

[Draft, November 14, 2008]

UCLA 2009 Summer Travel Study Program–Guangzhou

Sociology 180C (4)

Special Topics in Sociology: Ethnographic Research in Urban China

Program Director: Dr. Min Zhou, Professor of Sociology & Asian American Studies

Program Assistant: Sam Guo, UCLA Confucius Institute

For more information, contact Summer Sessions & Special Programs at:

<http://summer.ucla.edu/> or UCLA International Education Office, Travel Study

Programs: <http://www.ieo.ucla.edu/TravelStudy/>

### **SOC 180C**

#### **Special Topics in Sociology: Ethnographic Research in Urban China**

June 29 - July 31, 2009 (six hours per week for five weeks)

[SOC181 (4 units) and SOC180C (4 units) are offered in this travel study program]

<http://www.ieo.ucla.edu/TravelStudy/Sociology-China/overview.htm>

#### **Course Description**

This is a five-week seminar focusing on ethnographic research in urban China, built on Chicago School sociology and the central themes explored in SOC181. This research seminar will introduce students to main concepts and methodologies of urban ethnography and apply them to conducting research in a variety of urban settings in China. Through intensive reading, classroom discussions, and field trips, students will learn to be inquisitive and reflexive observers and grasp the basic skills of conducting urban ethnographies in economically globalized and culturally diverse urban settings. The course objective is two-fold. One is to focus on conceptual and methodological issues related to urban ethnography, including the subject-centered approach to direct/indirect observations and face-to-face interviews and the inductive approach to design, fieldwork, and analysis. The other is to explore three major urban settings: the capital city Guangzhou; the officially designated Special Economic Zone (SEZ) ~~Shenzhen~~ and/or Zhuhai; and the industrial development district ~~Zhongshan~~. Linking the themes explored in SOC181, the class will also take a close look at one or two migrant sending communities in the Pearl River Delta region.

We pay special attention to examining how globalization, development, and migration change the urban landscape and impact work and life of ordinary citizens in urban China, particularly structural changes (e.g., commercial zoning, luxury residential development projects and gated communities, migrant living arrangements, slums, and squatter settlements) and cultural changes (e.g., migrant cultures, lifestyles, consumer behavior, urban entertainment). Students are encouraged to be critical and mindful of the differences between China and the US and between Western theories and methodologies and Chinese particularities.

This course will be made up of three components: lectures and/or guest lectures; class discussion (sometime in small groups), and field trips. Students are expected to read intensively and actively participate in class discussions and field trips to various sites.

Students will also be required to conduct a mini-research project, which entails selecting a topic of interest (relevant to one of the three urban settings identified above), framing a central research question, designing a plan for data collection, doing fieldwork, conducting data analysis, and the writing of a research report. Short courses in survival Chinese will be available to all students on the program.

## **Weekly Topics**

### **Week One: The Chicago School and Urban Ethnography**

Philosophical paradigms

Inductive reasoning v. deductive reasoning

Place, space, and social processes; public life as seen by outsiders; being seen in public space; the observer as reflexive participant; and the outings

*Homework:* Framing a research question (1 page)

### **Week Two: Multi-Methods of Urban Ethnography**

Methodological approaches

Designs

Direct and indirect observations

Face-to-face interviews

Focus groups

Issues concerning data collection

Gaining entry: gatekeeper, trust

Establishing rapport with subjects

Recording

Taking field notes

Cross-checking for validity of data

Ethics

*Homework:* Developing a prospectus for ethnographic research (2 pages)

### **Week Three: Doing Ethnographies in Different Settings**

Economic Reform and Urban Change in China: Doing ethnography in capital cities

Development and Internal Migration: Doing ethnography in the SEZs and the industrial development districts

Globalization, Transnationalism, and International Migration: Doing ethnography in migrant sending communities

*Homework:* Exploring a site

### **Week Four: Doing Ethnographies with Different Populations**

The power elite: cadres, managers, entrepreneurs

Class divide: White-collar v. blue-collar workers; highly-skilled v. low-skilled

Urban-rural divide: Urban *hukou* holders v. rural *hukou* holders

Age divide: The young v. the elderly

*Homework:* Fieldnote or fieldwork report (2-3 pages)

**Week Five: Data Clean-up, Analysis, and Writing**

*Homework:* Research proposal (6-8 pages)

*Possible sites [Fieldwork or field observation on one of the following]:*

- College campus life
- Street traffic
- A foreign chain establishment
- A specialized commercial district/street
- A food market
- A residential neighborhood (an apartment complex, a slum, or a migrant living quarter)
- A public park (Central Park or Yuexiu Park in Guangzhou)
- A karaoke bar
- Social eating in a restaurant
- An emigrant village
- A township or village industry

**Required Reading:**

- 1) Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
  - 2) An electronic reader compiled by Professor Min Zhou
- Denzin, Norman K. 2001. "The Reflexive Interview and a Performance Social Science." *Qualitative Research 1*: 23-46.
- Becker, Howard. 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research."
- Fox, Renée C. 2004. "Observations and Reflections of a Perpetual Fieldworker." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595: 309-326.
- Katz, Jack. 2004. "On the Rhetoric and Politics of Ethnographic Methodology." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595: 280-308.
- Oka, Tomofumi and Ian Shaw. 2000. "Qualitative Research in Social Work."

**Recommended Readings:**

- Becker, Howard. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Biao, Xiang. 2004. *Transcending Boundaries: Zhejiangcun: The Story Of A Migrant Village In Beijing* (translated by Jim Weldon). Brill Academic Publishers.
- Lee, Ching Kwan. 1998. *Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women*. University of California Press.
- Also see required and recommended reading lists for SOC181.

## **Grading**

Grading is based on attendance, reading memos and field notes, class participation and presentation, and the final research proposal which is due on September 20. The program director reserves the right to vary this format.

### *Field trips:*

Day trip in Guangzhou

Day trip to Shenzhen (Special Economic Zone)

Day trip to Dongguan (Manufacturing industries)

Day trip to Jiangmen (*qiaoxiang*—traditional emigrant sending communities, including Taishan, Kaiping)

Day trip to Zhongshan, Zhuhai, and/or Macao

Optional: Post-class tours to Hong Kong or Shanghai, Beijing, and Xian

### *Schedule*

All schedules, itineraries, and group activities are subject to change at the discretion of the program director.