

Studying Closed Societies in East, North-East and South-East Asia: Tibet, Xinjiang and China's Socialist Neighbors

Instructor: Dr. Robert Barnett

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30pm or by appointment

Seminar Sessions: Mondays, 4.10-6.00pm

Class prerequisites: none

Course-type: Seminar

Level: 4000

Pts: 4

The Course

A number of regions or countries in East, North East and South East Asia remain closed to foreigners or have political conditions that make it impractical, unethical or dangerous for foreigners to speak in depth with local residents. In many of these areas research by scholars or journalists is only rarely permitted if at all, and academic publications from within the country may be extremely limited in the issues they can discuss or the opinions they can express. These areas include Tibet and Xinjiang within the PRC, and its neighbours North Korea, Vietnam, and Laos. Is it possible to study such places to a reasonable academic standard without access to them? How should students and researchers approach the study of contemporary conditions in these areas? Can carrying out close readings of official texts from such countries lead to a reliable understanding of conditions there?

The course surveys and critically assesses some of the methods used by journalists, intelligence agencies and social scientists in these situations, such as "Kremlinology", refugee interviews, open source research, and digital survey tools. It focuses in particular on what can be learnt from the approach of historians, political scientists and anthropologists in situations where study and reporting must be done without access, and it gives primacy to teaching methods of close reading of primary, official texts produced in closed societies, for which detailed knowledge of context, ideology and history are essential.

The course is designed for any students at undergraduate or graduate level interested in studying closed societies in East and North-East Asia, particularly those considering research in the social sciences and political science, or in journalism and aid work in the area, who aim to develop critical, self-reflective methodologies for such studies.

Course Overview

The course begins with critical discussions about different theories concerning the practice of close reading, and at the politics of characterizing societies as "open" or "closed". Sessions 3-7 look at previous failures of different methods for the interpretation of inaccessible societies, beginning with an anthropological discussion of the complexities of reading texts written by cadres within a socialist state, as the main focus of the course is on providing students with tools for contextual readings of primary texts from closed societies. Sessions 8-14 discuss case studies in the region, from Tibet to Vietnam, and include guest lectures by writers and researchers who have tried to develop tools for studying or reporting on those areas.

Course Goals

The course seeks to provide a theoretical and methodological basis for students and professionals studying closed areas of East and North-East Asia, particularly for scientists, political scientists, and journalists. It aims to provide a basic familiarity with the history of methods used to interpret events in places without access, including the history of their failures, as well as to produce critical awareness of general presumptions about the primacy of the

interview as a research tool. Students are expected by the end of the course to be able to assess whether productive lessons and usable methodologies can be derived from earlier, often flawed efforts to study closed societies from the outside. Overall, the course aims to provide a critical awareness of assumptions concerning fieldwork, access, interviews and other elements of research by foreigners abroad.

Course Requirements

There are no prerequisites for this course. Any student can attend, and no previous knowledge of the area or of the relevant languages is required. The course will consist of one session per week. Each session will begin with a 15-20 minute presentation by a student, who will then lead a discussion, with both lasting in total for about one hour. The presenter can use a projector for powerpoint presentations or distribute handouts. The discussion will be followed by a brief lecture. Images and film clips will be shown.

Students must attend classes regularly and should participate in class sessions. Grades will be based on assignments, attendance and participation. Non-attendance or repeated late attendance will affect grades. You will be expected to complete all required readings before the classes, and to read or look briefly at optional pieces wherever possible. Most or all of the reading materials will be available on the Courseworks site. By each Sunday evening students will be required to post a brief comment on one or other of the required readings for the coming Monday's class. There will be at least one additional session for film viewings.

