

OEL331 Modernity vs. Tradition in Chengdu

Level: 3

Credit Units: 5 Credit Units

Language: ENGLISH

Presentation Pattern: EVERY JAN

Synopsis:

The objective of OEL331 is to provide students with the conceptual tools and learning experiences to develop a deeper understanding of modernity vs. tradition in Chengdu vis-à-vis the Chinese modernisation project. This objective will be achieved through a combination of experiential learning, e-learning, classroom activities, and participation in an overseas trip to Chengdu, China.

Due to the fertile Chengdu plain and good irrigation, Chengdu is known as “the heavenly land of abundance”, having supported the rise of ancient Chinese empires with its agricultural surpluses. Over the past few decades since China’s market reform, it has rapidly transitioned into a technological, transportation, and communication powerhouse. Besides bearing the reputation of being the home of the giant panda and Sichuan peppercorn, Chengdu has thus also become one of the fastest growing cities in the world, having risen from the status of a 2nd-tier to that of a 1st-tier city. Having been named China’s best performing city economy three years in a row (defeating even Shenzhen and Beijing), Chengdu exemplifies the achievement of China’s rapid modernisation project and showcases the political will of the Chinese government. The western experience has shown that the modernisation project often pits modernity against tradition, with the rapid erosion of the latter as a consequence. Chengdu demonstrates the possibility that this is not an inevitability, as it seeks to harmonise natural and cultural heritage with rapid economic expansion.

In this course, students will have the opportunities to witness various manifestations of how modernity faces off against tradition and their subsequent homeostasis. From visiting museums that detail Chengdu’s 2400 years of history, to its ancient towns, to its bio-research bases, and to its financial centres, students will get to see one particular expression of China’s developmental ambition. By reflecting on the relationship between modernity vs. tradition and the Chinese modernisation project, students will be able to better appreciate how modernisation takes on different forms in different historical and cultural milieus.

Topics:

- Experiential Learning
- A history of Chengdu
- Chengdu’s contemporary development
- Modernity vs. Tradition
- The Chinese modernisation project
- Chinese political structure
- Technology and Commerce in Chengdu
- Educational provisions in Chengdu
- The Chengdu way of life vis-a-vis Chinese culture
- Commercial relationships between Chengdu and the world
- Chengdu vs. other Chinese economic powerhouses
- Career-building, networking, and investing in Chengdu for Singaporeans

Learning Outcome:

- Identify the key features of Chinese modernity
- Examine the role that Chengdu's history plays in its current development
- Explain how Chengdu's achieved its current status as China's best performing economic city
- Apply social scientific perspectives to relate Chengdu's balancing of modernity and tradition to the Chinese modernisation project
- Deconstruct preconceptions about China and its management of natural and cultural heritage
- Analyse how the China's economic development has shaped Chinese culture
- Construct new ways to relate Chinese modernity vs. tradition to the Chinese modernisation project
- Verify new interpretations with local stakeholders

Assessment Strategies (Evening Class):

Components	Description	Weightage Allocation (%)
Overall Continuous Assessment	GROUP BASED ASSIGNMENT 1	20
	GROUP BASED ASSIGNMENT 2	10
	GROUP BASED ASSIGNMENT 3	20
	TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT 1	25
	TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT 2	25
Total		100