CURE2016/UGEC2042: Modernity & Urban Culture

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
2nd Term 2017-2018

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Medium of instruction: English

Lee Shau Kee Building (LSK) 301
Lecture: Friday, 1:30-3:15pm
Tutorial: Friday, 3:30-4:15pm

Focusing on urban modernity in Asia, this course looks at how blueprints for modernist, global, logistical, and creative cities are articulated across the region. Such templates are often top-down visions for urban renewal and economic growth with varying degrees of triumphalism and failure. In this course, we will explore the multiple forms modernity assumes among different urban milieus and their residents. How can the complex flows and rhythms of a modern metropolis be visualized? What social and economic changes prevail in the shift to a mode of governmentality specific to the conditions of neoliberal capitalism, media convergence, and immaterial production? What are the normative spaces of key nodes in the world market, and what rights do they afford to their users? What voices and experiences are excluded from the delineation and operation of the modern Asian city?

To investigate these questions, the course is divided into four sections, each of which focuses on a different facet of the relationship between the Asian city and cultural modernity. First, the course will ask what constitutes a modern city. We will start by discussing how its workings as an administrative unit shapes the identities and movements of its inhabitants. To uncover the variegated experience of urban modernity, the rational order of the state will be juxtaposed against the creative trajectories of residents. Next, the course will examine how Northeast and Southeast Asian cities are typically imagined and articulated in audiovisual representations that circulate globally through media networks. We will look at different methods for comprehending and visualizing urban flows and rhythms, such as street observations, museum exhibitions, and digital visualizations, which offer divergent perceptions of the metropolis. To conclude, we will explore how the experience of the modern city has become transformed by the rapid urbanization and informatization of Asian economies, which have produced a burgeoning class of cosmopolitan consumers and transnational migrants.

Each week, the lecturer will lead the discussion of the required and recommended texts, which explore distinct spatial and visual articulations of urban modernity across the region. In two multimodal critical reflections to be submitted at different points in the semester, students will apply ideas discussed in class to
analyze articulations of urban modernity in two sites of cultural production now characteristic of many Asian global cities, the history museum and the art fair. For the final project, the students will work in groups to create a proposal for a social media campaign that reveals the complexities of modernity in an Asian city of their choice. Tutorial sessions will be used to workshop drafts of the critical reflection and final project.

ASSESSMENT

Class participation – 15%
You are expected to attend all the lectures and tutorials. Please make sure you have thoroughly read the required text so that you can participate actively in the discussion. In every class session, different students will be called to share their thoughts or raise questions. Your responses to the presentations of your classmates will also be assessed.

Multimodal critical reflection 1 (3 images & 400-600 words) – 20%
Working alone or in pairs, you will produce a multimodal critical reflection that analyzes the representation of modernity in a museum of urban history. The critical reflection will combine digital photos with written text. During the field trip to a museum in week 7, you will take three photos of different spaces or objects in the museum that illustrate or challenge the concepts about 1) parallel modernities, 2) world cities & urban logistics, and 3) street observation & digital visualization discussed in class. The accompanying written text of 400-600 words should provide an analysis in narrative or expository form.

Multimodal critical reflection 2 (3 images & 400-600 words) – 20%
Working alone or in pairs, you will produce a multimodal critical reflection that analyzes one or more of the exhibitions and events organized alongside Art Basel. For this paper requirement, you will take two photos of different images or objects that illustrate or challenge the concepts about 1) branding identity & immaterial, and 2) peripheries & minorities discussed in class. The accompanying written text of 400-600 words should provide an analysis in narrative or expository form.

These two paper requirements will be marked based on the depth and clarity of the understanding they demonstrate in their explanation of its ideas and their application. The suitability of the chosen concepts for the articulations of modernity captured in the photos will factor into the grade.

Presentation (7 minutes) – 5%
During tutorial, each student or pair of students will have the opportunity to share their thoughts on one of these two requirements. The feedback they receive from a preassigned respondent will be used to revise the paper for submission.

