

Reflections on Participation in the Piedmont Project (May 2011) &
Revised Syllabus of CHN 401 Advanced Reading and Writing in Modern Chinese

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I joined the Piedmont Project with the idea to develop a three-week course module on sustainability in contemporary China for CHN 401, a course I will be teaching again next Fall. As I seek to further broaden the cross-cultural perspectives for this course, I think the issue of sustainability cannot be more relevant: China, a fast-growing economy that has by and large prioritized development over environmental protection for more than three decades, has been paying a lofty price. In recent years, the country has been making noticeable efforts to develop sustainability initiatives both domestically and globally. To deepen students' understanding of contemporary China, I believe it is indispensable for them to learn about how the country and its people have come to terms with environmental problems, and how this process is similar to and different from the American experience. More specifically, my plan was to select one particular aspect of daily life in China, relate it to sustainability, and construct class discussion and other tasks centering on that aspect. I had in mind one potential focus, i.e. transportation in Chinese cities. I had hoped that by learning about Chinese urban dwellers' common modes of transportation and their environmental impacts, and comparing them with their own, my students would come to appreciate the centrality of sustainability in the Chinese context, and to further understand the contemporary Chinese society through the choices its government and people have made regarding environmental issues. I realized, however, that this plan would require a great deal of specialized knowledge. For instance, what is sustainability? What are the specific sustainability issues that a developing economy like China is dealing with? I had also hoped that the workshop would help me find answers to these questions.

What I have learned from working with fellow participants, step by step and led by the workshop organizers, however, is of a higher level. The two-day experience not only opened up my thinking about approaches to teaching sustainability, but also urged me to rethink about my pedagogy overall. The last time when I taught CHN 401, I used a collection of texts as the framework and main content of the course. The inspiring presentation by Ms. Sandra Robertson from the Georgia Hunger Coalition and our discussion on community engaged learning, however, encouraged me to try stepping out of the classroom and integrating student-led field trips into the course. Thus, instead of simply adding a three-week module on sustainability to the original topics, I decided to redesign the entire course.

Contemplation on “place” and sharing one’s own “place” with fellow participants through verbal description were the very first task we did in the workshop. My immediate

response was that this would be a perfect project for my students. I would ask the students to choose a place in China they visited or know about and would like to share with their classmates, and bring a photo that place to class. They would first describe the place in Chinese, and then present the image. I would then lead the class to examine how the photo matches up with what they have imagined in their mind. This activity would serve as an introduction to the main module on sustainability.

The module will consist of three parts. A group of three or four students will lead the project. First of all, the student leaders will identify three or four places on campus that are particularly interesting to them, do research on what these places could teach them about sustainability, and present their research orally in Chinese to the class. Then, they will organize these places into a coherent fieldtrip and lead the class to visit them. Finally, each student will write up a reflection paper on the fieldtrip in Chinese. Throughout this process, I will guide the students in language practice that are appropriate to the need of each stage, including exercises in vocabulary, key grammatical structures, and new sentence patterns. I will apply the structure of this module to other units of the course, some of which also relevant to sustainability issues.

I have attached the revised syllabus to this summary. As you will see, I have benefited from the workshop in a variety of ways: some are concrete ideas that I borrowed directly from the workshop, e.g. the awareness of “place,” and others are inspirations that I would like to turn into reality, e.g. create course modules in which students not only have their voices but can take actions. I hope my students will be inspired by the revised course as much as I have by the experience with the Piedmont Project.

CHN 401 WR

Advanced Reading and Writing in Modern Chinese I

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Course Description and Objectives

This is an advanced course in Chinese language and culture. Through reading, discussion, fieldtrips, and writing practice, this course aims to further improve your oral communication proficiency and refine your reading and writing skills in the Chinese language, broaden your knowledge of China, and deepen your understanding of the Chinese people, culture, and society.

This course satisfies the GER continuing writing requirement. Improving general writing skills (not just writing using the Chinese language) is also an important objective. You will be given biweekly writing homework during the semester, and a guided paper assignment for the final project. Your writing will be evaluated not only in terms of the correctness and grammaticality of Chinese formal usage, but also in the specificity of your expressions, the clarity of sentence structures, and the cogency of your arguments.

