

## ■ Teaching China as a Global Culture

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### Abstract

Recent decades have witnessed a striking change in the attitudes of students in American institutions of higher learning toward China as a subject for study. Whereas China formerly was “exotic” because it was so old or so politically foreign to American students, now studying China is seen as an appropriate avenue to interesting employment and important careers. This has produced enormous increases in Chinese language course enrollments. But these changes bring new responsibilities to teachers: to the extent that we help shape the future through our students, we must balance our new emphases on shared political and economic ends with continued awareness of cultural differences. As China’s interpreters to students in the West, we must engage new analytical paradigms in order to promote greater understanding among our peoples in the highly competitive global marketplace for goods and ideas.

**Keywords:** Undergraduate students; cultural differences; analytical paradigms; global competition; language study; cultural understanding; the responsibility of the teacher

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## Introduction

In the curricula of American colleges and universities, during the past 50 years China has moved from being an exotic subject on the margins of normal course choices to occupy a central position. Through this process, China's academic interpreters abroad, its "translators" in all senses, have had to change their tactics considerably as they have necessarily moved from the simple dichotomies used to contrast an "old" China with a "modern" America to an emphasis on similarities of national interests in the increasingly global culture in which both China and the United States participate. To do so has necessitated recognizing cultural pluralities including not only in China and in the United States, but cultures that differ historically from those of today—or even a few decades ago. Understanding and teaching "China" has rightly become considerably more complex as these cultural pluralities have been more thoroughly acknowledged in American academic circles.

## A Historical Overview

Through the 1960s and 1970s student and faculty interests gravitated toward humanistic courses on ancient Chinese art, poetry, and philosophy. Studies of the Chinese brand of Communism appealed to social scientists more familiar with Soviet ideology and practice in that age of Cold War between the two superpowers. College courses focused on these two poles in subject matter, leaving most of China's history to be presented as lists of names and dates to be memorized, but not necessarily to be understood with any degree of sophistication. Even though graduate students seriously interested in the study of China carried out extensive textual research there—and in fact the complexities of "Chinese culture" were being "discovered" there—Taiwan was seldom mentioned in the American classroom. Likewise, Hong Kong and Macau were simply sources of cheap merchandise or tourist destinations in the eyes of most Americans. Before *Hanyu pinyin* became widely used abroad, most of China's place names had difficult combinations of sounds that few non-specialists could pronounce and few students could remember. Moreover, when China seemed to be so very different from the US, one did not need real fluency in the spoken language; written Chinese was sufficiently exotic to attract some attention, but few American students committed the years needed to reach

proficiency in spoken *Hanyu*.<sup>1</sup>

However, through the 1990s and especially after the turn of the millennium, China has assumed a considerably greater significance in American college classrooms. This trend is visible in Chinese language enrollments, which increased over 80% between 1970 and 1980, and another 70-plus percent between 1980 and 1990. But from 1990 to 2002 they doubled.<sup>2</sup> This explosion of student interest in China is the result of a variety of causes, including those intrinsic to American academia and the obvious recent changes in international politics and trade. It is not only that China has taken on a much greater importance in global politics and economics; China has begun to *mean* something quite different, a sea change not lost on our students. In part, this remaking of China reflects new analytical paradigms on the part of Western academic presentations of China.

No longer is China exotic, the apparent opposite and Other to the US in many ways; China is now seen as comprehensible, as worthy of study as is Western Europe.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese experience in a number of areas, particularly China's solutions to common human problems, can now be seen as relevant in solving problems abroad as well. China's problems are not unique, and its astonishing and continued economic success commands attention. Consequently, colleges and universities in the United States have witnessed rapidly increasing enrollments in ever more specialized China courses across a number of academic disciplines as well as in the study of language. And with broader recognition of China's importance in the world, more and more faculty incorporate information about China in their general, non-China courses.<sup>4</sup> Where only the study of Western Europe and the United States seemed to be relevant to students in decades past, China has become the most prominent non-Western subject across the academic spectrum. I conclude that the paradigms used in teaching culture on the tertiary level have changed largely in response to the general recognition of

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<sup>1</sup> Welles, p. 13, Table 5, indicates that total American college-level enrollments in Chinese in 1960 were 1844, and in 1970 reached 6238.