Assignments

1. Post your responses to one or more of the readings for the Monday class to the rest of the class, at one page in length by 7pm each Sunday.
2. Each student will give a class presentation during the term, with their summary of and comments on a reading for that class, and will lead part or all of the discussion for that session.
3. After each student presentation, each student will fill in an evaluation form giving feedback on the presentation. Within a week the presenter will post a summary of the feed-back received from other students and add their own self-evaluation on their presentation.
4. In sessions where there is no student presenter, each student will bring a short piece of text to present to the group and lead a 10 minute discussion based on that text.
5. Each student will submit a one page proposal for their final research paper by Week 11.
6. Each student will act as rapporteur for two sessions, taking notes on the main ideas in the discussion for that session and summarizing them at the beginning of the next session.
7. There will be at least one random in-class test or quiz on basic facts in Tibetan history around mid-term, based on required readings.
8. The final paper will be a research paper of some 3,000 words in length requiring some basic library or similar research.

Grading

Grades will be assessed within your peer group – graduates will be assessed alongside other graduates, and undergraduates alongside other undergraduates. Assignments will be weighted as follows:

Midterm	Final	Presentation	Attendance	Postings
30%	45%	10%	5%	10%

Academic Integrity

This course is taught in the spirit of the guidelines for academic integrity of Columbia College, the School of General Studies, and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. All work should be the original work of

the student her or himself. Papers may be discussed with other members of the class but may not be copied in any part from the work of anyone else, including from printed or Internet sources.

Disability Support

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with Disability Services (DS). More information on the DS registration process is available online at www.health.columbia.edu/ods. Faculty must be notified of registered students' accommodations before exam or other accommodations will be provided. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact Disability Services for a confidential discussion at (212) 854-2388 (Voice/TTY) or by email at disability@columbia.edu.

Weekly Class Schedule

The readings will be available on the Courseworks site except for those marked with an *asterisk which will be available as photocopies. Each week students must read all the required readings and at least one of the optional readings. Presenters must read at least two of the optional readings for their week and produce a summary of their contents for the rest of the class.

Recommended Text (not required)

Tsering Shakya, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows: A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Session 1. Introductory Discussion: Defining the problem of study without access

How can we study a region or country where access is effectively impossible or heavily restricted? The introductory session discusses the general problem of identifying the methodologies that are typically used in this situation and asking what reliance can be placed on them. What lessons can be learnt from the different approaches of the anthropologist, the historian or the journalist?

Session 2. The Notion of the Closed Society and Theories of Close Reading

Lester, David. "Suicide and homicide in open and closed societies." *Psychological reports* 29.2 (1971): 430-430.

Wettersten, John. "Towards a new theory of the closed society." eds. Ian Jarvie, Karl Milford, and David Miller, *Karl Popper, A Centenary Assessment* 1 (2006): 251-262.

Götz, Norbert. "The Concept of Openness: Promise and Paradox." *The Paradox of Openness: Transparency and Participation in Nordic Cultures of Consensus* (2014): 10.

Jarvie, Ian. "Popper's Ideal types: open and closed, abstract and concrete societies." *Popper's open Society after fifty Years. The continuing Relevance of Karl Popper* (1999): 71-82.

Laclau, Ernesto. "The impossibility of society." *The Discourse Studies Reader: Main currents in theory and analysis* (2014): 122ff.

Fairclough, Norman, Jane Mulderrig, and Ruth Wodak. *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (2011): pp 1-14, 121-39

Rob Leurs, "The 'chain of equivalence'. Cultural studies and Laclau & Mouffe's discourse theory," *Politics and Culture*, November 9, 2009

<http://politicsandculture.org/2009/11/09/the-chain-of-equivalence-cultural-studies-and-laclau-mouffes-discourse-theory/>

Clifford Geertz, "Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture" in *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. Basic Books, New York, 1973, pp. 3-30

Session 3: Learning from the Soviet Case: Yurchak and the Anthropology of Cadre Studies

Yurchak, Alexei. *Everything was forever, until it was no more: The last Soviet generation*. Princeton University Press, 2013.

