



CHES 5110 Selected Themes on Chinese Media CHES3004 / CCSS3101 Media China

Digital China--1980s till Today

2020-21, Spring Term, Wednesdays 830 – 1115 in Cheng Yu Tong Bldg 203

Mixed mode. Can be conducted face to face as well as streamed real-time on Zoom for remote participation.

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Teaching Assistant: Cecilia Chan

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the digital transformation of China, including the rise of online social movements and digital contention, censorship and control, digitization of the state and efforts to encourage indigenous technology, as well as the notion of China as a new global cyberpower.

The structure of the course will help students understand the articulation between different facets of digital China: political economy, social movements, and geopolitics. A choice of readings will provide opportunities to discuss various methods used to study digital politics, from ethnographic observation and interviews to digital humanities.

Learning outcomes

After completing this course, you should:

- have a basic understanding of the landscape and history of the Chinese digital industry and services,
- understand the articulation of the digital with social movements and transnational trends,
- be able to discuss the different research methods one can use to study the developments of the digital from a social science perspective.

Learning activities

Each class will be composed of a lecture (1/2) and discussions with the class or student presentations (1/2).

This course uses Blackboard as a main platform to share readings, class contents and other planning documents. Students experiencing difficulties to access Blackboard should get in touch for alternative options.

All sessions will be conducted in real time in class and, if necessary, partially, or entirely on ZOOM. The meeting details and password will be shared on Blackboard as well as by email before classes start.

Recording of classes is not permitted.

Assessment scheme

- Essay: 30%

CHES 5102: 2000 words

CHES3004 / CCSS3101: 1500 words

Each student will **pick a subject among the presentation topics** proposed in the schedule below and inform the instructor by email **on or before session 5**.

It is possible to propose a subject that is not in the list, upon agreement with the instructor.

Several students can choose the same subject, but this is an individual assessment, it is not permitted to write the essay together. Strong similarities between essays will lead both students to lose points.

Specific instructions and recommendations will be posted after the start of the semester.

10% of the grade will be deducted for each day of late submission.

Essays should be submitted **with signed VeriGuide receipt**. Links for submission will be provided on Blackboard.

- Oral presentation (groups of 2): 20%

Each group will **pick a subject among the presentation topics** proposed in the schedule. Only one group for each topic, first come first served.

CHES 5102: It must be a different subject from the one chosen for the essay.

CHES3004 / CCSS3101: It can be the same topic as the one chosen for the essay.

Specific instructions and recommendations will be posted after the start of the semester.

- Mid-term exam and final exam: 10% and 20%

3 to 4 Open questions testing the acquisition of concepts discussed in class.

A list of questions will be displayed, and students will have one or two hours to submit answers.

Depending on the coronavirus situation, exams may be conducted:

- in the classroom if ALL students can sit in the classroom at the same time.

- from home on Zoom in any other case. In case of a mixed teaching method (such as students taking turns to come to class, with half of the class attending on Zoom), then exams will be conducted from home for all students.

This will be announced closer to the date in accordance with the actual situation.

- Mind-mapping: 10%

On the evening before each class session, students are required to contribute **to a collective mind map** online (such as Padlet) based on the contents of the previous class session.

This ensures that concepts are correctly understood, and it is a tool for revisions.

More details about the evaluation of the mind-mapping exercise will be posted separately.

- Participation: 10%

At every session, the instructor will provide some **questions to prepare for the next session**. Students need to prepare elements to answer these questions, such as ideas from the readings, links to news articles, illustrations, interesting charts or figures or just personal reflections.

These questions will be discussed in class.

In case of a mixed methods teaching, students can:

- answer or ask questions orally
- answer or ask questions in the chat section.

(The chat will be recorded on the instructor's computer, for that purpose only. It will be deleted after the evaluation exercise is completely over.)

Attendance will not count in the participation grade. This is to ensure that students are not disadvantaged in case of any technical difficulties.