<sup>2</sup> Welles, p. 13, Table 5. Total college enrollments in Chinese language for 2002 were 34,153 in the United States. In public high schools in some areas, Chicago for example, 2005 enrollments in Chinese were as much as seven times their total in 1999.

<sup>3</sup> In part, Americans are acknowledging social change: Chinese is the third most commonly spoken language in American households, after English and Spanish, according to Adams.

<sup>4</sup> Using Washington University as example of a far broader trend, all of the core courses for undergraduate majors in International and Area Studies include China units, and in the School of Law, teaching and research on intellectual property by non-China specialists use the Chinese experience as commonly as they do experience from other parts of the world. I will refer to the experience at Washington University again below, but only because of my familiarity with changes there, and not because our faculty are unique among American academics in their responses to changes within China and its place in the world.

the relevance of the Chinese experience as a way to understand better our general human history and our common, global future.

American scholars of China in my generation are products of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. With probably only few exceptions, our graduate educations were supported by fellowships funded by an act of the US Congress, the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Sponsored by Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright, this legislation provided financial aid for American students to pursue graduate education in what were termed the “less commonly taught” languages, in other words, the languages that could be critically helpful in America’s foreign policy agenda of outflanking the Soviets as both worked to polarize the world between our two political camps. Chinese and Russian were at the top of the list in terms of numbers of students supported.<sup>5</sup> This direct involvement on the part of the US government was a product of the first stage in the process of increasing academic engagement that I wish to outline here:

### *1. Modern China as Weak Foe, Ancient China as Exotic Other (1949-1965)*

Almost without regard for the recent experience of China’s own people, American academics in the 1950s through the 1960s primarily offered courses on ancient China. Some even went so far as to make light of the study of modern China as “mere journalism,” not proper “History,” and besides, the history of 20th century China was not very interesting. The sorry tale of China’s defeats by Europeans in the Opium Wars and twice more at the hands of Japanese was enough to discourage even the “friends of China.” It would seem that American scholars had simply accepted China’s official national narrative, agreeing that China was the victim of a repeated foreign aggression and humiliations for a hundred years. Consequently, through the 1960s few Americans knew anything about 20th century China’s outstanding accomplishments in literature, art, and film, and courses on these subjects were virtually nonexistent. It was not uncommon for the rare university courses in modern Chinese literature to focus on how politics had replaced art to produce a literature barely worthy of critical attention.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> When I began graduate study in Chinese at Columbia University in 1965, all 60+ graduate students in the East Asian programs were recipients of those fellowships. (This also meant that all were US citizens.)

<sup>6</sup> In this regard, see the prickly 1962-1963 exchange between Columbia Professor C. T. Hsia and the Czech scholar Jaroslav Průšek. Moreover, in the graduate-level history of Chinese literature I took in 1966 at Columbia University, two semesters of study only got us to the Yuan period; even Ming and Qing literature was sometimes said to be derivative and less worthy of study than older Chinese texts.

Furthermore, our teaching and research were largely informed—and impeded—by a set of dichotomies; traditional China vs. the present (divided at the May Fourth movement of 1919), elite vs. popular in terms of values and practices, educated people vs. the masses in recent times as in the past, and in linguistic terms, vernacular spoken language (of the “masses”) vs. the classical style of writing used by China’s old ruling class. Many of these distinctions were simply borrowed from China’s own scholarly perspectives from earlier in the 20th century, of course. Some American scholars were inspired by the audacity of drastic revolutionary changes brought about by the Communist party, and by the late 1950s began to teach contemporary China as a unique member of the communist bloc—never giving up the ironclad antithesis between authoritarianism and democracy, with attendant value judgments.<sup>7</sup>

The courses we taught were generally informed by this analytical model: that the object of our study was fundamentally different from our own experience and therefore needed “interpreting” in order to make sense of it. In the 1960s and 1970s, the few China specialists among American college faculty often taught lecture courses and very small readings courses—most emphasizing the exotic character of China. Even the names of the courses drew attention to that characteristic. One lecture course commonly taught at that time was on “Oriental cultures,” sometimes called the “rice paddies course,” two semesters to teach everything one needed to know about China and Japan, but generally at an elementary level. In some institutions the enrollments were high, but not all of these courses were intellectually demanding.

