# Chinese language and culture

## Prof. Natalia Francesca Riva

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The aim of this course is to introduce key aspects of modern Chinese language and culture to students **with no prior knowledge of China and the Chinese language**.

In regards to Chinese culture, China’s current realities will be analyzed in light of the country’s long history and deep-rooted civilization. A particular focus will also be placed on 20th century-China in order to follow the path of the historical evolutions and profound transformations that led the country to the achievement of its current status of a major global power.

At the end of the course, the students will be able to develop logical connections around the events and phenomena studied. In addition, they will develop critical and communicative skills through classroom discussions and presentations. They will be able to discuss topics such as: China’s historical, geographical, demographic, and administrative settings; issues related to Chinese traditional, modern, and contemporary culture; China’s society and social change; China’s economic development; and China’s Party-State system.

In regards to the Chinese language, they will learn its history, evolution, and characteristics as well as the fundamentals of language use (writing, reading, listening, speaking). They will practice daily conversations, covering the following communicative functions:

* How to say hello and goodbye
* Introducing oneself
* Asking someone’s name and surname
* Identifying people and using titles
* Asking someone’s nationality
* Asking polite questions
* Adjectives
* Possessives
* Using numbers
* Talking about dates
* Telling time
* Phone numbers
* Asking prices
* Asking what someone wants
* Asking for permission
* Looking for someone
* Asking for directions
* Expressing thanks
* Refusing politely
* Making comments and suggestions

At the end of the course, the students will be able to write, read, listen, and speak the fundamentals of the Chinese language at the basic level.

***COURSE CONTENT***

* Introduction to China: historical and geographical background; ethnic and linguistic variety.
* China’s traditional culture, philosophical systems, and values, and how they inform the present.
* Modern and contemporary China: cultural, economic, and political dimensions, and key institutions.
* Domestic and foreign policy challenges that China faces today.
* Characteristics of Chinese, Chinese dialects, and the languages of China.
* Chinese phonetic system and writing system.
* Basic Chinese dialogues and daily conversations.

***READING LIST***

K. Brown, *Contemporary China.* Macmillan International Higher Education, 2019 (Third Edition).

Language practice materials will be provided by the teacher.

Multimedia materials will also be used for language instruction.

In preparation for class discussions, attending students will be asked to:

read assigned papers and articles;

watch assigned movies and documentaries;

listen to assigned podcasts;

partecipate in conferences suggested by the teacher in due time.

Additional study materials will be indicated during the teaching period.

Non-attending students are required to agree upon a specific program with the teacher.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Theoretical and practical lessons, lectures, and seminars.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Partial written test for attending students, held at the end of the first semester and covering the culture-related content studied in the first half of the course. The partial test is not compulsory and consists in 5 open-ended questions.

Final oral exam for all, divided into two parts: one covering culture-related content and consisting in 2-3 questions; and one testing language and Chinese-English translation, and viceversa, through reading and speaking exercises.

Further information regarding the assessment methods and criteria will be given by the teacher during the course.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Attendance is highly recommended. The teacher’s office hours will be announced at the beginning of the course.

In case the evolution of Covid-19 pandemic does not allow teaching in presence, online lectures and distance learning will be guaranteed. Channels and modalities will be communicated in due time to all students.