

GE2132: DISCOVERING THE DYNAMICS OF CONTEMPORARY CITIES AND ARCHITECTURE IN CHINA

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Discovering the Dynamics of Contemporary Cities and Architecture in China

Subject Code

GE - Gateway Education

Course Number

2132

Academic Unit

Chinese and History (CAH)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

GE Area (Primary)

Area 1 - Arts and Humanities

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course will provide an introduction to contemporary Chinese cities, with a focus on how urban architecture helps shape the way people live in the city and on how urban culture influences the way people build/rebuild cities in China. It will cover a broad range of topics, including China's urban development in the last 20 years, national economic reform and urbanization, the top 10 Mega-cities in China, skyscrapers and new urban landmarks, the cultural centre and the city's image, urban heritage and urban tourism, urban community and daily life, urban open space and public space, globalization and new building typologies, shopping malls and urban consumerism. Through a series of teaching and learning activities such as lectures, class discussion and presentation, workshops and field studies, this course explores various aspects of the architectural impact on urban culture, or vice versa. It fits students who are interested in discovering the dynamics of contemporary cities in China and in investigating the urban environment and the challenge of urbanization. This course will be taught by experts in Chinese architecture and urban study.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Describe key concepts of cities in contemporary China and their contextual features.		x	
2	Develop an attitude to observe a city with interdisciplinary perspectives.	x		
3	Critically discuss major issues concerning the interrelationship between city, cognition and society.		x	
4	Describe the interaction between urban architecture and urban culture of Chinese cities.		x	
5	Analyse the phenomenon and the impact of urbanization in China through urban daily life.		x	

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	To introduce concepts, theories and examples with thematic topics, and to explain approaches of interdisciplinary studies in fields of urban study, architectural study, cultural study and social study. Students will be assigned to read reference articles before the lecture. The lecture will include discussions or Q&A between students and the instructor. An expert in the field will be invited to give a guest lecture.	1, 2, 3
2	Workshops	To demonstrate techniques, skills and methods for analysing cities and to interpret urban data graphically.	4
3	Tutorials	To instruct, discuss and review assignments and projects of the course. Students are encouraged to ask questions actively.	2, 4
4	Field Study***	Students will team up to visit Hong Kong City or a selected city in China, under the supervision of the course instructor, in order to learn outside of the classroom. It will help students to develop curiosities about the urban society. Data research is an option to field study if the field-trip cannot be organized.	1, 5
5	Group Project	Students will team up to do the field-study, a case-study report and an oral presentation, so as to foster spirit of collaboration and learn from each other.	4, 5

Additional Information for LTAs

*** Field-study is a mandatory course-requirement for all students. Field-trip to cities in China is an option. It will be organized by Instructor(s) who will go with students together. Normally such trip will be arranged during weekend or public holidays, it will be a 2-3 days trip to cities of Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Foshan in Guangdong province, or to Macau. If there

is a longer break such as Easter, the possibility to other cities in Northern China will be considered. The course will apply for financial supports of PMES (Pilot Mainland Experience Scheme) to cover up to 60% of students' travel expenses. If some students will not be able to visit China because of personal reasons such as visa issue or financial arrangement, then they will have an option to take part in local (Hong Kong) Field-trip which will also be guided by course Instructor(s). Field-trip to Macau is considered as outside Hong Kong activity because it faces the same question as trip to mainland in terms of travel expenses and accommodation. For the field studies which take place in either the mainland cities or in Hong Kong/Macau, requirements and criteria of assessment will be the same. Hong Kong and Macau are cities that belong to the Great China Region, today no one should underestimate the interrelationship among Hong Kong, Macau and the mainland cities, which often are influenced by each other.

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Workshop Exercises: Students are required to do exercises in the workshop in order to acquire skills and methods to analyse and to represent the city. One exercise is Mapping method. Another one is Photo-collage method.	4	10	Allow use of AI for generating graphic	Yes

2	Case Study Report (Group Project): Students are required to submit a written case-study-report (5000-word) on a selected city, based on the field-study or data research, by employing skills of interdisciplinary study. This is a group project. The case-study must analyse the city physically (architecture) and phenomenally (culture), apply theories of urban study and cultural study, to identify issues and problems, and to propose creative and sound solutions for improving urban systems of the cities, with critical reflections on the process of rapid urbanization.	4, 5	40	-	No
3	Oral Presentation: Students are required to make an oral presentation of their discoveries in the field-trip. This is a group project.	1, 3	20	-	No
4	Quizzes There are 2 quizzes to test students' understanding of all lecture topics taught in classes. Each quiz weights 15%, and is conducted online via Canvas/Quizzes.	1, 2, 3	30	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)

Assessment Task

Workshop Exercises

Criterion

Skills of graphical and diagrammatic representation of urban data.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Strong evidence of

- precise, correct, clear and effective graphics which represents or interprets significant and meaningful urban data;
- comprehensive context, reasonable structure, ability to organize various elements into hierarchic orders based on demand ;
- good sense of logic, abstraction and systematic expression;
- diagrammatic analysis, strong visual effects, bold statement.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Some evidence of

- precise, correct, clear and effective graphics which represents or interprets significant and meaningful urban data;
- comprehensive context, reasonable structure, ability to organize various elements into hierarchic orders based on demand ;
- good sense of logic, abstraction and systematic expression;
- diagrammatic analysis, strong visual effects, bold statement.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited evidence of

- precise, correct, clear and effective graphics which represents or interprets significant and meaningful urban data;
- comprehensive context, reasonable structure, ability to organize various elements into hierarchic orders based on demand ;
- good sense of logic, abstraction and systematic expression;
- diagrammatic analysis, strong visual effects, bold statement.

