

A Tale of Two Global Megacities: The Rise of Shenzhen and the Renaissance of Shanghai

A Field Study Course in Shenzhen and Shanghai, China, Summer 2024

Intellectual Background and Rationale

In 1979, China established its first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) near the small agri-fishing village of Shenzhen bordering Hong Kong. Over four plus decades, Shenzhen has grown into China's leading innovative city of high-tech manufacturing, finance, and logistic, earning the moniker as the country's "Silicon Valley." While overshadowed by Shenzhen's rise as a new global megacity in the 1980s, Shanghai, China's historic world city and largest economic center, began a renaissance in 1990 when the creation of the Pudong New Area, similar to the Shenzhen SEZ, powered Shanghai back on track as China's premier global city. Today, both Shenzhen and Shanghai have over 20 million people. Both have surpassed Hong Kong in GDP. While Shenzhen has risen as an unprecedented "miracle city" that can compete with San Francisco as a global innovation center, Shanghai has experienced an unparalleled renaissance from its glorious past to rival New York and London as a global financial enter of the 21st century.

Shenzhen's miraculous development has benefited heavily from being China's most popular destination for rural and urban migrants from all corners of the country, as China's largest city of migrants. As many migrants have become wealthy Shenzhen residents living in some of China's most pricy high-rise apartments, numerous others make a basic living in Shenzhen's low-cost urban villages that are gradually being diminished by large-scale urban renewal or upgraded by small-scale and incremental reconstruction. Like the Silicon Valley and other cities characterized by heavy in-migration, Shenzhen has become China's most innovative city. Around 90% of Shenzhen's companies are privately owned and run by risk-taking migrant entrepreneurs. Shenzhen has led all Chinese cities in international patents applied and granted, and consistently accounted for about half of China's patents. This innovative prowess stems primarily from R&D by such globally competitive technology companies as BYD, Huawei, and Tencent.

Already China's most populous city with 13 million people around 1990, Shanghai has almost doubled its population over the last three decades through in-migration, which however has not had the same effect on entrepreneurial innovation as Shenzhen. While Shanghai was China's most dominant industrial powerhouse from 1949 on, it has fell behind Shenzhen in technological innovation largely because Shanghai's economy has been heavily anchored by state-owned enterprises. Shanghai's more restrictive policies on in-migration have been less favorable to entrepreneurship and innovation than Shenzhen's more inclusive and welcoming policies. To compete with Shenzhen, the Shanghai government has elevated innovation to one of its top priorities together with trade, finance, and logistics/shipping in its master plan for 2035. On the critical dimension of logistics/trade, Shanghai and Shenzhen rank as China's and often the world's No. 1 and No. 3 ports, respectively.

Plan, Learning Goals, and Guest Lectures

In Summer 2024, Trinity's Center for Urban and Global Studies (CUGS), Urban Studies program, and Minor in Urban China Studies, with financial support from the Thomas Urban China Studies Endowment and administrative support from the Office of Study Away for program promotion and student recruitment, will jointly resume the China summer program in Shenzhen and Shanghai, after a four-year hiatus due to the pandemic, which disrupted the annual run of this highly successful summer program in both China and Southeast Asia. Different editions of this Trinity's "flagship" summer program graduated almost 170 Trinity students over 11 years through 2019 and involved the participation of around 40 faculty persons. A good number of Trinity graduates from this program have gone on to complete an Urban Studies graduate program and/or pursue a career with a China and Asia focus including several who currently work and live in Shenzhen and Shanghai.

We set three learning goals for the 2024 program as follows.

1. Understand historical change and continuity to inform and enrich the program's contemporary focus on the post-1980 and post-1990 development and recent renewal of Shenzhen and Shanghai, respectively.
2. Apply a comparative approach/logic to identifying key factors that both differentiate the developmental trajectory of Shenzhen and Shanghai and drive them toward partial convergence regarding the program's main topics.
3. Combine classroom-based instruction in local contexts with field visits to sites/projects to obtain the mutual reinforcement and pedagogical synergy between theoretical perspectives and engaged learning.

This summer program/course will start by providing a historical perspective as a backdrop and context for understanding the trajectory of both cities comparatively. To accomplish this first learning goal, we will visit a number of history and urban planning museums in conjunction with site visits to select urban renewal projects in both cities. The course will highlight the dual theme of in-migration and innovation and their closely related critical challenges such as urban renewal. We will examine migrant life in Shenzhen and Shanghai from linked sociocultural and spatial perspectives. To understand the two cities' different migrant cultures, we will read a body of academic and popular writings. We will use a couple of urban villages in Shenzhen and migrant communities in Shanghai to probe the lived experience of migrants relative to their socioeconomic status, work conditions, and access to amenities such as consumption and entertainment as these connections are affected by urban renewal. Regarding innovation, we will plan to visit technology firms, factories, and port facilities in both cities (see a photo below).

