

China and Africa: Global Encounters in History and Present

PKU Summer School International 2021

Instructors: Liang Xu (许亮), Ying Cheng (程莹)

Course level: Undergraduate/graduate students

Course Credit: 3 (two weeks)

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Course Description

The twenty-first century has witnessed unprecedented growth of economic cooperation between African countries and China. Achille Mbembe, a prominent African political philosopher, once proclaims that Africa-China will become the most important “material relations” in global capitalism. Over the last two decades, China’s accelerating influence on the African continent has raised a host of questions. Is Africa China’s second continent? How do African states and African people respond to opportunities and challenges posed by China’s presence? Is China a development model for Africa? Are Chinese people racist? How much soft power does China have in Africa? How do China and Africa portray each other in arts and literatures?

To address these questions, our course focuses on both the material and nonmaterial dimensions of this fast-developing relationship. On the one hand, we will challenge the often-skewed treatment of China in Africa as a unitary presence by looking closely at three different levels of engagement: the state and the state-owned enterprises, medium and small sized private companies, and the grassroots adventurers and migrants. On the other hand, we will examine China-Africa relations through the lenses of popular media, moving images, contemporary arts, and literary texts. It is our firm belief that the representation and construction of identity and otherness is an essential component of everyday life that fundamentally shapes our experience, perception, and even prejudice in cross-cultural communications and encounters. In this course we will explore:

- The history and the present state of China-Africa relations,
- key myths and rumors about China’s involvement in Africa,
- preliminary development impacts of China’s presence on the continent,
- the role of migration and migrants in China-Africa engagement,
- and the relevance of media, film, art, and literature in contemporary China-Africa relations.

By thinking critically about China-Africa engagement, we hope that our students will become better observers of the globalized world. It is our contention that China-Africa is by no means an Afroasian story only; more profoundly, it is a story of global encounters. Through the use of academic, journalistic, and various visual evidence, we help students to interrogate and gain deeper understanding of key themes such as state and development, race and gender, culture and capitalism, and diaspora and globalization. Ultimately, we hope that students will apply such conceptual tools in their lives beyond school.

Pre-requisites /Target audience: N/A

Assignments and Exams (essay or other forms)

The class will meet virtually on Zoom. Student participants are expected to have read the assigned readings before coming to class and engage in class discussions. Students will be asked to write a five-page response essay on any discussion topic and present it in class. There will be a written exam for the course at the end. Detailed instructions regarding the essay and exam will be announced in class.

Evaluation Details

Evaluation details are as follows:

λ Class Participation: 30%

λ Response Essay: 20%

λ Final exam: 40%

Textbooks and Reading Materials

The course does not require any textbooks. All reading materials will be made available in electronic copies.

CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to adjustment)

Week 1	Mon (July 5)	Tue (July 6)	Wed (July 7)	Thu (July 8)	Fri (July 9)
9: 00 am – 12:00 pm	Session 1 (Lecture) Study China-Africa: Why and How?	Session 2 (Lecture) Place China-Africa in Context: Does History Matter?	Session 4 (Lecture) A Silent Invasion? From Coolie Trade to New Waves of Chinese Migration in Africa	Session 6 (Lecture) China, African Security, and Developmental Peace	Session 8 (Lecture) Rethinking China’s Soft Power – The Pragmatic Enticement of Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm		Session 3 (Discussion) Are Chinese People Racist? Rethinking Race, Gender, and Culture	Session 5 (Discussion) Documentary Screening and Discussion: <i>Guangzhou Dream Factory</i>	Session 7 (Discussion) Film Screening and Discussion: <i>Wolf Warrior II</i>	Session 9 (Discussion) How Much Soft Power Does China Have in Africa? China-Africa Media Engagement
Week 2	Mon (July 12)	Tue (July 13)	Wed (July 14)	Thu (July 15)	Fri (July 16)
9: 00 am – 12:00 pm	Session 10 (Lecture) China-Africa Industrial Cooperation: Bulldozer or Locomotive?	Session 12 (Lecture) China-Africa Cooperation in Public Health	Session 14 (Lecture) Tracing Africa-China in Moving Images and Literary Representations	Session 15 (Lecture) “The Agency of Arts”: Interrogating “Chinafrica” in Contemporary African Arts	Session 16 (Lecture) Conclusion and Student Presentations
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Session 11 (Discussion) Documentary and Discussion: TAZARA Railway and Chinese Infrastructure in Africa	Session 13 (Discussion) Will Africa Feed China? China’s “Land Grab” in Africa	(Time to prepare essay & exam)	(Essay submission)	Final Exam (2pm-4pm)

Session 1 Study China-Africa: Why and How?

