

PKU International Summer School

**Environmental China: nature, culture and development
(subject to revision)**

环境与中国：自然，文化和发展

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Objectives:

CHINA is commonly seen in the West as a negative example, even the villain, of global environmental ills. Besides surpassing the United States to be the world's largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, China also experiences widespread pollution of its air, soil and water--arguably among the worst in the world. China's problems are neither unique nor isolated, however. Employing political ecological approach, the course explores the roots of China's environmental challenges as created by and mediated through historical, cultural, political, economic and social forces both internal and external to the country, and especially the acute changes as a result of global socialism and capitalism in the 20th century. It also examines some of the solutions that Chinese government and the public are taking on to deal with worsening environmental conditions.

Proceeding of the Course

Student participation in class is an essential element for the success of a course. This means that you attend each class on time and read the readings BEFORE the class start. All students are expected to participate in discussion with the expectation to speak in class throughout the term. You will also submit FIVE think pieces (one page) of the readings throughout the term. The think pieces are not going to be graded but will be recorded. There will be two organized fieldtrips in Beijing. You will be required to participate unless you generate a written excuse in advance from relevant authorities.

For class attendance, if you miss more than **three** classes without prior notification to the instructor, the participation grade will go down by half and an additional missing period will result in the participation grade down to 0. Five or more unexplained absences from the class will result in an "F" for the course. I will have office hours and expect meet with you at least twice during the term.

Assignment:

1. Two quizzes on China's geography and history
2. Five think pieces based on class readings.
3. Short papers: There are two options about writing assignments for this course. The first option is to write two short papers (5 pages each, double-spaced and typed with 12-point

font). One paper is on regional profile and the second paper on a topic of your interest. The second option is to write one longer analytical paper (10 pages, double-spaced and typed with 12-point font) on a topic that is relevant for the central theme of this course, and that should focus on one or more specific issues or topics of this course.

Papers require research on primary sources, the short paper should have to cite at least one class reading and longer paper cite at least 2 readings.

The two short papers are each due by **Thursday, July 16**, and **Friday, July 31**. Students who choose to write a longer paper/project should determine their topics in consultation with the instructor by the end of the second week and should submit the papers by **Friday, July 31**. No late submission will be accepted unless a legitimate reason is presented to the instructor at least three days in advance. If you have any question concerning how to pick up a topic and/or how to write paper(s), please consult with the instructor.

All papers require in text citation in format of (author, year) and bibliography. All should have introduction and conclusion.

Textbook:

Required

1. Shapiro, Judith, 2012. *China's environmental challenges*, 978-0-7456-6091-2

Beyond the textbooks, required readings are accessible through hyperlinks embedded in the course site

Evaluation:

Participation and discussion	Two Quizzes	Presentations and think pieces	Paper(s)
20%	10%	30%	40%

Academic Integrity

Participation in this class commits the students and instructor to abide by a general norm of equal opportunity and academic integrity. It implies permission from students to submit their written work to services that check for plagiarism (such as Turnitin.com). It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the definition of plagiarism. Violations of the norm of academic integrity will be firmly dealt with in this class.

Phone and computer policy:

Please shut off and put away cell phones/personal communication devices before entering the classroom. Your phone is not to be visible in class.

In-class computer policy: Computers are allowed in class only for purposes of taking notes and viewing course readings. No other documents are to be opened. Students who bring

computers to class must sit toward the front of the room and **not in the back rows**. Web browsers are **never** to be activated unless I specifically ask you to do so.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(Subject to adjustment)

Reading and class schedule are posted on the course site. It is subjected to revision and I will email you if the revision happens within two days of the class period.

Session 1

Introduction: China's environment: questions and theoretical perspectives

The purpose and scope of the course

Course requirements

Class, field trip and presentations scheduling

Questions:

- Why do we study China's environment?
- How do we evaluate the state of China's environment, by whom, for whom, and according to what standards?
- What are the key arguments and promises of political ecology? Can the framework be used to study China?
- What is ecological modernization and how can it be adapted to address the Chinese context?

