



# Global China Program

## Globalization and Urbanization: China's Urban Transformation and What It Means for the World

**Instructor:** Dr. Li, Limei (李丽梅)

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**Language of Instruction:** English

**Contact Hours:** 56 course hours. One course hour is 45 minutes.

**Recommended Credit:** 3

**Semester:** fall 2023

### 1. Course Description

Today, the world is an urban place—more than half of the world's population lives in towns and cities. It is especially important to understand urban development in developing countries, where the great bulk of urban growth is now taking place. This course examines China's urbanization in the past seven decades, including its processes, forces and issues. Since the second half of 20th century, China has undergone unprecedented urban transformation that in turn is changing the landscape of this most populous country. The urbanization rate in China grew from roughly 10% in 1949, to 17.9% in 1978, to 26.2% in 1990, to 36.1% in 2000, and to 49.7% in 2010. China just crossed the 50% mark in 2011. By the end of 2022, about 921 million people, or 65.2% of total population were living in urban areas. China, once the biggest agrarian nation, has become the biggest urban society in the world, which not only poses enormous opportunities as well as challenges for China, but also carries far-reaching implications for the rest of the world.

This course introduces students to the recent literature on the immense urban transformation and offers a critical understanding of China's urbanization, social-spatial restructuring and some of the most important urban issues. The course focuses on the post-1978 period, which fundamentally differs from the previous 30 years of state socialism. The topics are mainly divided into four parts. Part I sets the context, describing the global context of urban development, China's geographical setting, and historical urban system. Part II focuses on the processes and the uniqueness of urbanization in China. Issues such as the socialist ideology, the household registration (*hukou*) system, rural-urban migration and globalization will be discussed. We will also pay special attention to the urban development in Shanghai. Part III outlines the social-spatial restructuring of Chinese cities in post-reform era. We will study the urban expansion on the edge as well as the urban renewal in the old city core. Part IV examines various urban issues emerging with the rapid urbanization, such as the massive migration, citizenship and incorporation, urban land and housing questions, urban inequality and social discontent, and environmental issues.

This course will combine lectures, class discussions, documentary and book discussions to help students better grasp the course materials. Students will be engaged in active learning activities, such as synthesizing reading materials, identifying questions for discussion, leading book discussion, and writing book reviews, and research paper.

### 2. Course Objectives



At the end of this course, students will:

- Be familiar with literature on urban development in China
- Understand the processes and uniqueness of China's urbanization
- Understand the impact of socialist ideology and institutions on urbanization
- Be able to assess the impact of globalization on Chinese urbanization
- Understand the pattern and dynamics of rural-urban migration and its implications
- Be able to analyze the social-spatial restructuring of Chinese cities
- Be able to discuss major urban issues in China
- Be able to discuss the implications of China's urban transformation to the world

### **3. Textbooks**

- 1) Weiping Wu and Piper Gaubatz, 2020. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. The Chinese city, New York & London: Routledge.
- 2) Weiping Wu and Qin Gao. 2022. China urbanizing: impacts and transitions, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- 3) Barry Naughton, 2018. The Chinese Economy: adaptation and growth, The MIT Press.

### **4. Books for discussion**

- 1) Xiaotong Fei. 1992. From the Soil, the Foundations of Chinese Society: A Translation of Fei Xiaotong's Xiangtu Zhongguo, With an Introduction and Epilogue by Hamilton, Gary G. and Wang, Zheng. University of California Press.
- 2) Eli Friedman. 2022. The Urbanization of people: the politics of development, labor markets, and schooling in the Chinese city. Columbia University Press.
- 3) Scott Rozelle and Natalie Hell. 2020. Invisible China: how the urban-rural divide threatens China's rise. The University of Chicago Press.
- 4) Xiao Ma. 2022. Localized bargaining: the political economy of China's high-speed railway program. Oxford University Press
- 5) Fulong Wu. 2022. Creating Chinese urbanism: urban revolution and governance changes. London: UCL Press.
- 6) Yifei Li and Judith Shapiro. 2020. China goes green: coercive environmentalism for a troubled planet. Polity.

Note: I will send all the course materials to you via the WeChat group.

### **5. Assessment and Grading**

Your final grade in this course will be assessed as follows:

Class attendance & participation:	15%
Book discussions & reviews:	20%
Mid-term exam:	25%
Final research paper:	40%

Throughout the semester, you are required to finish each reading assignment on schedule, send your discussion question one day before the class, attend class on time and actively take part in class discussion, lead one book discussion and write one book review, and write a final research paper.