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/>.

If you are unsure about what plagiarism is, or more generally how to comply with standards of academic honesty, you should check the resources at the link above.

You are encouraged to review your note-taking and writing methods, notably by looking at tips provided by various universities (tips [here](#), tips and exercises [here](#), more detailed tips [here](#), and a video [here](#)).

Course schedule

PDF versions of all readings and assignments are available to registered students on Blackboard.

Readings are optional but strongly encouraged. They can and should be used to answer the weekly questions (participation) and to complete the mind map.

Term dates: 11 January 2021 (Mon) – 24 April 2021 (Sat)

Add/Drop: 11 January 2021 (Mon) – 25 January 2021 (Mon)

Session 1: Introduction 13 January

Goals of the course and evaluation
First contact with course contents
Guidelines on sources of information about the Chinese Internet

No reading required

Part 1: Infrastructure Policy and the Creation of the Chinese Digital Landscape

Optional: general reading for part 1

HONG, Yu. *Networking China: The Digital Transformation of the Chinese Economy*. University of Illinois Press. Chicago, 2017.

Session 2: Historical legacies of Chinese telecom networks 20 January

HONG, Yu. 2015. "Colonial Legacies and Peripheral Strategies: Social-Spatial Logic of China's Communications Development since 1840." *Global Media and Communication* 11(2): 89-102

HARWIT, Eric. 2008. "China's Internet and Government Policy." In *China's Telecommunications Revolution*, 79-111. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Session 3: Forms of the digital divide in China 27 January

MCDONALD, Tom. *Social Media in Rural China*. London: UCL Press, 2016.
(chap 4)

CARTIER, Carolyn, Manuel CASTELLS, and Jack Linchuan QIU. 2005. "The Information Have-Less: Inequality, Mobility, and Translocal Networks in Chinese Cities." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 40: 9-34.

Choice of subjects for presentations

Session 4: The digitization of the state 3 February

LAGERKVIST, Johan. 2005. "The Techno-cadre's Dream: Administrative Reform by Electronic Governance in China Today?" *China Information* 19(2): 189-216.

HORSLEY, Jamie. 2018. 'China's Orwellian Social Credit Score Isn't Real'. *Foreign Policy*, 16 November. [Link](#)

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2019. "China's Algorithm of Repression. Reverse Engineering a Xinjiang Police Mass Surveillance App." **(Executive summary)**
[Link](#)

Part 2: Social media, Social movements and the Control of Online Public Opinion

Optional: general reading for part 1

HAN, Rongbin. *Contesting Cyberspace in China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

Session 5: The rise of civil society online

10 February

YANG, Guobin. 2009. *The power of the Internet in China : citizen activism online*. New York: Columbia University Press. **(Introduction)**

LIU, Jun. 2019. "From Mobilization to Legitimation: Digital Media and the Evolving Repertoire of Contention in Contemporary China," ThinkChina Analysis, University of Copenhagen. [Link](#)

ZHAO, Hui, and Jun LIU. 2015. "Social Media and Collective Remembrance: The debate over China's Great Famine on Weibo." *China Perspectives*, 2015/1: 41-48.

Presentation topic:

- The Sun Zhigang case
- Citizen journalism

Deadline for choice of subject for the essay (email or during class)

17 February: no class, Chinese New Year break.

Session 6: Censorship and propaganda

24 February

ROBERTS, Margaret E. *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall*. Princeton University Press, 2018. **(chap 5)**

ARSENE, Séverine. "From Self-Censorship to Social Protest." *Revue Française de Science Politique (English)* 61(5) (2012): 53-74.

HAN, Rongbin. *Contesting Cyberspace in China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018. **(chap 5)**

Presentation topic:

- A Chinese Intranet?
- Google and China

Session 7: The complexity of public space

3 March

SZABLEWICZ, Marcella. 2014. "The 'Losers' of China's Internet: Memes as 'Structures of Feeling' for Disillusioned Young Netizens." *China Information* 28 (2): 259-75.

