

GEOG 4070 – China Field School

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Instructors: Dr. Pinliang Dong (pdong@unt.edu, phone: 940-565-2377)
Dr. Feifei Pan (Feifei.Pan@unt.edu, phone: 940-369-5109)
Department of Geography, University of North Texas, Denton, TX 76203.

Prerequisites

GEOG 1710 (Earth Science) or GEOG 2180 (Geosystems, Environment, and Society), or consent of the department.

Description

6 hours. Students will develop skills in field observation, analysis, and interpretation for a variety of geographical, geological, and environmental problems, experience diverse landscapes and cultures in China, and visit Chinese national research institutes in geography, resources and environment, and geospatial technologies. The China Field School teaches field skills through visits to four sites: Beijing, Kunming, Dali, and Lijiang. Exercises emphasize the implementation of field skills in an applied geography context.

Objectives

Location, place, human-environment interaction, movement, and region are the five themes of geography. For undergraduate and graduate students, knowing about our planet and its people is an important aspect of geography education. With a rapidly growing economy and as the most populous nation in the world, China faces great challenges in addressing problems in population, resources, and environment. These challenges will in turn impact many worldwide problems. As a study abroad program, the China Field School covers several topics in physical geography, human geography, and environmental science. The study site in Beijing will provide general information about China's landform, climate, natural resources, and population, while the study sites in Yunnan Province will allow students to develop field observation, analysis, and interpretation skills. Moreover, the geographical location of Yunnan Province will allow students to better understand several important issues in Southeast Asia, such as environmental protection, international rivers, and water resources.

Grading

Grades are based on participation (30%) and a final project (70%).

Participation will be measured by attendance in activities; inputs in group discussions and field observations; and responsibility and flexibility in relations with classmates and instructors.

Final Project: Each student will choose an independent research project on a topic related to geographical, geological, or other environmental issues or problems identified in China. Students can apply different approaches including literature review, field observation and data analysis to develop their own solutions to the environmental problems or issues in China. After students return from China, they will have one week to complete their final projects.

Schedule

The schedule includes classroom instructions before the field trip, and daily discussions/meetings during the field trip.

- Day 1 (5/25, Sat): Afternoon arrival in Beijing. Transfer to hotel.
- Day 2 (5/26, Sun): Cultural activities in Beijing: Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, and Temple of Heaven.
- Day 3 (5/27, Mon): Three steps of landforms in China: field trip to the Great Wall.
- Day 4 (5/28, Tue): Visit two research institutes at the Chinese Academy of Sciences: (1) Geography; (2) Remote Sensing and Digital Earth.
- Day 5 (5/29, Wed): Morning: Beijing → Kunming (3 hours 20 minutes). Afternoon: visit the Yunnan Ethnic Village (culture and architecture of 25 ethnic groups in Yunnan Province).
- Day 6 (5/30, Thu): Urban planning and environmental issues in Kunming – wetlands and water quality protection; visit Yunnan University.
- Day 7 (5/31, Fri): Himalayan tectonic belt, active faults, graben basins, and karst topography: Field trip to Yangzong Lake, Tangchi Hot Springs, and Stone Forest (karst topography).
- Day 8: (6/1, Sat) Free day in Kunming.
- Day 9 (6/2, Sun): Kunming → Dali (250 freeway miles, air-conditioned tourist bus). Stop at the Lufeng World Dinosaur Valley. Stay at the Old Dali Town between Erhai Lake and Cangshan Mountains.
- Day 10: (6/3, Mon) Three parallel rivers of Yunnan: (1) Jinsha River (Upper Yangtze); (2) Lancang River (Upper Mekong); and (3) Nujiang River (Salween River). Field trip to Lancang River (Upper Mekong); water quality and wetlands of Erhai Lake.
- Day 11: (6/4, Tue) Dali → Lijiang (120 freeway miles, air-conditioned tourist bus). Stop at Xinhua Village (silver mining, silverware production and sales). Dongba Culture and Hieroglyphs.
- Day 12: (6/5, Wed) Free day in Lijiang (Naxi daily life: folk dance and music, food, language, and hieroglyphs).
- Day 13: (6/6, Thu) Field trip to the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (glacier retreat and global climate change).
- Day 14: (6/7, Fri) Lijiang → Kunming (370 miles, air-conditioned tourist bus).
- Day 15: (6/8, Sat) Kunming → Beijing
- Day 16: (6/9, Sun) Beijing → Dallas (or personal travel in China).
- One week after Day 16: Final project report is due.