



SYLLABUS

GEOGRAPHY 5503

URBAN CHINA: SPACE, PLACE, AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION
SPRING 2025 – In person

MW 12:45pm-2:05pm; Hagerty Hall 062

COURSE OVERVIEW

Instructor

Instructor: Max D. Woodworth

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Office hours: by appointment

Course description

China crossed a threshold in 2011: in that year, more than 50 percent of the country's population had come to reside in cities. This historic transition from an agrarian society to a majority urban one testifies to the radical changes that have transformed China starting in the early twentieth century, continuing through the Republican (1911-1949) and Socialist (1949-1978) periods, and gathering strength during the period of "reform and opening up" (1979-present). Given the scale, pace, and intensity of change, China's urban transformations present fundamental challenges for the country's future development and for global society.

This is a course in human geography that examines the roles of cities within China's social, economic, political, and cultural transformations since the end of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911CE). The purpose of the course is to provide a detailed empirical view of China's urbanization and a rigorous conceptual understanding of city development through close readings of key works in the field of Chinese urban studies and urban theory.

The readings for this class are often complex. It is ok to not understand everything upon first read; bring your questions to class, sit with the ideas, read them a second time, and do your best to think them through. Listen to your classmates. My hope and objective for this class is to make the classroom a community for

shared learning and intellectual growth. You are expected to do your part by completing the readings and coming to class ready to share with and learn from each other. Class time is structured to require active participation from everyone.

Course learning outcomes

By the end of this course, successful students should be able to:

- Identify key historical moments in China’s urban development
- Correctly parse differing theoretical stances on urban development
- Analyze the different forces driving China’s urban development
- Connect Chinese urbanization to national and global issues

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note: Readings, viewings, and assignments are due on the date posted here.

	Date	Topic	Reading, viewing	Assignment
Week 1	Jan. 6	Introduction		
	Jan. 8	The geographic setting	Wu & Gaubatz, Ch. 1	
Week 2	Jan. 13	Historical antecedents: origins of the modern Chinese city	Wu & Gaubatz, Ch.’s 2 & 3	
	Jan. 15			RR1
Week 3	Jan. 20	NO CLASS – MLK Day		
	Jan. 22	Building Cities, Making China “Modern”	Musgrove; Buck	
Week 4	Jan. 27	Socialist modernity in the urban <i>danwei</i>	Bray; Tan, Gao, Xue & Xu	RR2
	Jan. 29		Watch <i>24 City</i>	
Week 5	Feb. 3	Urban governance, part I: Spatial administration and urban governance	Ren Ch.’s 1 & 2	RR3
	Feb. 5		Lin & Ho ; Ho	

Week 6	Feb. 10	Urban governance, part II: The entrepreneurial urban Party-state and the “New Type Urbanization”	Hsing; He & Wu	RR4
	Feb. 12	Cont’d	Wu; Zou, Chen, Zhong & Zhao	
Week 7	Feb. 17	Urban financialization	Wu, Chen, Pan, Gallent & Zhang; Woodworth & Ulfstjerne	RR5
	Feb. 19	China’s “ghost cities”	Woodworth and Wallace	
Week 8	Feb. 24	In-class viewing: <i>The Chinese Mayor</i>	n/a	
	Feb. 26		n/a	
Week 9	Mar. 3	Migration and migrants	Ren Ch. 4; Chan; Chan	RR6
	Mar. 5		Watch <i>The Last Train Home</i>	
Week 10	Mar. 10	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
	Mar. 12			
Week 11	Mar. 17	Environment and cities	Caprotti; Chien	RR7
	Mar. 19		Rodenbiker	
Week 12	Mar. 24	NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR AWAY		
	Mar. 26			
Week 13	Mar. 31	Urban spectacle	Debord; Ong	RR8
	Apr. 2		Broudehoux; Woodworth	
Week 14	Apr. 7	Other Chinas? Taipei	Allen	RR9
	Apr. 9	Taiwan’s “military dependent villages”	Watch <i>Vive L’Amour</i>	
Week 15	Apr. 14	Other Chinas? Hong Kong and Macau	Peck, Bok & Zhang; Chu	RR10
	Apr. 16	Dystopian images	Hao; watch <i>Behemoth</i>	
Week 16	Apr. 21	Paper presentations	n/a	Final Paper

Detailed Course Reading List

Week 1

The geographic setting

Students unfamiliar with modern Chinese history and the crucial changes since 1978 are strongly advised to watch “Becoming a Superpower,” the second episode of the BBC documentary titled *China’s Capitalist Revolution*. You can watch the film by visiting Films on Demand, which can be accessed through the university library site’s Research Database list (link is on the right side of the library’s homepage). Each episode is about 45 minutes in length.