Group project/paper (3000-4000 words total) – 35%
Group presentation of final project (10 mins.) – 5%
As your final requirement for the course, you will work in groups to create a proposal for a social media campaign that highlights the often suppressed or
marginalized complexities of modernity in an Asian city of your choice. The paper should explain how a selection of **key ideas from at least three different class sessions** is being applied in the conceptualization of this proposal. The proposal should be accompanied by a collection of **five sample images** that simulate the implementation of the social media campaign.

This requirement will be graded based on the depth and clarity of the understanding it demonstrates in its explanation of its conceptual ideas and their analytical application. Credit will be given to the suitability and uniqueness of the chosen ideas and images. Lastly, the presentation of the project will be marked for its organization and coherence.

By week 10, each group should submit a summary of approximately 400-500 words in bullet-point format, which concisely describes its plans for the project and the ideas to be applied.

**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: Visualizing the Modernist City** (Jan 12)

- What is urban modernity?
- What spatial form does the modernist city assume?
- What stake do residents have in the city?
- How is the city visualized in different Asian cultures?


**Week 2: Parallel Modernities (Film screening)** (Jan 19)

- How are modern forces experienced in different Asian cities?
- How do global images of modernity shape local spaces and their residents?
- How is urban modernity represented in Asian audiovisual culture?


 Film viewing: The Terrorizers, Edward Yang (1986)

**Week 3: Parallel Modernities (Class discussion)** (Jan 26)


**Week 4: World Cities and Urban Logistics** (Feb 2)
- What is an Asian world city?
- How do world cities act as hubs for transnational flows?
- What rights do citizens and migrants possess in world cities?


Recommended: Deborah Cowen, “Logistics Cities: The ‘Urban Heart’ of Empire,” in *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in the Global Trade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014),

**Week 5: Street Observation & Digital Visualization (Class discussion)** (Feb 9)
- How do maps represent the spatial reality of a city?
- How does street observation provide a thicker description of urban life?
- How does digital visualization trace urban flows and connections?


Recommended: Nev Hochmann and Lev Manovich, “Zooming into an Instagram City: Reading the Local through Social Media,” *First Monday* 18, no. 7 (2013)

Tutorial

**Week 6: LUNAR NEW YEAR HOLIDAY** (Feb 16)

**Week 7: Street Observation & Digital Visualization (Field trip)** (Feb 23)
- How is the modern city visualized in the museum?
- What experiences and voices are excluded from this representation?

Field trip: Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Sha Tin (Tentative)

**Week 8: Presentation of multimodal critical reflection 1 (Tutorial)** (Mar 2)

**Week 9: Branding Identity and Immaterial Labor** (Mar 9)
- How do world cities use branding to enhance their reputation?
- How are cities managing the shift to regimes of knowledge and innovation?
- In what ways does Asian audiovisual culture capture these changes?


Tutorial

Submission of individual critical reflection (Mar 9)

Week 10: Peripheries and Minorities (Mar 16)
   How does the modern Asian city define the periphery?
   What experiences and voices are left out of representations of the city?
   How could a world city be imagined differently?


Tutorial

Submission of summary of final project

Week 11: Consultation on final project (Tutorial) (Mar 23)

Week 12: Hong Kong Arts Month (Field trip) (Mar 26-29)
   What function does an international fair such as Art Basel play in a world city?
   How does Trinh’s work reimagine urban peripheries and minorities?

Field trip: Hong Kong Arts Month exhibitions and events

READING WEEK (Mar 30)

Week 13: Presentation of multimodal critical reflection (Tutorial) (Apr 6)

Submission of multimodal critical reflection 2 (Apr 8)

Week 14: Presentation of final project (Tutorial) (Apr 13)

Week 15: Preparation for final project (Apr 20)

Submission of final project and paper (Apr 22)
ACADEMIC ETHICS

You are expected to abide by the university’s principles and regulations on academic dishonesty. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the information on the following webpage: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

All written requirements must be accompanied by a VeriGuide receipt. Papers submitted without a VeriGuide receipt will not be accepted and marked.

Violations such as plagiarized work or multiple submissions will not be tolerated in any form, and will be subject to disciplinary action. Remember that all words, phrases, or ideas taken from sources other than your own submitted assignment must be properly cited.