This research seminar will help students learn theories of cultural globalization and the methods of ethnographic research. Through intensive reading, classroom discussions, and a mini project of field research, students will explore the process of globalization in China. Issues to be investigated in the seminar include the cultural convergence thesis, cultural hybridization thesis, cultural supermarket thesis, consumer nationalism, nation-state and globalization, the nexus of global and local interactions, global risk society, and individualization as a global process.

During the seminar, students will form small groups to discuss various topics, after which each group will present its findings to the seminar as a whole. Students will be required to conduct a mini research project and sharpen their research skills through various practices, including research design, fieldwork, data analysis, and the writing of a short research paper. Students will also participate in field trips to various sites where evidence of the development of a global city can be observed.

A course reader will be available once the students arrive in Shanghai. Grading is based on class participation/presentation (15%), participation in TA-led sessions (5%), and the final research paper (80%) which is due on August 30, 2017.

Weekly Topics and Readings

Week 1. McDonaldization and the Cultural Convergence Thesis (June 21)

Important themes:
1. Economic, political, and cultural globalization
2. McDonald’s development in the Chinese market and its global triumph
3. The culture of golden arches and the McDonaldization of society
4. The cultural imperialism thesis and the debate on cultural homogenization
5. The flow of capital and corporate culture

Week 2. Hybridization and Cultural Supermarket Thesis (June 28)

Important themes:
1. Cross-cultural consumption and the aspects of cultural globalization
2. Hybrid cultures: the domestication of foreign cultural products
3. The agency and agents in cultural appropriation
4. Hybridization thesis and the debate on consumer nationalism
5. The cultural supermarket thesis and the class issue in cultural globalization


Week 3. The Individualization Thesis (July 5)

Important themes:
1. Mobility, social trust, and modernity
2. The new patterns of social interactions in modern society
3. The difference between individualism and individualization
4. Disembedding, detraditionalization, and individualization
5. The global trend of individualization and its impact


Week 4. Globalization of Everyday Life: Food and Food Politics (July 12)

Important Themes:
1. How globalization influenced and is influenced by everyday life processes
2. The rising importance of food politics as a new global phenomenon
3. Food consumption and the new food cultures
4. Food and political activism
5. The global system of food production, circulation and consumption.