There seem to have been several reasons for this. One might have been to interest students in studying East Asia. Another might well have been to suggest that foreigners might not be able to grasp Asian cultures without growing up there. At my institution a lecture course on East Asia’s glorious artistic traditions drew hundreds of students over the years, most of whom never took a second course in the subject—because advanced courses were only seldom offered. This was in turn because so few students were prepared to grapple with difficult texts and the sheer volume of the historical material.<sup>8</sup> One topic that continued to attract attention through the 1970s was the *Yijing* 易經 or “Book of Changes”;

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<sup>7</sup> Starting in 1958 Washington University’s Professor Stanley Spector began to offer courses on contemporary China, and was roundly denounced as a Communist—both by colleagues and members of the community—for doing so.

<sup>8</sup> A case in point were the grand courses at Washington University in the appreciation of traditional Chinese painting given by the late Professor Nelson Wu (perhaps even better known as the novelist Lu Qiao 鹿橋), a great connoisseur of traditional Asian arts and architecture.

numerous American students wanted to learn about the weird and mysterious philosophies of the ancient East. I inherited a course called “Oriental Philosophies” which also had large enrollments. Clearly students were interested in dabbling with ideas that were perceived (and probably presented) as radically different from their everyday experience. Yet at the same time rigorous advanced-level discussion courses on such demanding topics as Confucian philosophy attracted only a handful of serious students—and even among this group few had begun to study the classical Chinese language. The study of language was limited to small groups who struggled through endless drills and weekly character quizzes; few would commit themselves to the years of study thought necessary to develop broad functional competence. Even so, by the late 1970s American students had reached a second stage of understanding:

## ***2. China as Aesthetic and Political Inspiration (1966 through the 1970s)***

Decades of teaching the appreciation of China’s cultural monuments and its modern social experiments had paid off by 1970; students were being inspired by China. But they divided into two groups: some students wanted to learn more about the glories of China’s past, while others wanted to follow in the footsteps of China’s *hongweibing* 紅衛兵 or Red Guards to become “revolutionaries,” at least in the realm of culture. To some degree this reflected American student responses to America’s military involvement in Vietnam. Yet at the heart of such trends were simple dichotomies left relatively unchanged from previous trends in interpretation. Incorporating the writings of Mao Zedong into a Chinese philosophy course as a school of thought and practice worthy of comparison with Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism brought two quite different student reactions. Some were incredulous that Maoist ideas were worth serious study. Yet those who were politically active often protested my subjugation of the Chairman’s “thoughts” to the same sort of scrutiny as the writings of old China’s “feudal” thinkers.

China was still a strange and distant land to most Americans, despite President Richard M. Nixon’s formal encounter with the aging Chairman Mao in 1972 that was to produce the agreement that still shapes US-China relations. The political paradigm was not simply US vs. Soviet Union; now it was complicated by another “Other,” a foe who might yet be a Cold War ally. International strategic relations were becoming more complicated, and the plurality of world cultures—even within the Socialist bloc—was being acknowledged. Simple dichotomies no longer were sufficient, and China now began to compete successfully with ancient China for students’ attention.

