh
area of inquiry, together as a class we should aim at contributing to a better understanding of this
late modern phenomenon, particularly in relation to what you know about China. We can be
confident of one thing for certain; consumption has never been a frivolous topic, and it certainly isn’t
so right now.

Lectures will be delivered in English, with opportunities for discussion in both English and Chinese.
Unless otherwise specified, written assignments may be submitted in either English or Chinese.

Required Text:
Latham, Kevin, Stuart Thompson and Jakob Klein, ed. Consuming China: Approaches to Cultural
Chapters from this book will be referred to extensively each week, and will serve as a
primary source of class discussion. It is normally the first listed source/s in each week’s
required reading.

Course Schedule

Week 1—7 Sep. Locating the Anthropology of China

Anthropology has had a chequered history in China, having attracted attention early in the twentieth
century, and then falling under suspicion for most of the second half. How has this history affected
the way anthropology has been done, and the kinds of anthropological knowledge that has been
produced? How different is the anthropology of China inside and outside China? How have studies of
Chinese communities elsewhere shaped the discipline? Why is anthropology, in either bourgeois or
radical guise, always treated with suspicion by the Chinese party-state? What is its relation to
minorities and peasants?

We will also discuss images of Hong Kong from 1972 (45 years ago now) from a consumption
perspective:

Business Insider: What Hong Kong Looked Like 40 Years Ago

Required Reading:
Consuming China: Chapter 8: “Images of the Chinese: photography and consumerism in 1990s
Hangzhou,” John Bayne.
斯基到莫斯科到毛澤東》胡鴻保，周燕譯. 北京：社會科學文獻出版社，2000.
For an overview of the pioneering work of Elisabeth (Lisa) Croll (PhD, Anthropology of China, 1977), please read the following obituary:

**Recommended reading:**

**Week 2—14 Sep. Locating Consumption in Anthropology**

Consumption only entered anthropology as an area of inquiry ‘in its own right’ in the late-1970s. In earlier studies it might be raised in association with exchange, social distinction, ritualised display, gifting, etc. Recently it has begun to be recognised as an essential a notion to anthropology as ‘culture’ is. What implications does consumption’s prominence in ‘everyday life’ have for the usual way of doing anthropology? Should we expect consumption to exhibit similar features in industrialised and non-industrialised societies? Is consumption ‘rational’ or ‘irrational’? How central is consumption to anthropology’s big themes of culture, society, and difference?

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**
Week 3—21 Sep. Locating Consumption in the Anthropology of Chinese Societies

Following the “reform and opening” instituted by the party-state in 1978 (de-collectivisation of agriculture, encouraging foreign investment, permission for entrepreneurs to start businesses), China has witnessed dramatic economic and social change that has seen the rise of consumption as a feature of everyday life. How has the experience of the “new era” in China changed the focus and methods of anthropologists? How has anthropological interest in consumption in China been similar or different to the study of consumption in other East Asian societies? How has the consumption environment changed since the early days of reform?

**Required Reading:**

**Consuming China: Chapter 1:** "Introduction: consumption and cultural change in contemporary China," Kevin Latham.

Ruan Xin. 《变与不变: 21 世纪一个中国村落的民族志研究》天津市: 南开大学出版社, 2013. 第三章.


**Recommended Reading:**


Week 4—28 Sep. Consumption and History

How is the experience of consumption related to longer (or deeper) patterns of social change? What lessons do historians of China provide for the anthropologist seeking to understand Chinese society...
today? Is it social change which drives consumption, or consumption that drives social change? What role can ideology play in relation to these other historical forces?

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 5—5 Oct. Signs of Consumption in Late Traditional China. Gazettes (地方志) and Commonplace Books (筆記).**

What relationship has consumption had to other aspects of social life in early-modern China? How did culture and custom give consumption a role and place in the traditional Chinese world? How did the cultural placement of consumption contribute to the shaping of social relations? One way of collecting evidence for these questions is turn to local gazettes and the observations found in literati miscellanies. These can still be an invaluable source for anthropologists seeking to understand contemporary expressions of local culture, as are secondary sources such as histories of the Ming and Qing. The commercial revolution of the Ming is particularly interesting in terms of the role of consumption.

