Urbanizing China

FALL 2021 ARCH UN3502 Barnard and Columbia Colleges Architecture Department
Lectures MW 2:40–3:55 PM ET
Sections One hour TBA
Instructor Nick R. Smith, nrsmith@barnard.edu

Course Description:
This course investigates the dramatic urban transformation that has taken place in mainland China over the last four decades. The speed and scale of this transformation have produced emergent new lifeways, settlement patterns, and land uses that increasingly blur the distinction between urban and rural areas. At the same time, Chinese society is still characterized by rigid, administrative divisions between the nation's urban and rural sectors, with profound consequences for people's lives and livelihoods. The course therefore examines the uneasy intersection between the rapid transformation of China's built environment and the glacial transformation of its administrative system. We will take an interdisciplinary approach to this investigation, using perspectives from architecture, history, geography, political science, anthropology, urban planning, and cultural studies, and including a strong emphasis on visual analysis of China's built environment.

The course is divided into two parts. Over the first four weeks, we will consider the historical context of China's urbanization, including the imperial, colonial, and socialist periods, as well as the current period of reform. During the remainder of the semester, we will focus on China's contemporary urban–rural relations along the following dimensions: land and planning, housing and demolition, citizenship and personhood, agriculture and food, and nationality and identity.