Wu, W and P. Gaubatz (2013). *The Chinese City*. London: Routledge. Chapters 1.

Week 2

Historical antecedents: origins of the modern Chinese city

Wu, W and P. Gaubatz (2013). *The Chinese City*. London: Routledge. Chapters 2 & 3.

Ren, X. (2013). *Urban China*. Malden, MA: Polity Press. Chapter 1.

Week 3

Building Cities, Making China “Modern”

Musgrove, C. (1999). Building a Dream: Constructing a National Capital in Nanjing, 1927-1937. In J. Esherick (Ed.), *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press): 137-157.

Buck, David D. (1999). Railway City and National Capital: Two Faces of the Modern in Changchun. In J. Esherick (Ed.), *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press): 65-89.

Week 4

Focus on the “danwei”

Bray, D. (2005). *Social Space and Governance in Urban China*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press. Chapter Six “Danwei Space.”

Tan, Gangyi, et al. ““Third Front’ construction in China: planning the industrial towns during the Cold War (1964–1980).” *Planning Perspectives* 36.6 (2021): 1149-1171.

Jia, Z. (2009). *24 City*. Available on Kanopy.

Week 5

Urbanization, part I: Spatial administration and urban governance

Ren, X. (2013). *Urban China*. Malden, MA: Polity Press. Chapters 1 & 2.

Lin, G. C. S. & Ho, S. P.S. (2005). The state, land system, and land development processes in contemporary China. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95(2): 411-436.

Ho, P. "Who owns China's land? Policies, property rights and deliberate institutional ambiguity." *The China Quarterly* 166 (2001): 394-421.

Week 6

Urbanization, part II: The entrepreneurial urban Party-state and the "New Type Urbanization"

Hsing, Y. (2006). Land and territorial politics in urban China. *The China Quarterly* 187: 575-591.

He, S. & Wu, F. (2005). China's emerging neoliberal urbanism: Perspectives from urban redevelopment. *Antipode* 41(2): 282-304.

Wu, Fulong. "The (post-) socialist entrepreneurial city as a state project: Shanghai's reglobalisation in question." *Urban studies* 40.9 (2003): 1673-1698.

Zou, Yonghua, et al. "Urban planning as a way to pursue quality-oriented urbanization: Anatomy of the urban planning of Xiong'an New Area, China." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 45.8 (2023): 1418-1433.

Week 7

Urban financialization

Wu, Fulong, et al. "Assetization: The Chinese path to housing financialization." *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110.5 (2020): 1483-1499.

Woodworth, Max D., and Michael Ulfstjerne. "Taking part: The social experience of informal finance in Ordos, Inner Mongolia." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75.3 (2016): 649-672.

China's "Ghost Cities"

Woodworth, Max D., and Jeremy L. Wallace. "Seeing ghosts: Parsing China's "ghost city" controversy." *Urban Geography* 38.8 (2017): 1270-1281.

Week 8

No reading. In-class viewing *The Chinese Mayor*.

Week 9

Migration and migrants

Ren, X. (2013). *Urban China*. Malden, MA: Polity Press. Chapter 4.

Chan, K. W. (2019). China's hukou system at 60: Continuity and reform. *Handbook on Urban Development in China* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing): 59-79.

Chan, Kam Wing. "What the 2020 Chinese census tells us about progress in hukou reform." *China Brief* 21.15 (2021): 11-17.

Fan, Lixin. 2009. *The Last Train Home*. View on Kanopy.

Week 10**SPRING BREAK NO CLASS****Week 11****Environment and Cities**

Caprotti, F. (2014). Critical research on eco-cities? A walk through the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City, China. *Cities* 36: 10-17.