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

This session gives a snapshot of the current state of China-Africa relations and highlights the importance of studying China-Africa relations. By revisiting some of the major myths and debates over China’s presence in Africa, this session attempts to present a more objective and complex story of China-Africa than is often reported in the media.

【Questions】

What are some of the current debates on China-Africa relations?
Why should we study China-Africa relations? And how?

[Readings, Websites or Video Clips]

Required reading:

Deborah Brautigam. 2009. *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 273-306.

Chris Alden and Lu Jiang. 2019. "Brave New World: Debt, Industrialization and Security in China–Africa Relations." *International Affairs* 95 (3), pp. 641-657.

Further reading:

Chris Alden. 2007. *China in Africa*. London: Zed Books, pp. 8-36.

Jamie Monson and Stephanie Rupp. 2013. "Africa and China: New Engagements, New Research," *African Studies Review* 56 (1), pp. 21-44.

Keguro Macharia. "Visiting Africa: A Short Guide for Researchers."

<https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/visiting-africa-a-short-guide-for-researchers/>

Binyavanga Wainaina. "How to Write about Africa." <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>

Session 2 Place China-Africa in Context: Does History Matter?

[Description of the Session] (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

This session places China-Africa encounter in historical contexts, from the earliest trade routes to Zheng He's famous voyages, from the Bandung moment to the popularity of Maoism on the continent. The goal is not to push the students to digest historical details but ask them to reflect how the past has been remembered, re-emphasized, and reinvented in the present. For instance, why do Chinese leaders keep referring back to history when they talk about China-Africa relations? What are the political afterlives of the Bandung Moment? Do Africans and Chinese perceive their "shared" past differently?

[Questions]

How do we periodize the history of China-Africa relations?

Whether and how is China's Africa policy shaped by history?

[Readings, Websites or Video Clips]

Required reading:

Philip Snow. 1988. *The Star Raft: China's Encounter with Africa*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, pp. 69-104, 144-185.

Christopher Lee. 2010. *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*. Athens: Ohio University Press, pp. 1-32, 235-265.

Further reading:

Anshan Li. 2012. *A History of Overseas Chinese in Africa to 1911*. New York: Diasporic Africa Press, pp. 17-54. The original Chinese version is provided in PDF as well.

Jamie Monson. 2009. *Africa's Freedom Railway*. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, read Chapters 3 and 4.

Julia C. Strauss. 2009. "The Past in the Present: Historical and Rhetorical Lineages in China's Relations with Africa." *China Quarterly* 199, pp. 777-795.

Priyal Lal. 2014. "Maoism in Tanzania: Material Connections and Shared Imaginaries." In Alexander Cook ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Session 3 (Discussion) Are Chinese People Racist? Rethinking Race, Gender, and Culture

[Description of the Session] (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

This session invites the students to participate in the discussion of the question – "Are Chinese People Racist?" We ask the students to reflect on the history of race discourse in China and comment on recent examples/incidents of racial discrimination in contemporary China. Ultimately, we will encourage students to ask: what should be done to address the issue of racism in China?

Session 4 A Silent Invasion? From Coolie Trade to New Waves of Chinese Migration in Africa

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

Migration has become an expansive and important theme in the discussion of China-Africa relations. This session introduces the history and current state of Chinese migration in Africa. It will examine three major waves of Chinese migration to Africa: the coolie trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, the arrival of Chinese industrialists in the 1960s to the 1980s, and the more recent wave of Chinese migration beginning in the 1990s. Are a million Chinese migrants building a new empire in Africa, as one popular book suggests? How do local Africans perceive the presence of Chinese immigrants? What are the main categories of Chinese diasporic spaces in Africa?

【Questions】

What are the three major waves of Chinese migration to Africa?

How do local Africans perceive the presence of Chinese immigrants?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Required reading:

Yoon Jung Park. 2009. "Chinese Migration in Africa." Occasional Paper No. 24, South African Institute for International Affairs. Johannesburg: SAIIA.

Yoon Jung Park. 2013. "Perceptions of Chinese in Southern Africa. Constructions of the 'Other' and the Role of Memory." *African Studies Review* 56 (1), pp. 131-153.

Further reading:

Melanie Yap and Dianne Leong Man. 1996. *Colour, Confusion and Concessions: The History of the Chinese in South Africa*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, read Chapter 5.