**Required Reading:**
**Recommended and Assignment Reading:**


**Week 6—12 Oct. Consumption and China’s Introduction to Modernity**

New technology, new commodities, and new patterns of consumption appear to be related, but how exactly? Do they each enter social relations in the same way? Or quite differently? How? What does the early-twentieth century history of China have to tell us about these questions? Was there a consumption explosion in early twentieth century China, and how similar was it to that we have been witnessing since the 1980s?

**Required Reading:**

曹南屏. 〈玻璃与清末民初的日常生活〉, 《中央研究院近代史研究所集刊》第 76 期（民國 101 年 6 月）: 81-134.


**Recommended Reading:**


*Group Report due October 19*

Has Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated in Distinction, consumption has become something much greater than keeping our bodies and communities healthy, it is also important for self-expression and the formation of our personal identities. What are the different forms consumption takes in China today? How does each form of consumption serve different groups and different needs? Has consumption really become such a significant way of gaining a sense of who we are?

Required Reading:

Weekly Reading:


If individuals mediate their self-expression and identity through consumption, can the same be said for nations? Internally, consumption creates tensions and disruption, particularly in the contrasts between rural, rural urban, and urban life. Is that a threat to national unity? And what about consumption behaviour in terms of a nation’s international or global image? How has the consumption revolution changed China’s ‘national narrative’?

Required Reading:
李泓.《改革开放以来中国文化变迁研究》北京: 中国社会科学出版社, 2013. 第四章，第一节.

Recommended Reading:

*Research Bibliography due October 28*

Week 9—2 Nov. Consumption and Minority Nationalities
Many people, even some anthropologists, are disappointed to learn that minority nationality communities (or ‘small-scale societies’) are also ‘modern consumers’ who behave very differently to ‘ethnographic’ accounts of their ‘traditional’ life. Are minorities undergoing the same changes as Han Chinese? Are the similarities only superficial, obscuring reinterpretations of consumption behaviour? How has ‘minority’ status affected minorities’ recent experience of consumption?

Required reading:

**Consuming China: Chapter 11:** “The consuming or the consumed?: virtual Hmong in China,” Nicholas Tapp.


Rainbow Reading:


**Week 10—9 Nov. (The Internet and) Consumption Mind Sets: Minds in Interaction.**

China’s “opening-up” was in part stimulated by the pressures of globalisation, a process involving increased international flows of trade, finance, migration, and knowledge, shaping new cultural and social spaces on multiple geographic scales. What has the effect of this process been on consumption? How is the most radical of these spatial reorientations, the internet, shaping consumption and social relations? How has the internet consumption experience meshed with other recent mindset changes in China? Where will Pokémon Go go in China?

Required Reading:

**Consuming China: Chapter 4:** “The emergence of consumer rights: legal protection of the consumer in the PRC,” Michael Palmer.


**Recommended Reading:**

Week 11—16 Nov. Consumption and the State

Is the policing of consumption a vain impossibility? Can the state really use the lure of consumption to buy its citizen's compliance? Aren't these two state impulses in contradiction? In China consumption is still attached to a question of morality and the ambiguity of desire: what might that fact reveal about contemporary social structure and patterns of social relations? And how much longer before the age-old critique of consumption no longer rings true?

Required reading:


Recommended Reading:

Week 12—23 Nov. Consumption and/in Greater China

Language, cultural memory, and cultural affinity in the Sinophone world provide for possibilities of cultural contagion in several directions at once. Is consumption an East Asian contagious disease? How are anthropologists tracing its progress? How limited is its spread beyond the Sinophone body? Can we identify any one of China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, or Melbourne as major sites of contagion?

Required reading:
檢自: http://commons.ln.edu.hk/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1438&context=mcsln
**Recommended Reading:**


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**Week 13—30 Nov. Sensing Consumption: A Theory Makeover.**

How has your picture of consumption changed over the semester? Are you convinced of its value for anthropological analysis? Can it be at all left out of any account of social life? How much importance should consumption be given for the anthropology of China today? Was it a significant omission in the anthropologies of China in the past? What tools have you gained for better understanding the role of consumption in social life?

