CHIN/CAPS 4406: Readings in Chinese History and Business Culture (offered through Asian Studies Department)

* Instructor: Prof. Zhihong Chen, Ph.D. (email: zc46@cornell.edu)
* Credits of both courses: 4
* Days/Times: 1:25-2:40 pm on T & R
* Pre-requisites: at least two years (on heritage track) or three years of Chinese or equivalent and permission of instructor only. Please contact Prof. Zhihong Chen (zc46) for getting a permission code to enroll during the pre-enrollment period. Limited to 15 students.

* Note: This is a Chinese language course. Native speakers of Mandarin are not eligible for this course. "Native speaker" means someone who has learned Chinese and spoken Mandarin (pu tong hua) from elementary school to high school in a native environment such as in Mainland China. The students from Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan are not considered as "native speakers". Students from Mainland China attending the international schools from elementary school to high school are eligible to take the course too.

* Course description for the course:

This is a 4-credit course, designed for those who have studied Mandarin to the advanced level (or equivalent). It is cross-listed with the major “China and Asian Pacific Studies” (CAPS), so the students who have declared the CAPS major can register for CAPS 4406 for getting the CAPS credits. The main goal of the course is to continuously enhance students’ Chinese proficiency while, at the same time, preparing them for studying in a Chinese-language learning setting as well as for working more comfortably and confidently in a Chinese business environment.

In recent years, along with the rapid growth of Chinese economy, issues on Chinese business and economy became a hot topic. Following this trend, the course is aimed to enhance students’ Chinese skills in the business context and promote their understanding of the macro and micro business environment and culture in China. An approach placing more emphasis on case study is adopted along with task-based language teaching. The course will cover the first five chapters of the textbook which is developed surrounding five real-life cases. These five companies are all multinational that have successfully operated in China by adapting their strategies to the special needs of the Chinese market. By reading, discussing, and performing communicative tasks related to those cases, students will learn how to use Chinese as a “carrier of culture”, thus acquiring a better understanding of China in economic and, broadly defined, cultural terms. The case study will also inspire students to explore the Chinese consumers’ interest and mentality, so that they will occupy a more qualified position to explore a successful road toward “doing business within China.”

In order to enhance students’ understanding of the business cases, clips of the selected television interviews and talk shows will be used to accomplish the following four goals:

First, the content of the textbook and the background information offered by the supplementary media materials complement each other. Second, key terms and expressions in the textbook will be repeated in the learning process to help students reinforce the knowledge. Third, in terms of cross-usage between colloquial and written language, students will have the opportunity to supplement their reading of written texts with the experience of watching television shows on the same or similar topics, which may help them understand the distinctions between the two language styles and accurately utilize both language registers to express their own ideas in different settings. Fourth, the authentic visual materials can help close the gap between pedagogy and the real world, most effectively enabling students to become familiar with all varieties of Chinese accents, – including those of Hong Kong, Taiwan and even foreigners speaking Chinese – thereby strengthening students’ abilities of practical application in the real world.

In order to expand and update students’ knowledge on various business-related issues, in addition to the business case analysis, supplementary listening, reading, writing exercises as well as media materials from different sources will also be provided in class or at Blackboard. Highlights of these exercises are: Listening comprehension of business news reports on current issues; analysis of the uniqueness of the Chinese financial market (banks, bond and stock market); discussion of
Chinese business laws, translation of business terms and documents, and commercial language and word processing.

For students who are interested in pursuing career opportunities in China/Hong Kong, the course will teach the proper ways to compose a Chinese resume while, at the same time, introducing related job interview skills.

By the end of the semester, students are expected to: (1) be equipped with the language skills to function more comfortably and confidently in real business settings; (2) enhance the cultural awareness about China and the Chinese business world; (3) improve listening comprehension of Chinese business news reports and television interviews and talk shows; (4) improve writing and translation skills of business documents; (5) be able to use Chinese language software for certain business purposes. Class will be conducted in Chinese.

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* Reviews by students who have taken the course:

1. For students who had never worked in China but are looking to work in China after graduation, I highly recommend taking this class before recruiting begins. This course not only teaches the business language that is useful in a Chinese job interview, but also helps student to understand the Chinese culture, which is valuable even for students that want to stay in the US after graduation as most big corporation these days do business with Chinese companies. I wish I had taken this class the first semester when I joined the business school. I got rejected by an investment bank in Hong Kong and one of my friends that worked there told me that I passed the interview but failed the Chinese language test, which had a lot of business terms similar to those that I learned in this class.

   -- Yin Wong, MBA ’12 of Johnson Graduate School of Management

2. “Business Chinese in a Cultural Context” is the best elective course that I have taken while at Johnson. This is not solely a Chinese language course; rather, it is a business course taught in Chinese that examines the challenges of doing business in China from a cultural and economic standpoint. The Chinese language skills of anyone taking this class will definitely improve throughout the semester, but the main focus of the course is to provide students with in-depth analysis of both inbound and outbound business in China. Collaborative, hands-on lectures and group projects provide students with a deep understanding of cultural elements that drive business decisions in China. This includes looking at the economic rational of why multinational companies do business in China, and why Chinese firms seek outward growth through acquisitions of foreign entities. The class is taught in a small setting, which allows students to explore topics in great depth. Additionally, Professor Chen actively tailors the pace and material to suit the language ability of each class and genuinely cares for the learning of each student. I recommend this course to anyone who plans to study or work in the greater APAC region in the future. After taking this class, I spent my final semester in Singapore, and the topics covered were extremely relevant in my studies abroad.

   -- Benson C. Chang, MBA ’12 of Johnson Graduate School of Management

3. “The Business Chinese course taught by Professor Chen is the most useful class I have taken outside of the Johnson School. Students are taught to function in the Chinese business setting through the use of TV interviews with prominent Chinese business figures, news reports and in-class debates on pressing issues, case studies of various multinational and domestic Chinese companies. Students will come out of the course not only having vastly enhanced their speaking, listening, reading, and writing of Chinese business terminology, but also a greatly improved understanding of the cultural nuances of doing business in China. I have worked in China prior to taking this class and so can attest to the value it will add. If you are going to be working in China, or even just thinking about it, this is a class you definitely should consider taking in order to prepare yourself.”

   -- David Z. Huang, MBA Class of 2010 of Johnson Graduate School of Management

Any questions? Pls email Prof. Zhihong Chen at zc46@cornell.edu.