Alexei Yurchak (2003). Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45, pp 480-510. doi:10.1017/S0010417503000239. [Soviet hegemony of form: everything was forever, until it was no more](#)

Gonneau, Pierre. "The Many Deaths of Ivan the Terrible and Their Interpretations." *Mundo Eslavo* 13 (2014): 75-87.

Bulag, Uradyn E. "Contesting the Words that Wound: Ethnicity and the Politics of Sentiment in China." *Inner Asia* 10.1 (2008): 87-111.

Humphrey, Caroline. "The 'Creative Bureaucrat': Conflicts in the Production of Soviet Communist Party Discourse." *Inner Asia* 10.1 (2008): 5-35.

Ssorin-Chaikov, Nikolai. "The Black Box: Notes on the Anthropology of the Enemy." *Inner Asia* 10.1 (2008): 37-63.

Primary readings: Extracts of cadre diaries from the USSR (in Humphrey, above).

Session 4: The difficulties of interviews, “seeing” and journalistic method

Muhlmann, Géraldine. *Political History of Journalism*. Polity, 2008, pp -128

Phillip Knightley. *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker*, last chapter.

Schudson, Michael. "Question Authority: a history of the news interview in American journalism, 1860s–1930s." *Media, Culture & Society* 16.4 (1994): 565-587.

Lukin, Annabelle, David Butt, and Christian Matthiessen. "Reporting war: Grammar as 'covert operation'." *Pacific Journalism Review* 10.1 (2004): 58.

Shim, David. *Visual politics and North Korea: Seeing is believing*. Routledge, 2013, Introduction plus pp 47-57

Primary reading: Interview by US Researcher in Nepal about singing bowls in Tibet (from Barnett article on Oral History)

Session 5. The intelligence model and its failures

Karam, Jeffrey G. "Erik J. Dahl, Intelligence and Surprise Attack: Failure and Success from Pearl Harbor to 9/11 and Beyond." *Intelligence and National Security* ahead-of-print (2014): 1-5.

Seliktar, Ofira. *Politics, paradigms, and intelligence failures: why so few predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union*. ME Sharpe, 2004.

Thayer, Bradley A. "Intelligence in the cold war: what difference did it make?." *European Security* 23.4 (2014): 620-622.

Laqueur, Walter. *The terrible secret: an investigation into the suppression of information about Hitler's "final solution"*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980. Pp.1-25

Laqueur, Walter. *The uses and limits of intelligence*. Transaction Publishers, 1993. Pp. 1-13

Primary Reading: Interview with Ahmad Chalabi, Frontline, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saddam/interviews/chalabi.html>

Session 6. The practices of “China-watching”

Pan, Chengxin. *Knowledge, desire and power in global politics: Western representations of China's rise*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012, chapter 2.

Juergen Domes, “Preface”, Ladany, Laszlo. *Law and legality in China: the testament of a China-watcher*. University of Hawaii Press, 1992, pp. i-xii, 156-164

Mitchell, Peter M. "The Communist Party of China and Marxism, 1921–1985: A Self-Portrait. By Laszlo Ladany. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1988. xx, 588 pp. \$44.95." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48.01 (1989): 138-139.

Gittings, John. "China-watching in Hongkong." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 2.4 (1972): 415-430.

Leys, Simon. "China and the pundits." *Quadrant* 33.9 (1989): 8.

Buruma, Ian. "The Man Who Got It Right." *The Chesterton Review* 39.3/4 (2013): 249-260.

Moody, Peter R. "China-Watching and Political Theory: Jürgen Domes ... and Roderick MacFarquhar" *The Review of Politics* 37.01 (1975): 137-140.

Friedman, Edward. "Some political constraints on a political science: quantitative content analysis and the Indo-Chinese border crisis of 1962." *The China Quarterly* 63 (1975): 528-538.

Primary Reading: Ladany, Laszlo. *Law and legality in China: the testament of a China-watcher*. University of Hawaii Press, 1992, pp1-12.