Shiuh-Shen, Chien. "Chinese eco-cities: A perspective of land-speculation-oriented local entrepreneurialism." *China information* 27.2 (2013): 173-196.

Rodenbiker, Jesse. "Urban ecological enclosures: Conservation planning, peri-urban displacement, and local state formations in China." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 44.4 (2020): 691-710.

Week 12**NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR AWAY****Week 13****Urban Spectacle**

Ong, A. (2011). Hyperbuilding: Spectacle, Speculation, and the Hyperspace of Sovereignty. In A. Roy & A. Ong (Eds.), *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell): 98-126.

Debord, G. (2006[1967]). *The Society of the Spectacle*. London: Zone Books. Chapters 1, 2 & 7.

Broudehoux, Anne-Marie. "Spectacular Beijing: The conspicuous construction of an Olympic metropolis." *Journal of urban affairs* 29.4 (2007): 383-399.

Woodworth, M. D. From the shadows of the spectacular city: Zhang Dali's Dialogue and counter-spectacle in globalizing Beijing, 1995–2005. *Geoforum* 65 (2015): 413-420.

Week 14**Other Chinas? Taipei**

Allen, J. (2012). *Taipei: City of Displacements*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. Ch.'s Prologue, 2, 7 & Conclusion.

Tsai, Ming-Liang. 1994. *Vive L'Amour (Aiqing wansui)*. On Kanopy.

Week 15**Other Chinas? Hong Kong and Macau**

Peck, Jamie, Rachel Bok, and Jun Zhang. "Hong Kong—a model on the rocks?." *Territory, Politics, Governance* 11.1 (2023): 100-119.

Chu, Cecilia L. "Spectacular Macau: Visioning futures for a world heritage city." *Geoforum* 65 (2015): 440-450.

Dystopian Images

Hao, J. (2017). *Folding Beijing* (<https://uncannymagazine.com/article/folding-beijing-2/>)

Zhao, L. (2018). *Behemoth*. Available for streaming [here](#).

Week 16

Paper Presentations

How your grade is calculated

ASSIGNMENT CATEGORY	POINTS
Weekly reading reflections (10x, 3pts each)	30
Final paper (incl. paper presentation)	40 (30 + 10)
Participation and attendance	30
Total	100

See course schedule below for due dates.

Late assignments

Late submissions will not be accepted. Please refer to Carmen for due dates and stay alert to deadlines.

Grading scale

93–100: A
 90–92.9: A-
 87–89.9: B+
 83–86.9: B
 80–82.9: B-
 77–79.9: C+
 73–76.9: C
 70–72.9: C-
 67–69.9: D+
 60–66.9: D
 Below 60: E

Instructor feedback and response time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call **614-688-HELP** at any time if you have a technical problem.)

- **Grading and feedback:** For any written assignments, you can generally expect feedback within **7 days**.
- **Email:** I will reply to emails within **24 hours on days when class is in session at the university**.

Explanation of graded assignments

Reading Reflections

You are expected to turn in a reading reflection ten times during the semester. A reading reflection is a short (1-2 pages single-spaced) written response to the week's readings. An effective reading reflection does the following: provides a concise summary of the reading(s), identifies and accurately articulates core argument(s), and provides a cogent and logical discussion of the content of the text(s). It should be composed of three or four paragraphs that flow from one to the next. In short, it should demonstrate careful and logical engagement with the reading. You do **not** need to critically analyze or break down each text, but you **should** show understanding of a text's key points. A sample essay will be provided in Carmen. The class will be divided into Groups 1 & 2, with each group taking responsibility for in-class discussion for either Monday or Wednesday sessions.

Reading reflections are due **Mondays before noon** and should be submitted through Carmen. On some weeks, you may be asked to share a hard copy with colleagues in class as part of group work. Reading reflections are graded on the usual grading scale.

Participation and Attendance

Students are expected to arrive to class ready to learn and to share ideas. For this, reading the assigned texts is essential. Students who cannot commit to read all texts for class should NOT enroll in this course. It is a reading-intensive class. Part of the participation grade will be submission once or more times per term (determined by total enrollment) of discussion questions based on the readings. Students assigned this task for the week should share their questions on the class discussion board by Sundays, 8pm.