But political and aesthetic inspiration only led our students so far: Modest numbers of students signed up for elementary Chinese, fewer still pursued the language far enough to study abroad. And the classical literary Chinese, or *wenyan wen* 文言文 courses had only a handful.<sup>9</sup> By the 1980s, however, China was beginning to capture the attention of students and faculty alike, to enter a new stage of understanding:

### 3. *China as Developing Country (1979-1989)*

New American awareness of the rapidly-changing China during the 1980s brought more and more students into the language classroom; opportunities for Chinese language teaching specialists sprang up across the US, and ever more American institutions sought venues for study abroad in China. Third levels of modern language instruction became common, and fourth or higher levels began at a few universities.<sup>10</sup> American undergraduate students were beginning to contemplate living and working in China, and by now some of them have had decades-long careers in business and diplomacy there. China was finally being perceived as comprehensible in terms familiar from other parts of the world, not as the “other” in a dichotomous difference with the West, but as a part of a diverse, multi-polar globalizing world.<sup>11</sup>

Interpreting China’s developments required faculty to historicize more carefully the differences between China and other cultures. Essentialization of China’s uniqueness, or of traditional dichotomies in terms of wealth, privilege, status, and culture, made way for more nuanced interpretations in so many fields. Foreign scholars discovered—along with their Chinese colleagues—that literacy in premodern China was a complex issue, that scholars were not always distinct from merchants, and that Chinese religious practices were shared by people

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<sup>9</sup> Even in 1978 only 13 students signed up for the first-level Chinese language class at Washington University, about half that for second level, and the one or two students who continued into the third level were those who could not afford to study abroad. There were also a very small number of committed students—usually five or fewer—who enrolled in classical language, which we learned by decoding the grammatical structures of ancient texts.

<sup>10</sup> At Washington University we added a second section of first year and began to offer a fourth level of instruction on a regular basis. More students were studying in Taiwan, and we established our current program for language study in China in collaboration with Duke and, later, Wesleyan University.

<sup>11</sup> My point here is not to obscure China’s distinctive historical trajectory; instead, I only deny the contention—still frequently endorsed by both Chinese and Western writers—that China is unique and therefore its experience cannot be meaningfully compared with other cultures. One does not have to claim sameness to make meaningful comparisons and contrasts between responses to invasion or mass political movements, to name only two possible topics, in China and elsewhere. In short, I contend that China’s experience can be fairly translated into terms comprehensible in other cultures.

at various income and status levels.<sup>12</sup> Similar complications were discovered in virtually every discipline, and by every major research project.

Interest in China grew among American graduate students as well.<sup>13</sup> Then in the late 1980s students from mainland China began to arrive in rapidly growing numbers. In a short time, many of the mathematics and sciences doctoral candidates at my University and elsewhere were Chinese nationals, and overnight our Chinese and Comparative Literature doctoral program became well populated with students who were almost exclusively from the PRC. Many of that generation stayed in the US to start their careers, and now their children appear in our classrooms, hungry to learn about their parents' culture. This brings me to the fourth and current stage of student awareness of China:

#### ***4. China as Modern Nation, Economic Competitor, and Potential Foe (1990-present)***

Since about 1990, the proportion of college students from Asian backgrounds at major American universities has increased to 20% or more. Many of our Chinese and Chinese-American students are the children of immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China who have come to the US since the 1980s. This mixture of backgrounds has meant a noteworthy sensitivity to multiple Chinese identities among our undergraduates, and our teaching has had to mature in this regard as well.<sup>14</sup>

Many of these second-generation Chinese-Americans can speak at least rudimentary Chinese with their parents, but few can speak standard *putonghua* 普通話 or Mandarin at a sophisticated level. To serve their needs, some American institutions have introduced one or more levels of language instruction for these "heritage learners." But ever more students who have no such background are choosing to study Chinese. In the fall of 2005 at Washington University for example, 78 students enrolled in the regular first-level course for beginners and an additional sixteen students signed up for the first level heritage course. From a total enrollment of 13 in 1978, we grew to 94 in elementary-level Chinese in

<sup>12</sup> See Bell, "Religion and Chinese Culture."

