Covering China
Shanghai summer course: 2011
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For centuries, in the minds of many westerners, China has been a mysterious, “inscrutable”,
very foreign place. But over the past few decades, as China has rapidly increased its ties to the
west, we are beginning to get to know each other better. Much of what we have learned
historically and currently about China has been filtered through the eyes of western journalists
covering China. Most recently, with the growth of the internet, we are learning more about China
from the Chinese themselves.

This course, Covering China, will look back at some of the reporting done about China from its
first opening to the west in the 1800’s, during the run-up to the Communist takeover in 1949,
through the Cultural Revolution, Cold War, Nixon's visit, Tiananmen 1989 and finally to the
Olympic Games in 2008. We will examine the role western journalists play in our understanding
of China and how accurate their perceptions have been. We will compare reporting from
resident journalists, fluent in Chinese vs. “parachute” journalists who pop in just for the big story.
And we will look at Chinese state run media and compare it to western reporting on the same
events. We will also look at how much, or how little, the internet has influenced our views of
China, their views of us, and their views of themselves.

A portion of each class will be devoted to writing about China and/or critiquing the work written
by your classmates.

Readings:
If one wishes to be acquainted with the past and the present, five cartloads of books must be read. - Chinese proverb.

All readings will be provided by me, either online or hard copies. Students will pick ONE
journalist to read about in depth. I will select appropriate sections of the following titles:
Harold Isaacs, Scratches on Our Minds: American views of China and India (M.E. Sharp, 1958)
James Thomson, Jr., Peter W. Stanley & John Curtis Perry, Sentimental Imperialists (Harper
Agnes Smedley, Battle Hymn of China (Knopf, 1943)
Edgar Snow, Red Star Over China (Random House, 1938)
Peter Rand, China Hands (Simon and Shuster, 1995)
David Perlmutter, Picturing China in the American Press, The Visual Portrayal of Sino-American
Margaret Macmillan, Nixon and Mao, The Week that Changed the World (Random House,
2007)
Fox Butterfield, Alive in the Bitter Sea (Bantam Books, 1982)
Nick Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's China Wakes (Vintage, 1994)
Ross Terrill, China in Our Time, Simon & Schuster (1992)
David M. Lampton, Same Bed Different Dreams (University of California Press, 2001)
Rob Gifford, China Road (Random House, 2007)
John Pomfret, Chinese Lessons (Henry Holt, 2006)
Other readings will be from *The New Yorker*’s Robert Shaplen, Orville Schell and Peter Hessler, and *The Atlantic*’s James Fallows. If censors permit, students should also be daily readers of:

- *NYTimes* (set up email alerts for anything related to China)

**Expectations and Grading:** Students will be assigned to one journalist who has covered China in the last century to read about more deeply; you will prepare an eight page paper and oral report on that journalist (due at the beginning of week six). In addition, students will be trained to write basic journalistic reports, essays and opinion pieces about events happening in Shanghai and China today. Assignments will be short articles about Chinese journalism, media, cyberspace and society. Ideally, students can submit their work to a professional news outlet or at least post on a blog or website.

There will be quizzes in most classes on current events and responses to the readings. They will account for 20% your grade.

Short writing exercises will count for 30% of your grade.

The 8 page paper will be 40% of your grade and the oral report on the same subject will count for 10% of the grade.

**Attendance/Due Dates:** All classes are mandatory. Students will receive a zero for any work turned in late. In the event of a personal emergency, contact me immediately via phone.

**Plagiarism:** In journalism, perhaps even more than in any other profession, the crime of stealing another person’s work is professional suicide. Don’t do it. Words, images, graphics, audio or video produced for this class must be created by you and you alone.

The university’s plagiarism guidelines: Plagiarism is the act of representing someone else’s creative and/or academic work as your own, in full or in part. It can be an act of commission, in which one intentionally appropriates the words, pictures or ideas of another, or it can be an act of omission, in which one fails to acknowledge/document/give credit to the source, creator and/or the copyright owner of those works, pictures or ideas. Any fabrication of materials, quotes or sources, other than that created in a work of fiction, is also plagiarism. Plagiarism is the most serious academic offense that you can commit and can result in probation, suspension or expulsion.