Rachel Bright. 2013. *Chinese Labor in South Africa, 1902-10: Race, Violence, and Global Spectacle*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 95-140.

L. M. van der Watt and W. P. Visser. 2008. "Made in South Africa: A Social History of the Chinese in Bloemfontein, Free State Province, South Africa, ca. 1980-2005." *Journal for Contemporary History* 33, pp. 121-142.

Philip Harrison, Khangelani Moyo, and Yan Yang. 2013. "Strategy and Tactics: Chinese Immigrants and Diasporic Spaces in Johannesburg, South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38 (4), pp. 899-925.

Session 5 (Discussion) Documentary Screening and Discussion: *Guangzhou Dream Factory*

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

In this session, we will watch *Guangzhou Dream Factory*, a documentary about Africans in Guangzhou. After screening, we will have a follow-up discussion on the current state of African migrants in China as well as their challenges.

Session 6: China, African Security, and Developmental Peace

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

The rise of China as a global power and its deepening engagement in African economies has thrust security to the forefront of its Africa policy. The session focuses on the changing divers and challenges of China's security engagement and examines the roles of different actors (the military and non-state actors) in China's security engagement in Africa. We will invite Lina Benabdallah, Assistant Professor at Wake Forest University and a leading expert on China-Africa security engagement to give a lecture on the "development-security nexus" and analyze whether China has brought new norms into international peace and security practices.

【Questions】

What are the major drivers of China's security engagement in Africa?

What is "development-security nexus"?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Required reading:

Xue Lei. 2017. "China's Development-Oriented Peacekeeping Strategy in Africa." In Chris Alden et al. eds., *China and Africa: Building Peace and Security Cooperation on the Continent*. Palgrave Macmillan US, pp. 83-99.

Lina Benabdallah and Daniel Large. 2020. "Development, Security, and China's Evolving Role in Mali." CARI Working Paper No. 40, SAIS, Johns Hopkins University.

Further reading:

Lina Benabdallah and Daniel Large. 2019. "China and African Security." In Chris Alden and Daniel Large eds., *New Directions in Africa-China Studies*. Routledge.

Chris Alden and Daniel Large. 2015. "On Becoming a Norms Maker: Chinese Foreign Policy, Norms Evolution and the Challenges of Security in Africa." *China Quarterly* 221, pp. 123-142.

Illaria Carrozza, "Chinese Diplomacy in Africa: Constructing the Security-Development Nexus," link: <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/04/07/chinese-diplomacy-in-africa-constructing-the-security-development-nexus/>

Duchatel's Ecfreport, "Into Africa: China's global security shift,"

link https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/into_africa_chinas_global_security_shift.

Session 7 (Discussion) Film Screening and Discussion: *Wolf Warrior II*

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

In this session, we will watch *Wolf Warrior II*, a film about Chinese military engagement in Africa. After screening, we will have a follow-up discussion on the current state and changing dynamics of China's military engagement in Africa and the challenges for China to protect its overseas interests on the continent.

Session 8 Rethinking China's Soft Power – The Pragmatic Enticement of Confucius Institutes in Ethiopia

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

As China expands its economic cooperation with Africa, China also begins to promote its "soft power" in the continent through media engagement and the state-sponsored Confucius Institutes. During this session, we will invite Professor Maria Repnikova from Georgia State University to speak on China's soft power in Africa, with a particular focus on Confucius Institutes (CIs). Her talk will challenge the popular imagery of CIs as controversial and ideological by illuminating their practical offerings in developing contexts. Specifically, through the case study of Ethiopia, the presentation demonstrates that China's fusion of practical or tangible benefits with language and cultural promotion invokes support from key participants, including university administrators, students, and Chinese teachers. At the same time, the apparent gaps between rising expectations of Ethiopian administrators and students and the limited resources on the ground, present a challenge for the sustainability of CIs in Ethiopia and beyond.

【Questions】

What is Confucius Institute?

How shall we evaluate and compare China's "soft power" with other powers' "soft power" in Africa?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Readings suggested by the speaker:

Jennifer Hubbert. 2019. *China in the World: An Anthropology of Confucius Institutes, Soft Power, and Globalization*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, read Chapter 3 "Coolness and Magic Bullets," pp. 45-73.

Anita Wheeler. 2014. "Cultural Diplomacy, Language Planning, and the Case of the University of Nairobi Confucius Institute." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 49 (1), pp. 49-63.

Don Starr. 2009. "Chinese Language Education in Europe: The Confucius Institutes." *European Journal of Education* 44 (1), pp. 65-82.