Final Paper

The final paper is expected to be 5-6 single-spaced pages in length. Papers can review a set of texts (minimum five) on a specific topic or can be an original research paper on a theme of your choice. Paper topics should be decided early in the semester. We will spend time in class brainstorming paper ideas. A tentative abstract and outline of the paper along with an initial set of readings and sources will be due near the mid-way point of the semester. A five-minute presentation of your paper is expected in the last class session and will be worth a portion of the paper grade.

Additional Notes:

Is attendance mandatory?

Yes. Every class meeting is important. Students must make a commitment to attend and be actively involved in this class, as long as they are feeling well. If you have any flu-like symptoms, please do NOT come to class. If I have any symptoms, depending on severity, I will hold class on Zoom. If an unavoidable conflict occurs, please be in communication with me.

Do I have to talk in class?

Yes. This is an upper-division, reading-intensive seminar. Active participation is required. Articulating your ideas with comments and questions will help you better understand the course material. I will call on students to comment if it seems they are too shy to volunteer. My point is not to put students on the spot, but to give them a chance to speak. There is no expectation that anyone be familiar with China. Given this, it is essential that we, as a class, make sure that no one feels unwilling to ask a question or offer comment. It's a cliché but it's true: there are no bad questions. Ask away!

Will late assignments be accepted?

Absolutely no late assignments will be accepted without a valid excuse (i.e., a medical or family emergency). Please do not request an exception. Examples of non-valid excuses that I have heard in the past include: having to attend a wedding, the Internet went out at home, a friend had a personal crisis, assignments from other classes are piling up.

What should I do if I am struggling with the material?

The course material is challenging and there is no expectation that you will grasp every detail upon first read. That is okay. Part of the educational enterprise is to tackle challenges piece by piece and derive from the material what you can. Many of the readings will reveal themselves to you upon several readings and over a longer span of time than this semester. If you struggle with the material, always feel free to raise questions in class and do not hesitate to seek further clarification of the material from classmates or from me during office hours.

What if I receive special accommodations?

This class is intended to be accessible to all students. If you require specific accommodations, let the instructor know as soon as possible. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to make such a request.

What about my electronic gadgets?

Laptops and tablets can be used in class for note-taking and accessing the readings. Unfortunately, these same devices offer endless opportunities to check out of class and browse the news, go shopping, chat with friends, see what's up on social media, and so and so on. Class is 80 minutes. Please exercise self-discipline to focus in class and minimize distractions. Put the phone away deep into your bag. Resist its call.

What about formatting for written assignments?

Please use the following standard format for all assignments: 12-point Times New Roman font, single-spaced, 1-inch margins on all sides. Please name all your submitted documents using the following format: Familyname_Reflection01.docx.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Discussion and communication guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Writing style:** In any written assignments, you should remember to write using good grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- **Tone and civility:** Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels they can express themselves freely and where people can disagree amicably. Intentionally demeaning language will not be tolerated in the class.

Academic integrity policy

POLICIES FOR THIS ONLINE COURSE

- **Written assignments:** Your written assignments should be your own original work. In formal assignments, you can follow any citation style as long as it's consistent and thorough. You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your assignments before you turn them in—but no one else should revise or rewrite your work. Written assignments undergo review through Turnitin, an online system that checks for plagiarism. The important thing to note here is that citation of sources is a *good thing* and shows you've done research.
- **Reusing past work:** In general, you are prohibited in university courses from turning in work from a past class to your current class, even if you modify it. If you want to build on past research or revisit a topic you've explored in previous courses, please discuss the situation with me.
- **Falsifying research or results:** All research you will conduct in this course is intended to be a learning experience; you should never feel tempted to make your results or your library research look more successful than it was.