Besides the disciplinary complementarity and shared focus/expertise on China between the two faculty instructors from Trinity, we will invite two or three professors in Urban Planning, Sociology, and Geography at Shenzhen University and Fudan University to give guest lectures. We will attempt to invite a couple of government urban planners and business executives who will share their practical insights with us, especially about urban renewal. We benefited from this informal and flexible practice of drawing from local academic and applied insights in the previous iterations of this program. We will also ask Julius Benthin '23, an Urban Studies and

Economics double major and currently enrolled in Trinity's new MA Program in Urban Planning, to be this year's teaching assistant. Participating students will also have an opportunity to interact with a number of recent Trinity graduates working and living in Shenzhen and Shanghai to learn about and be inspired by their post-graduation careers.

The Course, Schedule, and Faculty Leaders

URST/INTS 313 (1.0 credit): A Tale of Two Global Megacities

Co-instructors: Xiangming Chen and Yipeng Shen

In-migration and innovation are the twin drivers of dynamic and sustainable cities. During China's rapid urbanization earlier and accelerated urban renewal, Shenzhen and Shanghai are a pair of most instructional cities where in-migration and innovation have interacted differently in driving growth, transformation, and renewal. Through comparative field studies in Shenzhen and Shanghai with a short side visit to the city of Dongguan (Hartford's Friendship City in China, see a photo below) bordering Shenzhen and the city of Nantong near Shanghai, the course aims to help students get a grounded understanding of how in-migration and innovation interact to generate and sustain Shenzhen's and Shanghai's dynamism in their broader regional contexts of the Great Bay Area including Hong Kong and the Yangtze River Delta region. At a critical time of growing competition/tension between China and the United States, we also intend this re-energized summer program to be a timely opportunity for Trinity students to obtain some first-hand understanding of China today by studying and experiencing fast-moving urban dynamics on the ground. Chen's visit to Shenzhen University in September-October 2023 and to Fudan University in Spring 2024 will help prepare for a safe and smooth run of the program. While in Shenzhen, he felt strongly a renewed sense of Shenzhen, which triggered China's opening to the outside world 40-plus years ago, to be more globally engaged.

*The summer course using the same cross-listed number as before will run from May 25 to June 11, 2024. Like the previous editions, we will have an intensive daily schedule of class instruction and field visits to fulfill all requirements for the one-credit summer course. Less travel than some years in the past will allow more stationary time of faculty-student interaction in extended discussions. To continue the program's tradition of enrolling a broad diversity of participating students from over a dozen majors, the program will be open to all Trinity students except graduating seniors, and particularly welcome applications from students majoring in Urban Studies, International Studies, and Asian/Chinese Studies. Participating Trinity students will be responsible for booking their own flights to and from China while students eligible for financial aid will receive scholarships to help defray their international travel and local living costs during the summer course in China. A small faculty committee consisting mainly of the two instructors will select the program's participants. We aim to recruit around 15 students for the program and already know of a few students' interests in applying for the program.

Program/course schedule (May 25-June 11, 2024)

March 15	Application deadline
May 25	Depart for Shenzhen

May 26	Arrive in Shenzhen (via Guangzhou or Shanghai)
May 27-June 1	Programming in Shenzhen (including Dongguan)
June 2	Travel to Shanghai
June 3-7	Programming in Shanghai
June 8-10	Programming in Nantong (near Shanghai)
June 11	Depart Shanghai

Program Faculty

Xiangming Chen served as the dean and director of the Center for Urban and Global Studies at Trinity College from 2007 to 2019 and has been the Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of Global Urban Studies and Sociology since 2007 and a guest professor at Fudan University since 2006. He conducts research on cities and regional development in China and Asia including a sustained focus and many publications on Shenzhen and Shanghai. His books include *Shanghai Rising: Power and Local Transformations in a Global Megacity* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009; Chinese edition, 2009) and *Global Cities, Local Streets: Everyday Diversity from New York to Shanghai*, with Sharon Zukin and Philip Kasinitz (Routledge, 2015; Chinese edition, 2016; Korean edition, 2017). He co-led this program from 2009 through 2019.

Yipeng Shen teaches Chinese and Japanese literature and films at Trinity College after receiving his Ph.D. in East Asian literature, film, and cultural studies at the University of Oregon. He recently published his book, *Public Discourses of Contemporary China: The Narration of the Nation in Popular Literatures, Film, and Television* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2015). His current research focuses on globalized youth culture in China, which covers a variety of topics such as eco-criticism and marital culture. He has taught in a number of Trinity's summer programs in China since 2015 and was Trinity's first Thomas visiting professor at Fudan University during Spring 2017.

For program questions, please contact:

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A photo of Trinity summer program visiting BYD, the world's co-leader in electric vehicle manufacturing, with Tesla, based in Shenzhen, China, Summer, 2019.



A photo of Trinity's summer program being met by municipal officials of the City of Dongguan, Hartford's Friendship City in China, near Shenzhen, Summer, 2019.