Session 9 (Discussion) How Much Soft Power Does China Have in Africa? China-Africa Media Engagement

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

Recent years have seen the presence of Chinese media and telecommunication companies in Africa. Besides providing digital TV services and global news channels, Chinese TV series and films have been translated and broadcasted in more than 40 African countries. In this session, we will discuss China's media engagement in Africa, with a focus on both the state media and private media companies, and ask whether China's media engagement has increased its soft power in African countries.

Session 10 China-Africa Industrial Cooperation: Bulldozer or Locomotive?

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

This session discusses industrial cooperation, one of the most important trends in China-Africa relations. With the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative and as China is undergoing industrial upgrades domestically, China is expected to export massive industrial and infrastructural investment to Africa. This session will help the students to understand both the opportunities and the hard choices Africa faces in the realm of industrialization.

【Questions】

What does the rise of China do for industrialization in Africa?

Will Africa become the next factory of the world?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Required reading:

Irene Yuan Sun. 2017. "The World's Next Great Manufacturing Center." *Harvard Business Review*, May-June Issue.

Carlos Oya and Florian Schaefer. 2019. "Chinese Firms and Employment Dynamics in Africa: A Comparative Analysis." IDCEA Research Synthesis Report, SOAS, University of London.

Further reading:

Justin Yifu Lin. 2015. "China's Rise and Structural Transformation in Africa: Ideas and Opportunities." In Celestin Monga and Justin Yifu Lin eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Africa and Economics, Volume II: Policies and Practices*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

林毅夫: 《中国的崛起和非洲的机遇》, 《中国非洲研究评论 2013》, 第 19-33 页。

Peter Hessler. 2015. "Learning to Speak Lingerie: Chinese Merchants and the Inroads of Globalization." *New Yorker*, August 10-17.

Liang Xu. 2019. "Factory, Family, and Industrial Frontier." *Economic History of Developing Regions* 34 (3), pp. 300-319.

Raphael Kaplinsky. 2008. "What Does the Rise of China Do for Industrialization in Sub-Saharan Africa?" *Review of African Political Economy* 35, pp. 7-22.

Session 11 (Discussion) Documentary Screening and Discussion: TAZARA Railway and Chinese Infrastructure in Africa

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

In this session, we will watch a documentary film about TAZARA Railway. After screening, we will have a follow-up discussion on Chinese infrastructure diplomacies and practices in Africa. We will discuss both the developmental impact and the various challenges of these infrastructural projects.

Session 12: China-Africa Cooperation in Public Health

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

In this session, we will invite Dr. Yunping Wang, a senior expert on global health from China National Health Development Research Center to come and give a lecture on China-Africa cooperation in public

health. Dr. Wang will give an overview of the history of China-Africa cooperation in public health and then focus on how China and Africa have collaborated during their fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

【Questions】

What can we learn from the history of China-Africa cooperation in health?

What are the achievements and challenges of China-Africa cooperation against Covid-19?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Required reading:

Anshan Li. 2011. "Chinese Medical Cooperation in Africa." Discussion Paper No. 52, Nordiska Afrika Institutet, Uppsala.

Deborah Brautigam. 2011. "U. S. and Chinese Efforts in Africa in Global Health and Foreign Aid: Objectives, Impact, and Potential Conflicts of Interest." In Charles W. Freeman and Xiaoqing Lu Boynton eds., *China's Emerging Global Health and Foreign Aid Engagement in Africa*. Washington, D. C: Center for Strategic and International Studies, pp. 1-12.

Further reading:

Peilong Liu et al. 2014. "China's Distinctive Engagement in Global Health." *Lancet* 384, pp. 793-802.

邱泽奇: 《朋友在先: 中国对乌干达卫生发展援助案例研究》, 北京: 社会科学出版社, 2017 年。

Read Chapter 6.

Session 13 (Discussion) Will Africa Feed China? China's "Land Grab" in Africa

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

Over the last 20 years, there has been repeated discussion on China's "land grab" in Africa. This discussion session interrogates such allegations by using evidence-based research. We will also use a couple of cases and ask students to analyze the success and challenges in China-Africa agricultural cooperation. The ultimate question is how Africa can embark on a sustainable path for agricultural development.

Session 14 Tracing Africa-China in Moving Images and Literary Representations

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

This session shifts from state-owned media to independently or individually produced media products such as Nollywood films and "Quaishou" short videos. We will examine how these popular moving images might provide a more nuanced understanding of China-Africa media interactions beyond the top-down approach often privileged in most international relation studies, and point toward the contested or fluid nature of engagements and perceptions.