OHIO STATE'S ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the university's *Code of Student Conduct*, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the university's *Code of Student Conduct* and this syllabus may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the university or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession

of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the university's *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by university rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the university's *Code of Student Conduct* (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the university.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages ([COAM Home](#))
- *Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity* ([Ten Suggestions](#))
- *Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity* (www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.htm)

Copyright disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Statement on Title IX

All students and employees at Ohio State have the right to work and learn in an environment free from harassment and discrimination based on sex or gender, and the university can arrange interim measures, provide support resources, and explain investigation options, including referral to confidential resources. If you or someone you know has been harassed or discriminated against based on your sex or gender, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or sexual exploitation, you may find information about your rights and options at titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu. Title IX is part of the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) at Ohio State, which responds to all bias-motivated incidents of harassment and discrimination, such as race, religion, national origin and disability. For more information on OIE, visit equity.osu.edu or email equity@osu.edu.

Your mental health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you find yourself feeling isolated, anxious or overwhelmed, please know that there are resources to help: ccs.osu.edu. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at (614) 292-5766 and 24

hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Prevention Hotline at 1-(800)-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. The Ohio State Wellness app is also a great resource available at go.osu.edu/wellnessapp.

Support and Resources

For further detailed information and access to helpful resources related to all of the policies listed above, please visit Academic Advising (<https://advising.osu.edu/>) and the Student Services Center (<http://ssc.osu.edu>).

HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

Mode of delivery: This course is in-person.

Credit hours and work expectations: This is a **3-credit-hour course**. According to [Ohio State policy](#), students should expect around 3 hours per week of time spent on direct instruction (instructor content and Carmen activities, for example) in addition to 6 hours of homework (reading and assignment preparation, for example) to receive a grade of (C) average.

Attendance and participation requirements: Because this is an in-person course, attendance and participation are essential to success in this class. Active participation in discussions is also a crucial part of the learning process. Participation does not necessarily mean being the most vocal; participation means showing up having read the assigned text(s) and ready to learn, listening respectfully to classmates and to lectures, asking questions, engaging in constructive ways, and so on. Your participation will also include your submission on one or more weeks of discussion questions for class.

Office hours: **OPTIONAL**

I will hold office hours by appointment either in person or on Zoom. When contacting me to meet for office hours, please include three half-hour time windows when you are available to meet. I will respond with a time that works for both of us.

STUDENT SUPPORT FOR SUCCESSFUL LEARNING

Students are encouraged to make use of the university's support services. These can be very helpful as you navigate the significant challenges of university life in all its dimensions. Please visit the Academic Advising website to obtain tips for success in this and other courses, information about academic affairs and regulations, and general advising about majors, minors, careers, and other aspects of academic life. Through the website you will be able to schedule appointments with advisors who can assist with specific issues. See here: <https://advising.osu.edu/> For guidance and access to resources in all areas of student life, please visit the Student Services Center. You can visit their website here for complete information: <http://ssc.osu.edu>

COURSE MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGIES

Textbook, articles, audio-visual materials

- This course will make use of a variety of texts and films. There are no texts to purchase for this class.
- All scholarly articles will be available either in hyperlinks or in PDF format on Carmen.
- Audio-visual material will be available through links.

ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292-3307, slds@osu.edu; slds.osu.edu.

Requesting accommodations

The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions, please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Accessibility of course technology

This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.

Accommodation for Religious Beliefs

It is Ohio State's policy to reasonably accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of all students. The policy permits a student to be absent for up to three days each academic semester for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief.

Students planning to use religious beliefs or practices accommodations for course requirements must inform the instructor in writing no later than 14 days after the course begins. The instructor is then responsible for scheduling an alternative time and date for the course requirement, which may be before or after the original time and date of the course requirement. These alternative accommodations will remain confidential. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all course assignments are completed.

Campus Free Speech Policy

Our shared values include a commitment to diversity and innovation. Pursuant to these values, the university promotes a culture of welcoming differences, making connections among people and ideas, and encouraging open-minded exploration, risk-taking, and freedom of expression. As a land-grant institution, the university takes seriously its role in promoting and supporting public discourse. To that end, Ohio State is steadfastly committed to protecting the First Amendment right to free speech and academic freedom on its campuses, and to upholding the university's academic motto — "Education for Citizenship."

When In-Person Classes Need to be Cancelled

Should in-person classes be canceled, I will notify you as to which alternative methods of teaching will be offered to ensure continuity of instruction for this class. Communication will be via [CarmenCanvas, email or other mode of communication].