Textbook, Blackboard and LearnLink

Lee, Kunshan Carolyn et al. 《文化纵横观》 *The Routledge Advanced Chinese Multimedia Course: Crossing Cultural Boundaries*. New York: Routledge. 2010.

On Blackboard, you will find the following:

- This syllabus (PDF) Detailed lesson plans Assignments Vocabulary quizzes

This course has a LearnLink conference. Feel free to ask questions or initiate discussions. Class-related announcements will also be posted on LearnLink. Please check the conference regularly and frequently.

Course Components and Requirements

- Course modules

This course consists of four modules, each centering on one area/topic of contemporary China. The instructor will lead the first module, but you will take turns to be responsible for the remaining three. The center activity for each of these three modules is a fieldtrip that we will take collectively either during class time or on weekends. Under the instructor's guidance, you will collaborate with your classmates to design and lead one fieldtrip. Each fieldtrip will be preceded by a group presentation. You and your team members will present research you have done about the fieldtrip. Finally, after class discussion and reflections on the fieldtrip, you will write an essay about a specific topic related to the fieldtrip. For these tasks, I will give you detailed information for how to prepare and what to accomplish.

- Quizzes and exams

Vocabulary quizzes will be given at the beginning of almost every class. Key vocabulary items will be designated for quizzes. You will need to know how to read and write these items. The rest is required for reading knowledge only.

Two exams will be given in the semester, each consisting of an oral and a written section. The oral section will require you to read segments from the texts in accurate pronunciation, and to conduct discussion on issues related to the texts. The written section includes grammar and reading questions.

- Final project

The Final project consists of an individual presentation on a topic of your choice (but approved by the instructor) and a formal paper on the same topic.

- Attendance, participation, and assignment policy

Attend class regularly. You are allowed **two penalty-free absences** regardless of reason through the semester. Beyond that, your third and fourth absences will, regardless of reason, lower your final grade by one rank, e.g. from C to C-. Similarly, your fifth and sixth absences will lower your grade one more rank, e.g. C- to D+. And so on for every two absences beyond the penalty-free allowance. **Save your free absences for emergencies!**

Come to class on time. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of the class. If you miss (a portion of) a quiz due to tardiness, you will not be able to make up for it.

Participate actively in class. Make the best use of contact time by fully engaging yourself in class activities. Participation accounts for 5% of your final grade.

All assignments must be completed and turned in on time. (Refer to the Lesson Plans on Blackboard for detailed schedule.) **Late assignments will NOT be accepted and will be recorded as zero.**

Grading

Your final grade for the course is composed of the following:

- Participation: 5%
- Group presentation: 5%
- Field trip: 10%
- Essays: 20%
- Quizzes: 10%
- Tests: 20%
- Final Presentation: 10%
- Final Paper: 20%

Conversion to letter grades will be based on the following:

92-100 A	89-91 A-	86-88 B+	82-85 B	79-81 B-
76-78 C+	73-75 C	70-72 C-	65-69 D	0-64 F

Honor Code

Strict adherence to Emory College's Honor Code will be enforced in this class. You, and you alone, are responsible for avoiding plagiarism and related problems.

If you are uncertain about the provisions of the Honor Code, see:
http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html.

For detailed information on appropriate referencing, you may consult the Citing Your Sources

Research Guide compiled by Emory Libraries at:
http://web.library.emory.edu/r_guides/how_guides/citationstyles.html

It is your obligation to familiarize yourself with the Code. The instructor will clarify expectations for sources to be used and documentation procedures. Student collaboration on assignments is not permitted, unless approved by the instructor. It is expected that the work you do for this course is your own original work and that this work does not duplicate either in part or in full work that you have done or will do for another course, unless there is approval of both professors. Using someone else's work verbatim or paraphrased without giving proper credit is plagiarism.

Tentative Schedule

Below is a general and tentative schedule to help you plan your overall study. For detailed information as to assignments, quizzes and tests, refer to the Lesson Plans that will be posted on Blackboard as the course proceeds.

Week	Topic
1	Orientation
1-3	1 st Module: Online Dating
4-6	2 nd Module: Floating Population
7	Exam (I)
7-10	3 rd Module: Chinese Architecture
11-14	4 th Module: Sustainable Development
14	Exam (II)
15-16	Final Presentation and Paper