

CHINA CHANGING: A FILM BY BRIAN L. JACOBS  
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China Changing is a raw, hypnotizing, postmodern film, with not-so-subtle nuances, about the profound layers of China's past, present and future, that visually investigates truth, language, reason, science, technology, human nature, the deconstructed self, the Other, power, oppression, creativity and aesthetics, through exploring the themes of transformation, culture, globalization, art, music, people, nature and history. The film begins and ends with a statement from Professor Wu, an activist-warrior in the causes of the Chinese people; "China just has to change, it has to change." As the film pans into its overlays of composed music, we see how many places in China have become urbanized, with large skyscrapers looming, representing a shift in its goals to unify China as a massive presence in the global community. The film transitions into the overwhelming sense of identity that exudes from its people from a small classroom in a large sky scraper to an unpolished village performance, representing China's past, while electric saws scream in the background as traditional dance and song parade for adventurous tourists. This blends into the complicated meta-narrative of religion as Buddhas abound, with famous historical landmarks positioning China as a force in man's ancient intellectual past. Yet, it is the people of China that represent their solidity as a country. The film ends with two popular symbols of China; the zoo'd panda and the vanishing Junk Boats of Hong Kong, with Professor Wu, once again sharing her complicated vision of her people and country. The film visually asks the question: How has China become a postmodern culture, so advanced in educating its elite, creating stunning architecture, & being ahead in science the arts & technology, while holding on to its past, to become a reckoning force in an uncertain future, while 85% of its people live in poverty? The film is raw. I wrote, edited, directed and produced the film. I compose its soundtrack and created the layers and filters all metaphorically creating meaning in the visuals. The film is meant to serve as a visual in a thematic curricular unit planned by my magnet team. It is also being used in our school community and is being shown to the WASC committee, Western Association of Schools and Colleges which will be added to our accreditation this year. The film covers our Humanities Magnet's standards where students in my study each cultural area from three different disciplinary perspectives, Social Institutions, Art & Religion and Literature. Students are shared and team-taught by three teachers from the magnet team. We ask several key questions. What is the current economic, political and social situation in the major countries we study? What is the environmental impact of modernization and globalization? What is the role of art in people redefining themselves after surviving an oppressive system? How does art help people to reconnect with heritage? My humanities magnet provides an interdisciplinary, writing-based program for students that focus on critical thinking and human rights in the study of world cultures. We explore cultural literatures, arts and social institutions in four areas of the world. One major area in our study is China; past, present and future. In teaching our students about other cultures we expect them to be open-minded and culturally sensitive recognizing their ethnocentric worldview and learning to adjust it in their study of the multiple worldviews we encounter. Our heterogeneous classes allow for cross-cultural dialogue between students. Another function is to provide high quality interdisciplinary instruction in the humanities to

promote the integration of students from varied ethnic and racial groups and from different socio-economic backgrounds. The magnet team emphasizes aesthetics, history, art, philosophy, literature and social institutions through development of critical thinking skills. We want to create a community of inquirers through transcending ethnocentric attitudes. With the film exploring the culture of China, through the concepts of, Western and Non-Western, ethnocentrism, globalization, sustainability and progress, students will be able to discuss what they saw and how their attitude about China, once having studied its social institutions, arts, literature and beliefs, have changed or remained the same. Many of the major concepts we teach are like an umbrella that covers the entire year and many of the major themes transcend into the film. My students discuss differences and similarities between religions and culture, and are introduced to many of the themes shown in the film. I want them to understand their biases and prejudices by having them see the rich culture and many contradictions of China. The students look at how we create the “other” and how these views translate into social stereotypes. We develop our curriculum our-selves, which adds to the authenticity and immediacy of our curriculum. Of course we want to instill in our students the pursuit of educational travel, exploration and enrichment outside the classroom. The film can also serve other teachers who wish to use it to show China’s complexity.