Session 7. Contemporary efforts to use “Open Source” methodologies

OSD, Open Source Data. "OPEN SOURCE INTELLIGENCE." *Handbook of Electronic Security and Digital Forensics* (2010): 263.

Steele, R. "Open source intelligence." *Handbook of intelligence studies* (2007): 129-147.

Best, Clive. "Challenges in open source intelligence." *Intelligence and Security Informatics Conference (EISIC), 2011 European*. IEEE, 2011.

Hulnick, Arthur S. The Downside of Open Source Intelligence. *International journal of intelligence and counterintelligence* 15.4 Nov 2002: 565-579. Intel Pub. Group. 07 Mar 2015.

Abbott, Jason. "Democracy@ internet. org Revisited: analysing the socio-political impact of the internet and new social media in East Asia." *Third World Quarterly* 33.2 (2012): 333-357.

Cohen, Yoel. "Foreign press corps as an indicator of international news interest." *International Communication Gazette* 56.2 (1996): 89-100.

Primary Reading: A translation of a speech on a PRC government-run radio station or news agency from FBIS.

Session 8. Case Study – Tibet context and background, and the historical approach to text

Kapstein, Matthew T. *The Tibetans*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013, chapter 7.

Melvyn Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein (eds.), *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet – Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, Berkeley: University of California, 1998, introduction.

Barnett, Robert. "Tibet." *Politics in China*, ed. William Joseph. NY: Oxford University Press (2010), pp. 401-27

Emily Yeh, *Taming Tibet*, Columbia 2014, chapter 6

Sautman, Barry, and Irene Eng. "Tibet Development for Whom?" *China Information* 15.2 (2001): 20-74.

Primary reading: The 17-Point Agreement of May 23rd, 1951, and Hu Yaobang’s 6-Point Speech of May 23rd, 1980.

Session 9. Tibet - Reading and interpreting official documents

Barnett, Robert. "Language and Ethnicity: Cadre-Speak in Contemporary Tibet." *Inner Asia* 10.1 (2008): 171-206.

Primary Readings: Chen Kuiyuan, “Speech on Literature and Art”, delivered 11th July 1997; as published by *Xizang Ribao* (“Tibet Daily”), Lhasa, 16th July 1997; published in translation as “Tibet party secretary criticizes "erroneous views" of literature, art” in *The BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 4th August 1997

Chen Kuiyuan, *Lantian baixue* (“Blue Sky, White Snow”), Beijing Chubanshe, Beijing, 1999 (selections in translation will be provided)

Chen Jingbo, “The Advance Party to Tibet and the Work of the United Front (Part I)” in *Bulletin of the History of the Tibet Communist Party*, Volume 1, 1988 (General Series No.19), pp. 7. Published 5 January 1988 [TIN Ref: Doc 20(ZY)p7]. Read pp. 1-6, 11-18.

Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, “Facts about the 1959 Rebellion”, in Hu Tan (ed.), *Theses on Tibetology in China*, China Tibetology Publishing House, Beijing, 1991, pp. 439-444 (or Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, “The True Facts of the 10 March 1959 Event”, *China Tibetology*, 2, Beijing, 1988).

“Interview with Jigme Namgyal”, Lhasa, August 1997. Published in French as “Postface. Témoignage de Jigmé Namgyèl” {Afterword: Testimony of Jigme Namgyal), in Katia Buffetrille and Charles Ramble (eds.), *Tibétains: 1959-1999, quarante ans de colonisation*, Editions Autrement No. 108, Paris, 1998, pp.163-9.

Tang Xiaoming, “Druju- Herdsman’s Secretary in Northern Tibet,” *China’s Tibet*, Vol. 25, 2014.2, pp. 38-42.

Session 10. The Tibet Gyama Landslide of 2013: Using Google Earth

Goodchild, Michael F. "What does google earth mean for the social sciences?." *Geographic Visualization: Concepts, Tools and Applications* (2008): 11-23.