**Required Reading:**


http://www.cssn.cn/zhx/zx_zhyj/201510/t20151019_2500766_5.shtml

**Recommended Reading:**


*Final Paper due Friday 8 Dec.*

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**Assignments.**

1. **Group Assignment: Gazette Research. (20 + 5 = 25 points). Class Discussion October 4.**
   **Group Report due October 19.**

At the commencement of the Semester you will be allocated a group of 3-4 people. As a group you will be responsible for one region of China covered by the collated gazetteer volumes (丁世良 ed.) listed in Week 5: North China, Northwest China, Southwest China (2 groups), and South
Central China (2 groups). **Task:** Scan your allocated volume of the Collated Folklore Materials series for evidence of *consumption practices and customs* in one (1) *sub-provincial location* (e.g. city, town, county) *per group member*, as well as prepare examples and observations *in English* (1500-2000 words in total, about 500 words for each member). If you do not read Chinese, your principal role will be the important one of assisting your group with working on translating terms and preparing the group write-up. Groups should meet to discuss the research and plan the writing up. **Assignments will be assessed on** 1) the appropriateness of the examples and observations to the course themes, and 2) the integration of the material into a cohesive paper. At the commencement of semester each group must nominate a Group Leader. As well as the group paper, each contributor will submit a 250 word (or 200 characters) reflection on the research process and its significance (this part may be *in Chinese or in English*) which will be allocated a separate result from the group mark. *Time will be allocated during class meetings for the development of this exercise.*

2. **Research Bibliography. (25 points) Due November 2**

**Task:** Prepare a research bibliography containing ten (10) academic publications (books, book chapters, and/or journal articles) specific to the region of China you were allocated in Assignment 1 *(these should not duplicate sources in this syllabus).* As well as being correctly formatted in line with academic convention (see “Style” below), each entry should have a *brief annotation* (evaluative comments) which explains the source’s relevance to the course themes of *“the anthropology of consumption in China.”* Items listed in your research bibliography may be in English or Chinese. Annotations may be in either Chinese or English, but not a mix, and should each be no more than 60 characters, or 80 words (not including bibliographic information). These sources may be useful in developing your final paper.

**Style:** For this assignment, for English sources you must use the *Chicago Manual of Style* conventions (“Author-Date version”) as outlined in their “quick guide” page (see link below). For Chinese sources you should follow guidelines prepared by the CUHK Sociology Department (http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/soc/citation.pdf).

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

3. **Final Paper. (35 points) Due December 9.**

Details to follow. A range of topics will be developed in response to class discussion and released with other details in Week 6.

4. **Active Attendance and Participation (15 points)**

Attendance in class is required. If you have urgent business that prevents your attendance please give the instructor advanced notice by email.

All assignments must be submitted to VeriGuide. Assignments without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded. The VeriGuide login can be found at the following link: https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx

**Academic Honesty**
The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students, and adopts a policy of *zero tolerance* on academic dishonesty. While “academic dishonesty” is the overall name, there are several sub-categories as follows:

(i) **Plagiarism**
(ii) Undeclared multiple submission
(iii) Cheating in tests and examinations
(iv) All other acts of academic dishonesty

Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the University.

香港中文大學對學生作業有嚴格的學術誠信要求，違反學術誠信的個案，一律以零容忍政策處理。「違反學術誠信」是一個統稱，包括以下類別：

(i) 抄襲
(ii) 未有聲明重覆使用作業
(iii) 測驗及考試作弊
(iv) 所有其他違反學術誠信行為

違反有關規定的學生予以懲處，嚴重者包括開除學籍。

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

In the case of group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions should there be any plagiarized contents in the group project, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed directly or indirectly to the plagiarized contents.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students’ uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.

Assignments without the properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submission. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one’s own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

Further information on academic honesty can be found at:
http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/