Readings:

- **Video clip [Man-made world](#)**
- Preface and Chapter 1. Shapiro, Judith. (2012). *China's Environmental Challenges*. Cambridge, U.K. ; Malden, MA : Polity Press 2012.
- [How responsible are Americans for China's pollution problems?](#)
- ["The Hatchet and the Seed"](#) (Chapter 1). In Robbins, Paul. (2004). *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell
- [Mol: Environment and modernity in transitional China: frontier of ecological modernization](#)

Session 2

Environment in Chinese world view

Questions:

- What are the traditional Chinese ethics on the environment? How do they differ from the prevailing western perspectives?

- How do different streams of Chinese philosophies conceptualize and deploy the roles of nature in the society?

Readings:

- Drake Hawks, Shelley. "[An Environmental Ethic in Chinese Landscape Painting.](#)" *Education About Asia* 18:1 (Spring 2013).
- Tu, Wei-Ming. "[The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature.](#)"
- Western philosophical thoughts on nature, and civilization: Sopher: ch. 2 in [What is nature: nature, human and inhuman.](#)
- [Confucian teaching, particularly p. 19-25.](#)

Session 3

China's environment in historical perspectives: Environmental evolution and the state

Questions:

- China has been the world most populous nation, how has China managed to feed its population?
- What are the roles of the Chinese state in mediating environment according to the classic Chinese philosophy
- What have been the common western perceptions of the Chinese state, are there continuities from the conception today?

Readings:

- [Oriental despotism: western thoughts on government and Asiatic mode of production.](#)
- [Review of Wittfogel 1958 book on Oriental Despotism. Jacques: Civilization state v.s. nation state, Pages 118-123.](#)
- Pomeranz, Kenneth. "The Transformation of China's Environment, 1500-2000."
- Robert B. Marks. "[Geography is not Destiny: Historical Contingency and the Making of the Pearl River Delta.](#)"
- Confucian teaching

Session 4

Feeding China: traditions, colonization and revolution

Questions:

- What are some of the most important traditional sustainable agricultural practices Chinese farmers have developed over the centuries?
- What have been the roles of food in colonialism and communist revolution
- How has the Chinese revolution changed Chinese views and practices on the environment?

- How did China tackle the food issues during the Mao era?

Readings:

- Xue, Y. (2005). "[Treasure nightsoil as if it were gold': Economic and ecological links between urban and rural areas in late imperial Jiangnan.](#)" *Late Imperial China*. 26(1): 41-71.
- [Excerpts](#). Read the preface p.1-15, 64-79, 360-375. From: Davis, Mike. (2001). *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño famines and the making of the third world*. New York, NY: Verso.
- [Excerpts](#) (p. 74-78, 267-274). From: Snow, Edgar. (1938). *Red Star Over China*. New York, NY. Random House.
- [Chapter 2](#). "In Shapiro, Judith. (2001). *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the environment in revolutionary China*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Session 5

Field trip I: food, security, safety and food trades

Questions:

- What are the contemporary trends of food production and consumption in China?
- What are the most common concern on food by the Chinese public
- What are the governments, consumers and NGOs are trying to do?

Readings:

- [Who will feed China? Agribusiness or its own farmers.](#)
- [Who will feed Chinese pig and why that matters to us and the planet?](#)
- [Self-sufficiency is the bottom line for Chinese food security](#)
- [FAO: China's economic growth and implication for agriculture and food security in China and the rest of the world \(useful summary and charts\)](#)
- Shi, Yan et al. (2011). "[Safe food, green food, good food: Chinese Community Supported Agriculture and the rising middle class.](#)" *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* 9(4): 551-558.
- Paul, John. (2007). "[China's Organic Revolution.](#)" *Journal of Organic Systems* 2(1): 1-11. 37(1): 227-254.

Session 6

Water: dams and water transfer project

Questions:

- China has the most dams in the world, and dam building has been highly controversial domestically and international. How should we evaluate the pros and cons of dam construction in China?

- Given China's shortage of water, what are the most effective approaches to deal with the water crisis?