<sup>13</sup> Early in the 1970s Washington University began to encourage its Ph.D. students in Comparative literature to focus primarily on the literary traditions of China. The program got off to a very slow start, finishing only one Ph.D. in the 1980s, a young Malaysian Chinese, Li Yung-p'ing 李永平 (Yun Phin Lee), who has since become a highly regarded writer of fiction in Taiwan; see his *Jiling chungiu*.

<sup>14</sup> Compare the statistic cited in note 2 above. Students who have family ties to various parts of China all seek to know about the range of modern and contemporary culture, and the non-Chinese students who study in China all realize the complexities of modern culture.



2005. By the fall semester of 2006, that first-year total was 108. And because so many of our best students now begin college already having studied Chinese in high school or abroad,<sup>15</sup> we have had to add upper-level courses as well, a regular fifth-level modern language course, another in business and legal terminology, and a modern literature course taught in Chinese. This has meant that the University has had to add new faculty positions; by the fall of 2007 we had seven full-time lecturers, all language pedagogy specialists, to meet the needs of our over 300 Chinese language students.

Not surprisingly, enrollments in classical literary Chinese have not kept pace with enrollment increases in modern language. When asked why they are studying modern Chinese language, student responses are of course varied. Few, however, express deep interest in the exotica of ancient China. They will study old philosophy, literature, and art as background information, as context for more recent developments. Most want to learn everything about contemporary China: China as a place to visit relatives, to see wonderful sights, to learn about another culture—one that is equally important to that of the United States, but different. In addition to the tomb of the First Emperor Qin Shihuangdi 秦始皇帝, they also want to learn about contemporary artists, and rock musicians, in China. They welcome internships in China as a chance to experience working and living here, as more and more look to China as the place where they will develop their careers.<sup>16</sup>

The social science courses about China taught in the US today cover a range of interests based even more firmly on commonalities between China and the US: the development of market economies, responses to AIDS and social dislocations of migrant labor, questions of intellectual property rights, educational challenges of the global market, and pollution control. These interests are closely tied to the daily news. They also reflect China's current national narrative, as budding world power and competitor with the United States in global economic trade. In the 1980s it was hard to find nails in Nanjing; local production had all been committed to export abroad. In 1987 when I returned to the US after

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<sup>15</sup> In the fall of 2000, over 1300 US high school students were enrolled in Chinese language courses; see Draper and Hicks, p. 20, Table 7. Unquestionably that figure is significantly higher today. Most Washington University students are from out of state, but even in Missouri nearly 44% of all high school students were enrolled in foreign language courses, Spanish being the most popular by far; see Draper and Hicks, p. 6, Table 2; Chinese is seen as the next logical choice of language to offer in both public and private high schools, especially in urban areas of the state.

<sup>16</sup> Recently our graduate student interests have also shifted from late imperial to modern and contemporary writers; indeed, the field of modern Chinese literature—and film—has blossomed across North America in the last two decades.

a year in China, a carpenter friend complained about the cheap Chinese nails on the market: they were softer than American nails and bent more easily, but US carpenters were buying them because they were considerably cheaper than the American equivalent. But no one would make this sort of comment today, or at any time in the last decade for that matter. Chinese goods reportedly constitute 80% of everything sold in Walmart stores in the US, and high quality Chinese parts appear in the most demanding machines: computers and virtually everything electronic as prime example. China has clearly mastered the international markets, and more and more foreign companies have shifted their production facilities to China to take advantage of cheap, highly skilled labor.

Newspaper headlines tell Americans about oil shortages, and indeed we all see the effects on the price we pay for gasoline all across our country. This helps our current students understand, with great clarity, China's need for oil for industrial development and consumer use and China's efforts to import petroleum from its Central Asian neighbors. It also brings home to American students the tremendous potential for developing trade between China and virtually every other country in the world. Unfortunately, the limited remaining world petroleum resources suggest that the United States and China will compete for those energy sources as well as for marketplaces all around the globe. One can only hope that economic competition never leads to a military conflict between our two countries.