**Class Attendance & Participation: 15%**



Attendance in class is expected. I also expect you to be prepared to participate in class discussions and share your ideas that are relevant to the class. You should read the assigned reading and prepare one discussion question before attending class. Starting from **the second week, students are required to submit one discussion question based on the readings for the next day's lecture to the teaching assistant by 6:00pm ONE DAY BEFORE THE CLASS** (except the mid-term exam week).

I will start the lecture by discussing some of your questions from the second week. Your contributions to class discussions are an important aspect of your overall performance in the course, which will be recorded and credited. **Missing 8 or more discussion questions out of 11 would lead to a grade of zero for participation.** If you cannot attend a specific class, please notify me in advance.

#### **Book Discussion & Review: 20%**

Six books are selected to help students better understand the historical, social, economic, political, environmental changes in urban China. Students will be divided into six groups (4-5 students in a group). Every group will be responsible for reading one of the assigned books and leading the book discussion in class. For that specific book, every member of the group should assume the role of leading discussants.

The leading discussants should read the book and prepare an introductory note (a PPT or PDF file) before the class. **Each group should send their presentation file to the teaching assistant one day before the class they are scheduled to do the presentation.** Then they are expected to do a presentation to introduce the book and prepare several discussion questions to guide the class discussion and engage your audience. Imagine you are the teacher and you are trying to describe the reading materials to your classmates. There is no better way to learn something than to teach it to someone else. Other students are expected to identify at least one question from the book for class discussion. The leading discussants also need to write a 1-2 page review (12-point Times New Roman or similar font, double-spaced). The written book summary should include at least one paragraph of your comments. **It is due one week after the book discussion.**

It is hoped that the book discussions can facilitate students to interact and learn from each other. There will be six book discussion sessions dealing with the assigned books, each of which will last about 50 minutes.

#### **In-class Mid-Term Exam: 25%**

The mid-term exam is a closed-book test, no textbook, no notes, etc. The mid-term exam will contain several multiple-choice questions and short-essay questions. All materials covered in lectures, readings and documentaries in the first half semester may be tested. The test will ask students to demonstrate a clear grasp of course materials and offer critical discussions of issues raised in readings. **No make-up.**

#### **Final Research Paper: 40%**

You will develop and present a final paper of your choice, with approval of the instructor. Your paper should answer a significant research question about China's urban development and/or future prospect.



**Choose a topic:** The topic must be relevant to urban development in China. Your final paper may either be a literature review on a specific topic related to the content of the class, or a research project involving collection and analysis of qualitative or quantitative data. You can also focus on a specific place (a province or a city or an urban district) in China and discuss its urban development and related issues. Another possible topic may be a comparative analysis between China and America concerning urban development or issues. Write a short outline of your proposal about your topic, research question you are going to address, and the possible ways to collect information and the possible references for your paper.

**Collect information, data and references:** You should collect and analyze information on the nature of the issue, its history, underlying processes, and its implications. You may consider interviewing people in town and participating and observing an event. You need to include site visit for your final research paper. Please do not forget to take photo or video of your visit. You must cite from academic sources. You are welcome to talk to me about data collection and possible references.

**Write it up:** The final paper should consist of an introduction, a brief review of other people’s work, your major analysis and argument, and a summary or conclusion. You need to form a clear statement regarding your research question.

At the end of your paper, please list all sources of information used alphabetically. Paper should be about 2500-3000 words (double-spaced). Please submit an electronic version (preferably in word files) to the teaching assistant.

For academic writing guide, please refer to:  
<https://writingproject.fas.harvard.edu/pages/disciplinary-writing-guides>

Please note:

Schedules, topics, readings and documentaries may be revised at times, in which case announcements will be made in class or on WeChat group as appropriate. You are expected to check email or WeChat group frequently so as to keep posted about course announcement and access the course materials.

Written assignments must be turned in on the dates specified. Late work will be penalized with a 0.5 point deduction for each day of delay.

**Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will not be tolerated.** To be noted, you are allowed to use ChatGPT in your assignments but you need to acknowledge you are using it. Please include a paragraph at the end of your assignment that uses AI explaining what you use the AI for and what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is in violation of academic honesty policies.

