

History Programme
Academic Year 2019-2020, Semester 2

HH3003
Migration and Diaspora:
Chinese Experiences in Comparative Perspective

Academic Units: 3 AUs
Instructor: Asst. Prof. Els van Dongen
Time and Venue: Tuesdays, 13.30-16.30, TR+80

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Content

“Diaspora” has become a buzzword in the last decades—with scholars referring to the proliferation of the term as a “diaspora diaspora”—but what do we mean when we talk about “diaspora”? Is there such a thing as a “Chinese diaspora”? And why do some use terms such as “overseas Chinese” and “Chinese overseas” instead? In this course, we will critically engage with different research paradigms to study the movement of Chinese to Southeast Asia, the Americas and Europe.

We will first outline the broader historical patterns of migration, focusing on traders in Southeast Asia, mass migration since the mid-nineteenth century, migration after 1945, and the rise of the “new migrants” after 1978. Following this, we will look at distinct migration patterns in more detail: why and when did Chinese migrate to Southeast Asia, the Americas, and Europe? Apart from local and global factors, what policies existed in host societies (and in China) and how did this affect the formation of Chinese communities? This brings us to the third area of concern, namely the organizational aspects of the Chinese communities: what were the principles behind community organizations? How did they materialize in different contexts? And how did they change over time? Finally, we will look into questions of identity and representation through media such as film, TV series, and literature. Throughout the course, we will engage with various types of primary sources, such as cartoons, photographs, novels, films, magazines, and historical artefacts.

Learning Objectives

- Investigate and explain the basic historical and geographical patterns of Chinese migration and how they relate to broader regional and global restructuring and other migration patterns;
- Compare and contrast research paradigms such as “diaspora,” “migration,” “Chinese overseas,” and “overseas Chinese”;
- Analyze and interpret various types of primary and secondary historical sources pertaining to Chinese migration and diaspora;
- Formulate novel historical arguments on Chinese migration and diaspora based on historical evidence;
- Present historical ideas and evidence on Chinese migration and diaspora.

Course Outline (Subject to Change)

S/N	Topic	Seminar Hours
	<i>PART I: Macro-Overview</i>	
1	Introduction	3
2	What’s in a name? Changing approaches and concepts	3
3	Broad historical overview (1500s-today)	3
4	Community organizations I (<i>huiguan</i> , secret societies)	3
5	Migration politics and policies	3
	<i>PART II: Communities around the Globe</i>	
6	Geographical dispersion I Southeast Asia [visit to Baba House]	3
7	Geographical dispersion II the Americas [primary source discussion/paper outline peer review]	3
8	Geographical dispersion III Europe [visit to Chinese Heritage Centre and exhibition]	3
9	Representation and self-representation I [Documentary screening]	3
	<i>PART III: Group Work</i>	
10	Preparation of group presentation	3
11	Group presentations I	3
12	Group presentations II (depending on class size; if the group is smaller, we will discuss the Chinese in Africa this week)	
13	Revision and Wrap up	3

Student Assessment

(a) Class participation	10 %
(b) Group presentation	20 %
(c) A 1500-word essay	20 %
(d) Final examination	50 %

(a) Class participation (online posting and in-class discussion)

Students are required to do the weekly readings and to prepare for discussion by posting short answers on the NTULearn Discussion Board. During weeks 6, 8, and 9, worksheets will also constitute part of class participation.

(b) Group presentation

Students are to explore the course themes in/with reference to a Singaporean context. Students are to conduct fieldwork and to combine this with secondary literature to formulate a historical argument. The group presentation should be around 30 minutes.

(c) Essay (1500 words)

Students can choose their topic of interest, but should include at least one primary source for the essay. They should bring a basic outline of the paper, including the primary source, during week VIII. We will do an in-class discussion based on the primary source and a peer review exercise of the outline.

(d) Final examination

Questions related to the examination can be asked in Week 13. The exam will be held on 29 April 2020.

References (Subject to Change)

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