Patterson, Todd C. "Google Earth as a (not just) geography education tool." *Journal of Geography* 106.4 (2007): 145-152.

Farman, Jason. "Mapping the digital empire: Google Earth and the process of postmodern cartography." *New Media & Society* (2010).

Wong, Edward. “Fatal Landslide Draws Attention to the Toll of Mining on Tibet,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2013

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/03/world/asia/deadly-tibetan-landslide-draws-attention-to-mining.html?_r=0
13 April 2013

Dave Petley, “So was the Tibet landslide, which killed 83 people, really “natural”? You be the judge”.

<http://blogs.agu.org/landslideblog/2013/04/13/so-was-the-tibet-landslide-which-killed-83-people-really-natural-you-be-the-judge/> April 13, 2013.

Primary Reading: Xinhua, “Loose rocks trigger deadly Tibetan landslide: geologist,” April 2, 2013.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-04/02/c_132279380.htm.

Session 11. Case Study – Xinjiang

Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, American Geographical Society Research Studies No. 21, 1940, pp.187-197

Bovington, Garner. "Xinjiang." *Politics in China*, ed. William Joseph. NY: Oxford University Press (2010), pp. 428-52

James Millward, "Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment", Policy Studies 6, East-West Center, Washington, 2004, pp 2-10

Dru C. Gladney, “China’s Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Internal Colonialism: The Case of the Uyghur Muslim Minority”, *Harvard Asia Pacific Review*. “Whither the Uighur?” Winter ‘98-’99. Vol. 3, No 1. Pp. 11-16.

Nathan Light, "Cultural Politics and the Pragmatics of Resistance: Reflexive Discourses on Culture and History" in Ildikó Bellér-Hann, M. Cristina Cesaro, Rachel Harris and Joanne Smith Finley (eds.), *Situating the Uyghurs Between China and Central Asia*, Ashgate 2007, 49-68.

Primary Readings: Videos of New Year (Spring Festival) television shows featuring Uighur performers.

Session 12. Case Study - North Korea

Guest Speakers: Barbara Demick and Lina Bragado

Cha, Victor. *Nuclear North Korea : a debate on engagement strategies*. New York : Columbia University Press, c2003.

Haggard, Stephan, and Marcus Noland. *Famine in North Korea: Markets, aid, and reform*. Columbia University Press, 2007.

Demick, Barbara. *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2009 (extracts)
Oh, Kong Dan, and Ralph C. Hassig. "North Korea through the looking glass." Brookings Institution Press, 2004.

Lewis, Jeffrey. "Huis Clos: The Limits of Understanding North Korean Decisionmaking." *Asia Policy* 13.1 (2012): 171-174.

Sang-Hun, Choe. "N. Koreans use cellphones to bare secrets." *The New York Times* (2010).

Primary Readings: Selection of official texts from within North Korea made by the guest speakers

Session 13. Case Study – Vietnam

Guest Speaker: Anya Schiffrin and Mary Park

Kingsbury, Damien. *South-East Asia : a political profile*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001.

Stuart-Fox, Martin. A history of Laos. Cambridge University Press, 1997. Desbarats, Jacqueline, and Karl D. Jackson. "Vietnam 1975–1982: The Cruel Peace." *The Washington Quarterly* 8.4 (1985): 169-182.

Hayton, Bill. *Vietnam, Rising Dragon*. Yale: Yale University Press, 2010.

Hallin, Daniel C. *The uncensored war: The media and Vietnam*. Univ of California Press, 1989.

Mottaz, Laura. "New media in closed societies: The role of digital technologies in Burma's Saffron Revolution." *Democracy & Society* 7.2 (2010): 23-25. <http://www.democracyandsociety.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/MottazSaffronRevolution7.22.pdf>

Primary Readings: Selection of official texts from within Vietnam made by the guest speakers

Session 14. Student Presentations: outline presentations for the final research paper and analyses of selected primary texts.