

The Sociology of China

Course description

In this course, we will study the sociology of China with a focus on the societal transformation and class formation in contemporary China. The course will engage with theoretical debates and empirical research that explore the evolving composition of Chinese social classes from its revolutionary era to the reform era. The course will analyse the social cleavages created by macro-level processes such as urbanisation, industrialisation, and demographic shift that China has witnessed in the last few decades. The course also explores the collective identity and actions of a few social groups, such as peasants protesting against land appropriation and pollution, migrant workers and middle class in China's mega cities, the religious and ethnic minority groups resisting cultural hegemony, young students and netizens engaging in online and offline activism, etc. By critically analysing the socio-economic positioning of these new social groups, this course aims to help students to develop a more nuanced understanding of China's 'post-socialist' transformation, identify the composing elements of China's population and society, and understand the key social and economic mechanisms and debates that put China's future development at stake. Through this course, students will acquire a set of analytical and conceptual tools drawn from sociology and anthropology, such as the Marxist, Weberian, Bourdieusian theory of capital and class distinction, 'weapons of the weak' by James Scott, and 'intersectionality' from feminist and gender studies.