--Boston University College of Communication Plagiarism Policy

**Class topics:** (exact dates and times TBA by the Shanghai program director).

Lectures 1 & 2: Looking East, Looking West
1. How the west sees China: 19th and early 20th century Chinese relations with the west. Missionary impulse, the China “market”, “Yellow Peril”
Writing exercise: impressions of China (pre-arrival)

“Victimized by the West”. Superiority/inferiority complex.
Writing: impressions of China on the ground.

Reading:
Same Bed, Different Dreams, David Lampton, pgs 249-278 “The Stories We Tell Ourselves”.
Scratches on Our Minds, Harold Isaacs. pp 63-209,
Sentimental Imperialists, Jim Thomson, pgs 4-60, 79-92.
Media: The Last Emperor
Media: Old Charlie Chan films. Listen to NPR program on the legacy of Charlie Chan.
http://www.onpointradio.org/2010/08/charlie-chan
<http://www.onpointradio.org/2010/08/charlie-chan>

3. 1920s: China In Turmoil
FIELD TRIP TO CPC FOUNDING SITE?
Media: The Roots of Madness”, or China in Revolution
Writing: Interviews: How Chinese View Americans

4. 1930's: The Long March
Harold Isaacs, Agnes Smedley, Anna Louise Strong, Edgar Snow, Pearl Buck
China Hands by Peter Rand
In depth Reading: Red Star Over China by Edgar Snow,
Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution, Battle Hymn of China, Agnes Smedley
Media: China in Revolution, 1911-1949 1911-1936 The Battle for Survival PBS (on You Tube), film: The Good Earth
Writing: communism in context

5. 1940's: World War Two and Beyond.
Teddy White, Henry Luce, The Soong Sisters, “The China Lobby”
Reading: China Hands, chapter on Teddy, p. 189, by Peter Rand
In Depth Reading: In Search of History by Teddy White, Thunder out of China, by Annalee Jacoby and Theodore White,
Writing: Half the story. When First Impressions are Wrong

6. 1950’s: “Who Lost China?” McCarthyism - no access to the story, State Department purges lack of China Hands = influence on Vietnam policy
Thomson, Sentimental Imperialists, pgs. 217-234
Writing: Vietnam legacy

7. 1960’s: Closed China, Cultural Revolution
There is no fence that does not allow the wind through - Chinese Proverb.
http://archives.newyorker.com/?i=1966-02-12#folio=040
<Torporyshaplen.com/news/world/memories-from-past-correspondents/article1308151/>
http://archives.newyorker.com/?i=1966-02-12#folio=040
Toronto Globe and Mail: Frederick Nossal 1959-60, Charles Taylor 1964
Media: Teddy White film 1:12:45
Media: “To Live”
Writing: Hidden from View

8. 1970’s: The Thaw
Nixon’s Visit
A photojournalist’s view of the trip: http://www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0501/halstead.html
<http://www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0501/halstead.html>
interview with Ed Fouhy
Media: televised images of China, ping pong diplomacy.
PBS American Experience, “Nixon’s China Game”
Writing: Seeing What We Want to See

9. 1980’s: Deng Xiaoping and the “New” China
In depth readings: Fox Butterfield Alive in the Bitter Sea, John Pomphret, Chinese Lessons, Ross Terrill, Seymour Topping, Jay and Linda Matthews, Melinda Liu
Writing: The Other

10. Tiananmen 1989: impact of live television, who got it right?
<http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/the_myth_of_tiananmen.php>
Writing: Legacy of Tiananmen
PAPER AND ORAL REPORTS DUE

readings: Rob Gifford, China Road
Guest: WSJ or Marketplace Shanghai correspondent or David Barboza, NYT Shanghai?
Oral Reports
Writing: Made in China

12. The Chinese Firewall.
Whispered words are heard afar - Chinese proverb

Internet censorship.
James Fallows, The Atlantic, March 2008 “The Connection Has Been Reset”
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/03/-ldquo-the-connection-has-been-reset-
Oral Reports
Guest: American working for Shanghai Daily?
Writing: Freedom of Speech

13. US complicity in censorship. Case study: Google and Yahoo
Rebecca McKinnon book forthcoming 2011
Oral Reports

14. Same Story, Different Take Case Study: Tibet
Writing: Whose Facts?

15. Western Media Biased Against China? Case Study: The Olympics
Writing: Breaking from the Pack, the conventional narrative.