Readings:

- Vermeer, E. B. (2011). ["The benefits and costs of China's hydropower: Development or slowdown?"](#) *China Information* 25: 3-32.
- Hsu, Angel, and William Miao. ["28,000 Rivers Disappeared in China: How?"](#) *The Atlantic*. April 29th, 2013
- China dialogue: [The fate of people displaced by Mekong Dams](#)
- [Chapter 3](#). Shiva, Vandana. (2002). *Water Wars: Privatization, pollution, and profit*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press
- [Magee; China fail to build trust with Meigong neighbors](#)
- [China dialogue](#), articles on dam and water issues.
- [China's split personality on water conservation.](#)
- [China water south-north transfer project](#)
- [Chinese scientist: water transfer project essential](#)
- [China needs to shift agriculture from water scarce north](#)
- [China's Poisonous waterways](#)
- [Energy security and Water](#)

Session 7

Globalization and pollution

Questions:

- How has the globalization of industry contributed to the pollution of China's environment?
- What is the power position of China in the global commodity chain?
- Could globalization be a solution to China's environmental problems?

Readings:

- [Lichtenstein: Supply chain and new world of retail supremacy](#)
- [Zhou, Bring fair trade to electronic industry](#)
- [Greening Supply chain in China](#)
- NYTimes Nov. 12. [Questions over China's climate change plan](#)
- [Junkyard Planet: China's role](#)
- [Bloomberg; China recycling clean-up jolts global industry](#)

Session 8

China's energy

Questions:

- What factors underline the rapid growing demand of energy in China?
- What are Chinese best options for energy choices?
- What are the global implications of China's energy choices?

Readings:

- ["Resource Efficiency: Economics and outlook for China."](#) CSIRO (Australia), IMP and CAS.
- Rosen, Daniel H., and Trevor Houser. (2007). ["China Energy: a Guide for the Perplexed."](#) Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- [Obama's US-China Deal is a very big deal-finally see some numbers](#)
- [NY Times: The poor need cheap fossil fuel](#)
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Session 9

China's energy and global implication?

Questions:

- What are the technical and geographical characteristics of each type of energy?
- What are the implications of China's energy choices for the world?
- Can China lead a non- or low-carbon energy regime?
- Are China and the United States becoming "responsible stakeholders" in climate change?

Readings:

Group presentation on different forms of energy

Read energy source sheet for your type of energy

- [Parks and Roberts: A model of North-South \(Non\)-cooperation](#)
- [Zhou, What exactly happened in Copenhagen?](#)
- [Is Pittsburgh really Green?](#)
- [New US-China climate deal is a game changer](#)
- [NY Times: China's global search of energy](#)
- [Heriberto, and Juan Pablo Cardenal. \(June\). "China's Economic Empire." The New York Times](#)

Session 10

Chinese state: the strength and limitation

Questions:

- What are the areas of strength of Chinese state in dealing with the environment?
- What are its weaknesses?
- What is the role of public participation in Chinese environmental issues?

Readings:

- Mufson, Steven. "[China wrestles with stubborn air polluters.](#)" *The Washington Post*. May 10th, 2013.
- [NY Times--China's air challenge](#)
- van Rooij, Benjamin. (2010) "[The People v. Pollution: Understanding citizen action against pollution in China.](#)" *Journal of Contemporary China* 19(63): 55-77.
- [Stout, Kristie Lu. "Can social media clear air over China?" CNN. April 19, 2013.](#)
- [China new middle class environmental protests](#)
- [Aulakh, Raveena. "How one man has fought to clear the air over China's pollution." Toronto Star. April 23, 2013.](#)

Session 11

Field trip II: Creative solutions in Beijing

Questions:

- How have the communities we visited deal with environmental problems?
- What are the strength and weakness of China's political economic regime in dealing with environmental problems?

Readings:

Session 12

Class conclusion: China and world in environmental changes

Questions:

- What do you learned on the field trip?
- What are the key environmental challenges of China?
- How far is China from the ideal system of ecological modernization? Which areas do you think are in need of most improvement?
- What have you learned the most from the class? How will affect your views on China's environment?
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~ The End of Class ~

Thank You !

