

HUMA 5700 (2026 春季)
Anthropological Studies of China [关于中国的人类学研究]

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Course description

This course addresses the **major paradigms** in anthropological studies of China. It examines the relationship between anthropological studies and the politico-economic circumstances within and outside China under which the knowledge about Chinese culture and society was produced. We will give particular attention to four issues:

- (1) the relationship of anthropological practices to domestic political and economic concerns;
- (2) the interplay between anthropology and different forms of colonialism and imperialism;
- (3) the significance of class, gender and ethnicity in the production of anthropological understanding; and
- (4) the politics of fieldwork and ethnographic writing.

Intended learning outcomes

On completion of this course, students should be able to:

- (1). Comprehend basic terms, concepts and theories in cultural anthropology about Chinese cultures and societies in ethnographic writings;
- (2). Write critical essays on the development of particular topics in anthropological studies of Chinese societies.
- (3). Develop appreciation and respect of cultural diversity and understand the importance of cultural awareness for social interaction in contemporary daily.

Seminar organization

The course will be organized as a **seminar** and normally will involve a close reading of both major anthropological works and secondary texts that relate these works to the historical conditions under which they have emerged. Besides some introductory lectures on course topics, usually presented by the instructor a week before the topic to be addressed, the principal responsibility for running each class will fall upon those participants who have been assigned as chief discussants for individual reading materials.

The assignment for each week--**two participants** being responsible for one reading item according to the reading schedule, one for presentation and the other for guiding discussion--will be made one week before following the alphabetical order of the participants' names running in a cycle. Both of the presenter and the discussant are required to make a ppt file for the class that outlines the presentation or the questions and topics relating to the reading item to organize the discussion. The presenter should get to the main issues addressed and the arguments of the author(s), within his or her **15 minutes** of presentation. The discussant should have not only "a firm grasp" on the subject but also a fully positioned stake in the direction of the discussion. The person will open the discussion with an extremely clear and concise 10 to 15 minutes

presentation of issues and questions to be addressed. S/he is then responsible for eliciting and directing the discussion to make sure that important points get covered. Every student is required at all times to actively contribute to the discussion. Everyone should come every week, having read all of the required readings extremely carefully and creatively. **Students failing to attend a particular class is required to write up a summary of all the reading materials for that class, and absence for more than 4 classes will lead to the F grade for the course.**

Fieldtrip requirement

Students are required to attend the fieldtrip out of 2 options and work on the related worksheet (by partnership of two teammates).

1)Fieldtrip option 1: Hungshing Festival in a Fishermen village

Venue: Kaosai Island, Saikung

Date and Time: Mar 30 (Monday, tentatively) (8:30am --1:30pm)

2)Fieldtrip option 2: You could explore a Hong Kong community for fieldtrip by yourself.

Research project requirement

2 students form a team (MA program) or work single handedly (MPhil/PhD program) to conduct an ethnographic research project independently. The student is required to submit a research proposal (fill in the form), to write **1 critical review essay** (2,000-2,500 words) on some chosen research topics related to the course topics (based on required class readings and reference readings listed on the course website), and then work on one **research paper** (5000 words long for MA and 6,000 words long for MPhil, PhD) based on first-hand ethnographic data collected from a Chinese community about the chosen research topic and analysis built upon the critical review essay.

Important dates for research project schedule

Research paper proposal due March 22 (Sunday)

Discussion meeting by appointment within Week 7 and 8

Critical review due April 26 (Sunday)

Research paper due May 17 (Saturday)

Planned assessment tasks

Grades will be based on the following components of the course work:

- ✧ Class reading presentation and discussion 15%
- ✧ Class participation 10% (1 mark per try, started from week 3)
- ✧ Fieldtrip and worksheet 15%
- ✧ Research project (60%)
 1. Proposal 10%
 2. Critical review 15%
 3. Research paper 35%

Tentative course outline and readings

Week 1 – Feb 2, 2026

Topic: Course Organization & The Nature and Practices of Anthropology

Required Reading:

- Bailey, G., & Peoples, J. (1999). Chapter 1: The study of humanity. In *Introduction to cultural anthropology* (pp. 1–13). Belmont, CA: West/Wadsworth.

Week 2 – Feb 9, 2026

Topic: The Concept of Culture and Anthropology Research Method

Required Reading:

- Bailey, G., & Peoples, J. (1999). Chapter 2: Culture and Chapter 3: Studying culture: Approaches and methods. In *Introduction to cultural anthropology* (pp. 14–68). Belmont, CA: West/Wadsworth.
- Whyte, W. F. (1994). Learning to be a participant observer. In *Participant observer: An autobiography* (pp. 67–84). Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Week 3 – Feb 23, 2026

Topic: Gender, Chinese Family and Marriage

Required Reading:

- Watson, R. S. (1986). The named and the nameless: Gender and person in Chinese society. *American Ethnologist*, 13(4), 619–631.
- Watson, R. S. (1991). Wives, concubines, and maids: Servitude and kinship in the Hong Kong region, 1900–1940. In R. S. Watson & P. B. Ebrey (Eds.), *Marriage and inequality in Chinese society* (pp. 231–255). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wolf, M. (1972). Uterine families and the women's community. In *Women and the family in rural Taiwan* (pp. 32–41). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Week 4 – Mar 2, 2026

Topic: The Lineage Model

Required Reading:

- Watson, J. (1982). Chinese kinship reconsidered: Anthropological perspectives on historical research. *The China Quarterly*, 92, 589–627.
- Faure, D. (1989). The lineage as a cultural invention: The case of the Pearl River Delta. *Modern China*, 15(1), 4–36.