Yet the likelihood that this might happen is relatively slim: Americans, and Chinese too, have understandings of each other that are far more nuanced than in the recent past. Compared to 1980, far more Chinese have seen and spoken with Americans; far more Chinese have relatives in the United States. Far more Americans have first-hand experience in China, even if only as tourists: many of our non-Asian-American students have spent at least a few weeks in China before they begin to study China and the Chinese language at the college level. This familiarity has mitigated the perception on both sides that the other is exotic and incompatible, hence incomprehensible. This is a wholly positive change. In China, ever more students study English and read Western news sources, scholarly studies, and literature on their own. Americans need subtitles, but Chinese films are commonly seen in secondary as well as primary movie market cities. China gets regular coverage in news media across the US. And as China has become more common in the popular imagination of the US, it has become much more complex in the minds of its scholars.

Likewise, the scholars themselves have become more diverse. China specialists of the 1950s and 1960s were generally men of European background; there were relatively few distinguished Chinese scholars in the US, for ex-

ample.<sup>17</sup> By contrast, today women make up a sizeable portion of American China specialists, and native speaking Chinese research faculty, both men and women, are to be found at every major institution in North America. There has been a virtual flood of scholarly publications about China in all major languages since about 1980, making “state of the field” essays a kind of cottage industry among specialists in all disciplines: each area of China studies is being remade regularly as new information, new texts, new critical and theoretical tools—and new degrees of international scholarly collaboration—become available.<sup>18</sup>

### Conclusions: Our Tasks in the Future

In conclusion, one more observation about changing student perceptions: As a consequence of the obvious developing importance of China in the worlds of trade and diplomacy, my University and others have increasing numbers of students who are studying two Asian languages (combining Korean and Chinese, Japanese and Chinese, Hindi and Chinese) or Chinese and a major European language, especially Spanish: they can easily see the advantage they will have in seeking jobs in international trade or foreign relations if they speak English, Chinese, and at least one other major language.

The US government did not need to pay students to reach this conclusion, and in fact since 1972 only a very few American students have received government support to study Chinese or any other language. Nor is this growth in student interest a result of faculty exhortations. Instead, changing student awareness of the relevance of studying China simply reflects China’s new importance as a global power. This is why Chinese language enrollments are increasing all across the United States—and in Korea, Japan, and throughout Europe and elsewhere as well.<sup>19</sup> Probably this fact, as clearly as any other, demonstrates just

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<sup>17</sup> One thinks immediately of Wing-tsit Chan, K. C. Chang, Y. R. Chao, Chaoying Fang, and Nelson Wu, among others—but the list is not very long, compared to the dozens of distinguished younger scholars who are native speakers of Chinese active in American academia today.

<sup>18</sup> Compare, for example, the tremendous changes from Hegel and Birch, “Studies of Ming Literature,” to the state of studies observed in Hegel, “Traditional Chinese Fiction” and especially Hegel, “Introduction: Writing and Law.”

<sup>19</sup> One need only think of the response to the “Confucius Institutes” established in countries throughout the world and supported by funds from China’s State Council: their purpose is to improve Chinese language instruction for local students, but they have been overwhelmed by the enormous demand for their services. See French, “Another Chinese Export,” who quotes Wu Yongyi, Deputy Dean of the International College of Chinese Studies at East China Normal University 華東師大 in Shanghai as saying 30 million people around the world are now studying the Chinese language.

how China's stature in the world has changed over the last fifty years: from quaint, mired in the past, different, and thus labeled "feminine" in gender terms, hence implicitly considered "submissive" to more dominant world leaders, China is now seen as a vibrant and powerful member of the world community, worthy of the most serious study for solutions to common problems and for understanding the common human condition. China has become a strong and "masculine" culture, one might say. It has taken its own direction in development, "with Chinese characteristics" as the slogan makes it.