**6. Class Schedule**

Week	Topics	Readings
1	Understanding Chinese cities: The global	Wu and Gaubatz, The Chinese city,



	<b>context</b>	Introduction
<b>2</b>	<b>Understanding Chinese cities: The geographical setting and historical legacies</b>  Documentary: China From Above (episode 1)	Wu and Gaubatz, The Chinese city, chapter 1-3
<b>3</b>	<b>National Day break</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Urbanization in socialist China: industrialization without urbanization</b>  Documentary: Gentleman from Shanghai	Naughton, The Chinese economy, chapter 4
<b>5</b>	<b>Globalization, economic reform and urbanization in China</b>  <a href="#">Book discussion 1: the foundations of Chinese society</a>	Wu and Gaubtz, The Chinese city, Chapter 4 & 6  <a href="#">Xiaotong Fei. 1992. From the Soil</a>
<b>6</b>	<b>Rural-urban migration and urbanization</b>  <a href="#">Book discussion 2: migration and urbanization</a>	Wu and Gaubtz, The Chinese city, Chapter 5  Wu and Guo, China urbanizing, chapter 4  <a href="#">Eli Friedman. 2022. The Urbanization of people.</a>
<b>7</b>	<b>Globalizing Shanghai</b>	Campanella, 2008. The concrete dragon, chapter 2
<b>8</b>	<b>In-class closed-book Mid-term exam, 1.5 hours</b>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Urban space restructuring: suburbanization and urban sprawl</b>  <a href="#">Book discussion 3: urban-rural divide in China</a>	Campanella, 2008. The concrete dragon, chapter 7  <a href="#">Scott Rozelle and Natalie Hell. 2020. Invisible China</a>
<b>10</b>	<b>Urban space restructuring: property-led redevelopment</b>  <a href="#">Book discussion 4: how has China built the most extensive high-speed railway network in a decade?</a>	Wu and Gaubtz, The Chinese city, Chapter 8 & 11  Wu and Guo, China urbanizing, chapter 1  <a href="#">Xiao Ma. 2022. Localized bargaining</a>
<b>11</b>	<b>Citizenship stratification in metropolitan China</b>  Documentary: China on Four Wheels	Li, L.M., Li, S.M. and Chen, Y.F. 2010. Better City, Better Life, But for Whom? The hukou and resident card system and the



		consequential citizenship stratification in Shanghai, City, Culture, and Society, 1, 145-154.
12	<p><b>10. Transition to a nation of homeowners</b></p> <p><b>Book discussion 5: How urban China contributes to urban studies?</b></p>	<p>Wu and Gaubtz, The Chinese city, Chapter 10</p> <p>Wu and Guo, China urbanizing, chapter 3</p> <p>Fulong Wu. 2022. Creating Chinese urbanism</p>
13	<p><b>11. Environmental consequences of Chinese urbanization</b></p> <p><b>Book discussion 6: China's environmentalism</b></p>	<p>Wu and Gaubtz, The Chinese city, Chapter 14</p> <p>Wu and Guo, China urbanizing, chapter 8</p> <p>Yifei Li and Judith Shapiro. 2020. China Goes Green</p>
14	<p><b>12. Looking toward the Future</b></p> <p><i>Documentary: Plastic China</i></p>	<p>Wu and Gaubtz, The Chinese city, Conclusion</p>

**7. Useful websites on cities & Chinese cities:**

- <https://secities.net/>
- <https://www.citylab.com/>
- <http://www.urbantheorylab.net/>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/cities>
- <http://www.urbanchinainitiative.org/en/>
- <http://www.chinaurbandevelopment.com/>
- <http://urbachina.hypotheses.org/>
- <http://urbanizationproject.org/>

**8. Useful websites on China Studies**

- <http://ww2.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/Chs/Default.aspx>
- <https://www.thechinastory.org/>
- <https://www.chinafile.com/>
- <https://law.yale.edu/china-center>
- <https://maoeraobjects.ac.uk/>
- <https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/>
- <http://chinaheritage.net/>
- <https://supchina.com/>
- <https://www.chinafile.com/>
- <https://chinadialogue.net/en/>
- <https://madeinchinajournal.com/>
- <https://www.chinadebate.com/>



<https://www.ccpwatch.org/cacr-blog>  
<https://everydaylifeinmaoistchina.org/>  
<https://thechinaproject.com/>  
<https://www.pekingnology.com/>  
<https://www.theworldofchinese.com/>

### **9. Public accounts on WeChat**

CityReads: post notes on city reads weekly  
SixthTone  
Theworldofchinese

### **10. Course Instructor**

Dr. Li Limei is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology, East China Normal University, Shanghai. She is a finalist of the 2020-2021 Fulbright Scholar Program. She teaches courses on urban sociology, social geography, urbanization and globalization, and Understanding China with data. Her research interests include urban housing, migrants and urban citizenship in Chinese cities. She creates a public account on Wechat, "CityReads", posting notes on city reads in both Chinese and English weekly.