Anthro175Q: Ideology and Social Change in Contemporary China

This course introduces students to social-cultural changes in China from 1949 to the present. It aims to provide students with a framework of understanding by closely examining cases of empirical study and life stories that reflect trends of institutional changes, social transformation and the remaking of both the individual and society. Four sub-themes constitute the general framework: (1) the changing yet still centrally important role played of the party-state in virtually all aspects of social life; (2) the traditional cultural logic that prioritize the web of personal relations, as reflected in notions like guanxi (networks), renqing (personal obligations) and mianzi (face) as well as the primacy of family and kinship; (3) the rise of the individual and the individualization of Chinese society in the era of consumerism and globalization; and (4) political and social tensions brought out by the compressed and rushed project of modernization to catch up with the West since the turn of the 20th century. A systematic survey of contemporary China along these four lines will offer a cultural understanding of the striving individuals, the thriving economy, and various political challenges and social problems in the largest consumer and investment market.

There will be two exams. A mid-term exam is scheduled on Feb. 6 and the final exam will be on March 21 (Friday, 11:30 AM). Exam questions will be based on materials drawn from both assigned readings and lectures. The final grade will be determined on the mid-term exam (40%) and final exam (60%).

The required readings are all uploaded (in PDF format) to the class website, and so is this syllabus. You may either read them online or print out the materials by yourself. There will be no paper materials distributed in the class, except for the exam questions during the midterm and final.

Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

Week 1. The Party-State and the Making of New China (Jan. 7 & 9)


Film: “To Live”.

**Week 2. The Monopoly of Resources and Organized Dependency** (Jan. 14 & 16)


**Week 3. Social Engineering and Cultural Changes** (Jan. 21 & 23)


**Week 4. Mobility, Stratification and Changing Patterns of Inequality** (Jan. 28 & 30)


Film: “Last Train Home.”


**Week 5. The Guanxi Culture and Its Transformation in a Market Economy (Feb. 4 & 6)**

*Midterm exam at 11:00 AM on Feb. 6.*


**Week 6. The Transformation of Private Life (Feb. 11 & 13)**


Stig Thogersen and Ni Anru. 2010. “He is He and I am I: Individual and Collective among China’s Elderly.” In Mette Hansen and Rune Svarverud (eds.) *China: The

**Week 8. Individual Rights and Social Protests: Negotiating the State-Society Relationship** (Feb. 25 & 27)


**Week 9. Consumerism and Risk Society in the Context of Globalization** (Mar. 4 & 6)


Film: “Mardi Gras: Made in China.”

**Week 10. The Party-State, Nationalism and the Modernization Project** (Mar. 11 & 13)