Week 5 – Mar 9, 2026

Topic: The Role of Rural Elites

Required Reading:

- Shue, V. (1988). *The reach of the state: Sketches of the Chinese body politic*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Chapter 3, pp. 74–121)
- Siu, H. F. (1989). Victims and agents; Chapter 9: Complicity and compliance. In *Agents and victims in South China: Accomplices in rural revolution* (pp. 189–211, 291–302). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Week 6 – Mar 16, 2026

Topic: Marketing Hierarchy and Regional System

Required Reading:

- Skinner, W. (1964–1965). Marketing and social structure in rural China, Part I. *Journal of Asian Studies*, 24, 3–43.
- Skinner, W. (1971). Chinese peasants and the closed community: An open and shut case. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 13 (3), 270–281.
- Wang, M. (1997). 市場與社會結構理論批判. In *社會人類學與中國研究* (pp. 112–148). 北京: 三聯書店.

Research Proposal Due: Mar 22 (Sun)

Week 7 – Mar 23, 2026

Topic: Popular Religion and the Chinese State

Required Reading:

- Watson, J. (1985). Standardizing the gods: The promotion of Tien Hou. In D. Johnson, A. J. Nathan, & E. S. Rawski (Eds.), *Popular culture in late imperial China* (pp. 292–324). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Weller, R. (1985). Bandits, beggars, and ghosts: The failure of state control over religious interpretation in Taiwan. *American Ethnologist*, 12, 46–61.
- Martin, E. (1988). Gender and ideological differences in representations of life and death. In J. L. Watson & E. S. Rawski (Eds.), *Death ritual in late imperial and modern China* (pp. 164–179). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 8 – Mar 30, 2026

Topic: Guanxi as Social Relations

Required Reading:

- Fei, X. (1992). *From the soil: The foundations of Chinese society*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Chapters 4 & 5)
- Yan, Y. (1996). The culture of *guanxi* in a North China village. *The China Journal*, 35, 1–25.
- Yang, M. M. (1994). *Gifts, favors, and banquets: The art of social relationships in China*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. (Chapters 5 & 8)

Week 9 – Apr 13, 2026

Topic: Cities, Urbanization, and the Flowing Population

Required Reading:

- Zhang, L. (2001). *Strangers in the city: Reconfigurations of space, power, and social networks within China's floating population*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Introduction, Chapter 1, Conclusion)
- Pun, N. (2005). *Made in China: Women factory workers in a global workplace*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. (Chapter 3, pp. 77–108)

Week 10 – Apr 20, 2026

Topic: Consumption and Economic Behavior

Required Reading:

- Pun, N. (2003). Subsumption or consumption? The phantom of consumer revolution in 'globalizing' China. *Cultural Anthropology*, 18 (4), 469–492.
- Yan, Y. (2000). Of hamburgers and social space: Consuming McDonald's in Beijing. In D. S. Davis (Ed.), *The consumer revolution in urban China* (pp. 201–225). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Greenhalgh, S. (1994). De-orientalizing the Chinese family firm. *American Ethnologist*, 21 (4), 746–775.

Critical Review Due: Apr 26 (Sun)

Week 11 – Apr 27, 2026

Topic: Ethnic Diversity and the Chinese World Order

Required Reading:

- Harrell, S. (1995). Introduction: Civilization projects and the reaction to them. In S. Harrell (Ed.), *Cultural encounters on China's ethnic frontiers* (pp. 3–36). Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Gladney, D. (1994). Representing nationality in China: Refiguring majority/minority identities. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53(1), 92–123.
- Appropriating otherness and the contention of Miao ethnic identity in Southwest China. (2012). *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 13(2), 142–169.

Week 12 – May 4, 2026

Topic: Chinese Cultural Identity and Nationalism

Required Reading:

- Ward, B. E. (1965). Varieties of the conscious model: The fishermen of South China. In M. Banton (Ed.), *The relevance of models for social anthropology* (pp. 113–138). London: Tavistock Publications.
- Watson, J. L. (1993). Rites or beliefs? The construction of a unified culture in late imperial China. In L. Dittmer & S. S. Kim (Eds.), *China's quest for national identity* (pp. 80–103). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Research Paper Due: May 17 (Sun)