The implications of this new world situation are fairly clear: students know how important China will be for their individual futures. But our students also understand the importance of other languages and experience with other cultures as well. As faculty and researchers involved in the study and teaching of China it is imperative that we be able to translate clearly and without distortion this new "New China"—and the new globalized world in which the complex Greater China is a central player—to our students in the United States. Similarly, our colleagues in China must also be able to translate the United States and its complex—but different—historical experience into forms and models that make sense and can further productive dialogues between our two countries and our two cultures. This will require presenting the world as multi-polar, complex, and diverse in some interests but tied together by the interests all cultures share.

Both American and Chinese young people in this electronic age increasingly share culture as music, dress, films, and attitudes become ever more global. Our duty as faculty and researchers is to make sense in intellectual terms of what our younger compatriots often feel more viscerally: we must complicate their understanding with historical facts and cultural complexities. We ourselves must understand this new global situation, and we must explain it with utmost clarity; we must challenge our students everywhere to think critically about cultural differences and our common human needs. We must expand our students' vision beyond the culture of the internet and the popular film to include more challenging elite culture and cultural complexity on both sides. As my colleague Gerald Early remarked at the Tsinghua conference in August of 2006, sports competitions attract viewers and enhance international rivalries because there is only one winner. But real cultural interchange can never be so simple. We must capitalize on students' interests to give them the sophisticated understandings of both similarities and differences that they deserve to receive. Through this process of education, and probably only in this way, can misunderstandings be avoided and conflicts averted as China and the United States become the two dominant—hence necessarily competing—global cultures. Both sides must realize that there is no necessity to have a "winner" between them. "Winning" can

only come about through dialogue and understanding; it is a goal that both must share.

But how can teachers contribute positively to new levels of understanding? In interpreting China for our students, it would be useful to consider insights reached in the field of translation theory. There are many types of translations, those that must be literary, and those that are more utilitarian. The first must recreate to some convincing degree the artistic accomplishments of the original for presentation to audiences having a quite different experience. Yet even the second must recognize that the context in which the translation is read may not be at all the same as the one in which it was written. Schools of theorists engage in fervent debate on how best to understand the task of translation and its inherent difficulties. Yet on one point all are clear: translation is a political act in all senses of that term. Some theorists would have us interpret texts—and cultures—in such ways that emphasize, or even distort, what we have in common, making the “foreign” seem as “natural” or familiar as possible. Others would insist that the foreign needs to seem foreign in our representations: we should not gloss over important distinctions in terminology, values, or points of view.<sup>20</sup> Now that our world is ever more globally integrated in economic terms, teaching China must be done without reliance on the timeworn clichés and dichotomies of previous generations. We must be faithful translators who can demonstrate *both* the familiarity *and* the foreignness of the originals as we recreate China in our own language. The act of translation demands our utmost seriousness—and constant self-evaluation. This same responsibility rests on China’s interpreters of the US as well.

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<sup>20</sup> Among the many useful statements on translation strategy, see Nida, “Principles of Correspondence;” Lefevere, *Translating Literature*, esp. Chapter 2; Venuti, “Local Contingencies.” Steiner, in *After Babel*, explains how politics can shape translation; Homi Bhabha cautions against the appropriation of the subordinate by the dominant culture through translation; see his “Postcolonial Criticism.”

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## 中國作為全球化文化教學

### 摘要

近幾十年來，美國大學生對於學習中國文化的要求和目的經過了很大的改變。在從前，他們將中國視為一種陌生文化，不是太古老就是在政治上不太一樣。對他們而言，中國是個充滿異國情調的國家。但現在中國研究則成爲一個可以吸引許多工作機會的途徑。正因如此，學習中文的美國大學生一年比一年多。但是這些變遷也爲老師們帶來不同的責任：除了教授現今中國政治及經濟上的嶄新局面外，尚需讓學生得到更深刻的文化理解，以及教導他們如何在充滿高度競爭性的全球貿易市場中，能對文化差異加以持續關注。就像翻譯文學作品，我們須增加兩國之間的文化理解；也就是說，我們不但需要解釋文化差別，也需要解釋兩個文化之間相似的部分。

**關鍵字：**大學生，文化差異，全球化的競爭，語言學習，文化認知，作為老師的責任