ZHANG, Yinxian, Jiajun LIU, and Ji-Rong WEN. 2018. 'Nationalism on Weibo: Towards a Multifaceted Understanding of Chinese Nationalism'. *The China Quarterly* 235: 758–83.

- Presentation topic:
- The "Little Pinks"
- Human Flesh Search Engines

Session 8: Big Data, algorithms, markets, and labor 10 March

- LI, Anthony H.F. 2017. "E-commerce and Taobao Villages A Promise for China's Rural Development?" *China Perspectives*, 2017/3: 57-62.
SUN, Ping. 2019. 'Your Order, Their Labor: An Exploration of Algorithms and Laboring on Food Delivery Platforms in China'. *Chinese Journal of Communication* 12(3): 308–23.

- Presentation topics:
- No sense of privacy in China?
- Chinese digital development and gender

Session 9: Digital humanities and the Chinese Internet 17 March

Exam: 1 hour

- STOCKMANN, Daniela. 2018. "Toward Area-Smart Data Science: Critical Questions for Working With Big Data From China." *Policy & Internet* 10 (4): 393-414.

No presentations

Part 3: China and the Global Internet

Session 10: Technonationalism and globalization 24 March

Exam results and feedback

- QIU, Jack Linchuan. 2010. "Chinese Techno-Nationalism and Global Wifi Policy." In *Re-orienting Global Communication: Indian and Chinese Media Beyond Borders*, ed. Michael Curtin and Hemant Shah, 284-303. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
JIA, Lianrui, and Dwayne WINSECK. 2018. "The Political Economy of Chinese Internet Companies: Financialization, Concentration, and Capitalization." *International Communication Gazette* 80 (1): 30-59.

- Presentation topics:
- Huawei
- Made in China 2025

Session 11: Internet governance 31 March

Essay due

- ARSENE, Séverine. 2015. "Internet Domain Names in China: Articulating Local Control with Global Connectivity." *China Perspectives*, 2015/4: 25-34.

SHEN, Hong. 2016. "China and Global Internet Governance: Toward an Alternative Analytical Framework." *Chinese Journal of Communication* 9 (3): 304-24.

Presentation topics:

- The 2017 Cybersecurity Law
- The World Internet Conference

Session 12: Extraterritoriality: soft power and sharp power 7 April

Essay results and feedback

NG, Jason Q, Jeffrey KNOCKEL, Lotus RUAN, and Masashi CRETE-NISHIHATA. 2016. "One App, Two Systems: How WeChat uses one censorship policy in China and another internationally." *The Citizen Lab*. 30 November 2016. [Link](#).

KOKAS, Aynne. 2018. "Platform Patrol: China, the United States, and the Global Battle for Data Security." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 77 (4): 923-33.

WALKER, Christopher. 2018. "What is 'Sharp Power'?" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 9-23.

Presentation topic:

- 5G Technology and China
- Telecommunications and the BRI
- Exporting China's model for Internet governance

Session 13: Hong Kong, Taiwan 14 April

WANG, Yidong. 2018. "Digital Amplification of Fringe Voices: Alternative Media and Street Politics in Hong Kong." *International Journal of Communication* 12 (0): 22.

TSUI, Lokman. 2015. "The Coming Colonization of Hong Kong Cyberspace: government responses to the use of new technologies by the Umbrella Movement." *Chinese Journal of Communication* 8 (4): 1-9.

MILLER, Carl. 2019. 'Taiwan Is Making Democracy Work Again. It's Time We Paid Attention'. *Wired UK*, 26 November. [Link](#).

Presentation topic:

- Audrey Tang and vTaiwan
- Social media and the Umbrella movement
- Social media and the Sun Flower movement

Session 14: Exam and wrap up 21 April

Exam: 2 hours