

**SPPD China Lab:  
River Transformation in Foshan**  
USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development

**PPD 613a; Spring 2009**  
*Lec 51330D & 51396D; 1 unit*

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**Professor Eric J. Heikkila**  
Policy, Planning, and Development  
University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0626

tel: +1-213-821-1037  
e-mail: [heikkila@usc.edu](mailto:heikkila@usc.edu)

(Photo depicts part of one exhibit at the  
Foshan Ceramics Museum)



**Meeting dates**

1. Mon, Feb 2nd
2. Mon, Feb 9th
3. Mon, Mar 2nd
4. Mon, Apr 6th

All meetings held  
in RGL 103, from  
8:30am to noon

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**Introduction, background and learning objectives**

This is a 1-unit course that precedes (and is the pre-requisite for) a companion 3-unit intensive field course offered in the summer term. Together, they comprise the SPPD China Lab for 2009. Although the two are closely coupled, they are technically two distinct courses, and so a separate syllabus is (or will be) available for the 3-unit companion course. The primary purpose of this 1-unit course is to lay the groundwork for activity to follow in the companion course.

As with all SPPD International Labs, the learning objective is to learn how to translate “classroom knowledge” into professional practice, and to do so in a setting outside the United States. Emphasis is therefore placed on having students develop a deeper understanding of the contextual dimensions of knowledge and practice. The pedagogical model draws on a professional consulting paradigm, with a clearly identified client and terms of reference for the students’ work.

This year, the client for the SPPD China Lab is Foshan Municipality in Guangdong Province. Although not as well known as nearby Guangzhou, Shenzhen or Hong Kong; Foshan Municipality boasts a population of six million persons, and is an integral part of the urban conglomeration that covers much of the Pearl River delta region, an area that has undergone remarkable transformation over recent decades, as evidenced by the satellite images in figure 1.

One unfortunate result of this urbanization has been significant environmental degradation, and environmental upgrading has thus been a major focus of World Bank project lending in China. One locus for WB activity has been Foshan, and it is through WB mediation that Foshan has agreed to be a client for the SPPD China Lab. Foshan plans to host an international roundtable forum later this year through the auspices of the Pacific Rim Council on Urban Development, an NGO for which I serve as founding PRCUD Executive Secretary, and Foshan is inviting our SPPD Lab to assist them in preparing for the event.

Figure 1: Urbanization of the Pearl River Delta



Source: NASA Earth Observatory

Foshan is asking PRCUD to assemble a group of international experts who will advise the municipality on actions it can take to foster a more harmonious relationship between urban society and its natural environment, with a specific focus on the Fenjiang River, a minor branch of the immense Pearl River that traverses the heart of the municipality.

Our task is to help Foshan prepare briefing materials that will be distributed in advance to dozens of international and domestic experts who will be invited to participate in the PRCUD Foshan Forum later in the year. The invited international participants in the PRCUD Forum will have outstanding and relevant scholarly or professional expertise, but in most cases will not have deep prior knowledge of Foshan. Conversely, colleagues at Foshan are of course intimately familiar with local conditions, but are not always fully aware of conditions or relevant experiences elsewhere.

## Course structure

### Topical focus

The focus of this year's SPPD Foshan Lab is tightly linked to five key issues that Foshan Municipality has indicated are their top priorities:

1. International experiences regarding river control and urban transformation
2. Fenjiang River and socio-economic transformation
3. Ecological restoration of the Fenjiang River area
4. The potential role of land markets in effecting transformation of the area
5. Reconciling renovation and cultural preservation in the Fenjiang River area

These issues will also be the focus of the PRCUD Forum in Foshan, and they go to the very heart of the relationship between urban society and its natural environment. In the case of Foshan, as is so true for almost all of China, this relationship has been subject to extreme distortions that are reflective of the dramatic and unparalleled changes that have occurred within China as a whole.

The 3-unit companion course during the summer will focus intensively on the Foshan experience. This preparatory course during the spring semester, however, will be scaled more modestly, in keeping with its single unit of academic credit. Likewise, we will not concentrate exclusively or even primarily on Foshan during this preparatory phase, but shall instead identify and draw upon pertinent lessons from relevant cases elsewhere in the world, including here in the United States. In fact, Foshan is eager to have us bring this kind of knowledge to them, as they are truly keen to learn.

## **Assignments**

There are three essential outcomes we shall strive for during this semester, two of which are formal assignments. The first is an assignment that you will do in small groups, whereby you identify and investigate a case study and produce brief synopses of pertinent lessons for Foshan. You will need to form your groups and identify your selected case studies by our second class meeting (Monday, Feb 9<sup>th</sup>), and your short synopses are due prior to our third class meeting (Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>).

The second assignment is also a group endeavor, but this time groups will be organized around the specific issues enumerated above, and will draw on the case studies produced in assignment one. So, for example, one group may synthesis lessons pertaining to socio-economic transformation for Foshan by drawing in part on the full set of case studies already produced.

In addition to these two assignments for which specific grades will be allocated, the class as a whole should use this opportunity to begin thinking strategically about how best to utilize its time in Foshan productively, so that the potential value of that intensive field experience will not be dissipated through ineffective time management.

## **Determination of grades**

Final grades for this 1-unit course are based on the following items:

- Class participation (10%)
- Case study (45%)
- Issue based synthesis of case studies (45%)

## **Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is a core value of our School and of this course. The penalties for plagiarism are tough, and rightly so, and they apply immediately upon the first instance. The guidelines located at [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug\\_plag.htm](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug_plag.htm) are very helpful, and I strongly admonish you to review them with all due diligence. Neglect them at your peril. The basic principle is simple: *never provide the reader with an opportunity to give you credit for someone else's work*. When in doubt, clarify.

## **Course Readings**

### **Scholarly works**

Bottelier, Pieter (2007), "China and the World Bank: How a Partnership was Built", *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 16(51), May, 239 – 258.

Heikkila, Eric J. (2007), "Three Questions Regarding Urbanization in China", *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, vol. 27, Fall, 65 – 81.

Lo, Carlos W.H. and Shui-Yan Tang (2006), "Institutional reform, economic changes, and local environmental management in China: the case of Guangdong province", *Environmental Politics*, vol. 15(2), 190 – 210.

### **Professional reports**

Esposito, Adèle and Sylvia Nam (2008), *Siem Reap: Urban Development in the Shadow of Angkor*, Briefing Document for the 2008 Pacific Rim Council on Urban Development Forum; J. Paul Getty Trust.

Rabé, Paul (2008), *Siem Reap: Urban Development in the Shadow of Angkor*, Final Report of the 2008 Annual Forum of the Pacific Rim Council on Urban Development, Los Angeles.

SPPD Foshan Lab (2008), *Final Report: A Clean Water Future for Foshan*, USC School of Policy, Planning, and Development.

World Bank (2007), *Project Appraisal Document* (Second Guangdong Pearl River Urban Environment Project), WB East Asia and the Pacific Region.