Marginal (D)

- Weak graphics which represents or interprets general urban data;
- limited context, loose structure, ability to organize some elements based on demand ;
- ability to express relevant points with acceptable visual effects.

Failure (F)

- Poor graphics which represents or interprets insufficient urban data;
- unclear context, loose structure, unsystematic organization of elements based on demand ;
- weak ability to express relevant points with acceptable visual effects.

Assessment Task

Case Study Report

Criterion

- To employ methods of interdisciplinary study;
- To identify urban characteristics of the case(the selected city or the selected district);

- To analyse the interrelationship between urban architecture and urban culture of the case;
- To discuss impacts of urbanization on daily life.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Strong evidence of

- rich content, ability to integrate various resources into primary and secondary levels based on demand;
- rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition;
- clear and integrated ideas which can keep to the point, clear-cut subject, distinct themes, ability to interpret the opinions effectively;
- sufficient and organized references which can be utilized in accordance with the topic.
- exact and fluent expression, good sense of context, ability to use various writing skills to make the paper convincing with proper diction.
- teamwork and collaboration.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Some evidence of

- rich content, ability to integrate various resources into primary and secondary levels based on demand ;
- rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition;
- clear and integrated ideas which can keep to the point, clear-cut subject, distinct themes, ability to interpret the opinions effectively;
- sufficient and organized references which can be utilized in accordance with the topic.
- exact and fluent expression, good sense of context, ability to use various writing skills to make the paper convincing with proper diction.
- teamwork and collaboration.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited evidence of

- rich content, ability to integrate various resources into primary and secondary levels based on demand;
- rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition;
- clear and integrated ideas which can keep to the point, clear-cut subject, distinct themes, ability to interpret the opinions effectively;
- sufficient and organized references which can be utilized in accordance with the topic.
- exact and fluent expression, good sense of context, ability to use various writing skills to make the paper convincing with proper diction.
- teamwork and collaboration.

Marginal (D)

- Marginal content, ability to integrate resources generally based on demand, limited or irrelevant use of resources;
- loose organization;
- ability to express relevant points to the subject matter;
- references are insufficient, ability to provide some reasonable personal comments, but no clear demonstration;
- sentence fluency and diction is acceptable.

Failure (F)

- Vague and devoid of content, weak ability to integrate limited resources ;
- loose organization, without distinct primary and secondary levels;
- unsystematic ideas which cannot express the subject matter or relevant themes;
- summary of references, no personal idea and/ or unreasonable comment;
- seriously insufficient/ no reference;
- over use of existing quotations and relevant research.

Assessment Task

Oral Presentation

Criterion

- Information and discovery derived from the field-study;
- Skill of oral communication;
- Teamwork spirit.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Strong evidence of

- Rich content, excellent grasp of the materials with in-depth or extensive knowledge of the subject matter;
- rigorous organization, coherent structure, balanced composition;
- critical analysis, convincing statement and creative comment;
- superior presentation skills: distinct pronunciation, fluent expression and appropriate diction, exact time-management.
- teamwork and collaboration.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Some evidence of

- Rich content, excellent grasp of the materials with in-depth or extensive knowledge of the subject matter;
- rigorous organization, coherent structure, balanced composition;
- critical analysis, convincing statement and creative comment;
- superior presentation skills: distinct pronunciation, fluent expression and appropriate diction, exact time-management.
- teamwork and collaboration.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Limited evidence of

- rich content, excellent grasp of the materials with in-depth or extensive knowledge of the subject matter;
- rigorous organization, coherent structure, balanced composition; · critical analysis, convincing statement and creative comment;
- superior presentation skills: distinct pronunciation, fluent expression and appropriate diction, exact time-management.
- teamwork and collaboration.

Marginal (D)

- Loose organization, but acceptable identified content.
- adequate understanding of the reading and indication of grasp of the general ideas, limited or irrelevant use of reading materials;
- simple and unilateral comments, without clear explanation;
- acceptable pronunciation and expression; few of mistakes in diction, but no influence to general delivery.

Failure (F)

- Limited familiarity with the facts of the reading and its surface relations, unsystematic ideas which cannot express the subject matter or relevant themes;
- loose organization, without distinct primary and secondary structure;
- devoid of personal comment and/or unreasonable opinion;
- softly voice, indistinct pronunciation and improper diction, seriously over time.

Assessment Task

Quizzes

Criterion

1. Understanding of the subject matter.
2. Ability in explaining relevant concepts.
3. To construct critical thinking.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

1. Excellent command of knowledge of Chinese architecture and gardens;

2. Excellent critical thinking ability in reviewing research reports/research articles related to Chinese architecture and gardens;
3. Excellent application of theories in studying architecture and gardens;
4. Excellent ability in knowledge application.