【Questions】

What is the current state of Nollywood films?

How otherness is constructed through moving images and literary representations?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Required reading:

Cobus van Staden. 2017. "Watching Hong Kong Martial Arts Film under Apartheid." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 29 (11), pp. 46-62.

Alessandro Jedlowski & Michael W. Thomas. 2017. "Representing 'Otherness' in African Popular Media: Chinese Characters in Ethiopian Video-films." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 29 (1), pp. 63-80.

Film Screening: Nollywood Film (2016) *Receive Your China Visa*.

Further reading:

Karen Thornber. 2016. "Breaking Discipline, Integrating Literature: Africa-China Relationships Reconsidered." *Comparative Literature Studies* 53 (4): 4, 2016, pp. 694-721.

Alessandro Jedlowski, "The Afterlife of Kung Fu Films in Abidjan" (Forthcoming publication)

Roberto Castillo. "Of 'blackfaces' and SinoAfrican modernities"

<https://africansinchina.net/2018/03/07/opinion-blackface-and-sinoafrican-modernities/>

Abderrahmane Sissako, *Waiting for Happiness* (2002, Original title: Heremakono) (Excerpt)

Session 15 "The Agency of Arts": Interrogating "Chinafrica" ("中非") in Contemporary African Arts

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

Unlike many other existing dialogues that focus on the economic and political impact of the China-Africa relationship, the artistic practices discussed in this session deal with the sociological and cultural consequences of increased connections and exchanges between China and Africa. We will examine how visual and performance artists respond to or comment on China's presence in Africa and suggest a possibility of understanding artistic practices as an alternative way of knowledge production and intervention in the context of Africa-China interactions.

【Questions】

How China-Africa is represented in African visual and performance arts? How is it different from other forms of representation?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Required reading:

Ruth Simbao. 2018. "When 'African Art' Meets 'China-Africa': Space-Time Imaginaries and a Pursuit for New Scripts." Keynote Speech at International Workshop on "Rethinking Third World", Hangzhou, China.

William Kentridge. 2015. "Peripheral Thinking." In William Kentridge: Notes towards a Model Opera, edited by Karen Marta, 81-152. Beijing: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art; London: Koenig Books.

Exhibition Catalogue. 2012. "Making Way: Contemporary Art from South Africa & China"

Video Screening: William Kentridge (2015) Notes Toward a Model Opera

Further reading:

Cheng Ying. 2018. "'The Bag is My Home': Recycling China Bags in Contemporary African Arts," *African Arts* 51(2), pp. 18-31.

Olu Oguibe. 2015. "Samuel Fosso: Emperor of Africa" <https://aperture.org/blog/samuel-fosso-emperor-africa/>

Mary Pettas. 2016. "A 'Natural' Alliance Between Kenyan And Chinese Artists Flourishes In Venice" <https://theculturetrip.com/africa/kenya/articles/a-natural-alliance-between-kenyan-and-chinese-artists-flourishes-in-venice/>

Abdi Latif Dahir. 2018. "A Kenyan painter's art questions China's deepening reach in Africa" <https://qz.com/africa/1343155/michael-soi-china-loves-africa-paintings-question-chinas-influence-in-africa/>

Session 16 Conclusion and Student Presentations

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

During this last session, we invite the students to join us in reflecting and digesting what has been discussed in the course. Students are expected to prepare a short slides presentation to introduce their essays. In particular, we encourage the students to ponder to what extent the China-Africa story covered in this course gesture toward something broader about the third world, the global south, and the forms of life and systems of meaning that affect all.

【Questions】

Does the course help you change the ways in which you perceive Africa and our world? How?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Required reading:

Ching Kwan Lee. 2017. *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, pp. 152-166.

Ruth Simbao. 2019. "Pushing against China-Africa slowly, and with small stories." *Something We Africans Got* 7, pp. 228-233.

Further reading:

Curtis Stone. 2018. "The Fundamental Difference Between China's and the West's Policy Toward Africa." *People's Daily* September 4, 2018.

James Ferguson. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, read Chapter 1.

Giles Mohan. 2013. "Beyond the Enclave: Towards a Critical Political Economy of China and Africa," *Development and Change* 44 (6): 1255-72.

Julia C. Strauss. 2013. "China and Africa Rebooted: Globalization(s), Simplification(s), and Cross-cutting Dynamics in 'South-South' Relations." *African Studies Review* 56 (1), pp. 155-170.