Good (B+, B, B-)

1. Good command of knowledge of Chinese architecture and gardens;
2. Good critical thinking ability in reviewing research reports/research articles related to Chinese architecture and gardens;
3. Good application of theories in studying architecture and gardens;
4. Good ability in knowledge application.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

1. Fair command of knowledge of Chinese architecture and gardens;
2. Fair critical thinking ability in reviewing research reports/research articles related to Chinese architecture and gardens;
3. Fair application of theories in studying architecture and gardens;
4. Fair ability in knowledge application.

Marginal (D)

1. Marginal command of knowledge of Chinese architecture and gardens;
2. Marginal critical thinking ability in reviewing research reports/research articles related to Chinese architecture and gardens;
3. Marginal application of theories in studying architecture and gardens;
4. Marginal ability in knowledge application.

Failure (F)

1. unsatisfactory command of knowledge of Chinese architecture and gardens;
2. unsatisfactory critical thinking ability in reviewing research reports/research articles related to Chinese architecture and gardens;
3. unsatisfactory application of theories in studying architecture and gardens;
4. unsatisfactory ability in knowledge application.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Subjects: Urbanism, Contemporary China, Architecture, Culture

Topics: Urban Development, City Planning, Infrastructure, Transportation

System, Urban Fabrics, Architectural Landmark, Public Space, Urban

Geography, Urban Ecology, Urban Heritage, Community and

Livelihood, Post-industrial Urban Economy

Examples: Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Nanjing, Chongqing, Hong Kong...

Activities: Lecture, Workshop, Tutorial, Field Study, Group Project.

Assignments: Reading, Response Paper, Workshop Exercise, Case Study Report,

Oral Presentation

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	John R. Logan, <i>The New Chinese City: Globalization and Market Reform</i> (Blackwell, 2002)
2	Laurence J.C. Ma & Fulong Wu (ed.), <i>Restructuring the Chinese City: Changing Society, Economy and Space</i> (Routledge, 2005)
3	Charlie Q.L. Xue, <i>Building a Revolution: Chinese Architecture since 1980</i> . (Hong Kong University Press, 2005)

4	Yingjin Zhang, <i>The City in Modern Chinese Literature & Film: Configurations of Space, Time, and Gender</i> (Stanford University Press, 1996) Part-I to Part-III.
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Additional Readings

	Title
1	Christian Dubrau, <i>Contemporary Architecture in China</i> (DOM Publishers, 2010)
2	Arianne M. Gaetano & Tamara Jacka (ed.), <i>On the Move: Women and Rural-to Urban Migration in Contemporary China</i> (Columbia University Press, 2004) pg. 1-40, 131-176.
3	James Watson, <i>Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia</i> . (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006)
4	Gordon Mathews, <i>Ghetto at the Centre of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong</i> (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011)
5	汪東梅著《中國城市化問題研究》（中國經濟出版社，2005）
6	何念如著《中國當代城市化理論研究》（格致出版社，2007）
7	韓昊英、賴世剛、吳次芳〈中國當代城市規劃的戰略觀〉（《浙江大學學報》2009年11月第39卷第6期）
8	付曉東、徐涵露〈中國當代城市經濟理論研究與未來展望〉（《河北學刊》2010年1月第30卷第1期）
9	姚震宇〈空間城市化機制和人口城市化目標：對中國當代城市發展的一項研究〉（《人口研究》2011年第5期）
10	薛求理著《建造革命：1980年以來的中國建築》（清華大學出版社，2009）
11	薛求理著《城境：香港建築1946-2011》（香港商務印書館，2014）

Annex (for GE courses only)

A. Please specify the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that the course is aligned to and relate them to the CILOs stated in Part II, Section 2 of this form:

Please indicate which CILO(s) is/are related to this PILO, if any (can be more than one CILOs in each PILO)

PILO 1: Demonstrate the capacity for self-directed learning

1, 3

PILO 2: Explain the basic methodologies and techniques of inquiry of the arts and humanities, social sciences, business, and science and technology

4

PILO 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills

5

PILO 5: Produce structured, well-organised and fluent text

1

PILO 6: Demonstrate effective oral communication skills

2

PILO 7: Demonstrate an ability to work effectively in a team

1, 3

PILO 8: Recognise important characteristics of their own culture(s) and at least one other culture, and their impact on global issues

4

PILO 9: Value ethical and socially responsible actions

5

PILO 10: Demonstrate the attitude and/or ability to accomplish discovery and/or innovation

5

B. Please select an assessment task for collecting evidence of student achievement for quality assurance purposes. Please retain at least one sample of student achievement across a period of three years.

Selected Assessment Task

Case Study Report

Students are required to submit a case-study report based on the field-study or data research in a selected Chinese city, by employing skills of inter-disciplinary study. The case-study must analyse the city physically (architecture) and phenomenally (culture), apply theories of urban study and cultural study, to identify issues and problems, and to propose creative and sound solutions for improving urban systems of the cities, with critical reflections on the process of rapid urbanization.