



**Clash of Digital Civilizations:  
The Global and Chinese Tech Ecosystems in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area  
GNAM, Spring 2020**

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**Course Description**

There is no longer such a thing as the Internet anymore. What we have today are rival Internets – a global, US-centric one and a massive but localized one in China. While globally ubiquitous services like Google and Facebook are blocked within China, Chinese services like WeChat have found little resonance beyond its home market.

Hong Kong has become the only place in the world where the rival digital ecosystems coexist at scale – where Google and Facebook remain unblocked next to large communities of WeChat users. This unique setting enables us to ask and answer several hypothetical questions. How would global tech companies fare in open competition with their Chinese rivals? How would the split between global and Chinese digital infrastructures affect technology entrepreneurship? What does this imply for the future of the digital economy and technology entrepreneurship worldwide? In this course, you will investigate these questions by experiencing the clash of digital civilizations within Hong Kong, extending into neighboring Shenzhen – perhaps the global center of hardware innovation and entrepreneurship today.

**Learning Objectives**

This course will not only provide you with an understanding of the differences between the global and Chinese digital and technology ecosystems and how they are interacting in Hong Kong, but also empower you to identify and exploit economic opportunities emerging from this dynamic:

- Understand how technology clusters (e.g. Silicon Valley) are driving tech innovation and entrepreneurship.
  - Understand the differences between the US-centric global digital ecosystem and the Chinese alternative.
  - Understand how the global and Chinese digital ecosystems are clashing in a Hong Kong in turmoil.
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- Understand how Hong Kong features two digital ecosystems – one loosely linked to the U.S. and Southeast Asia and another inextricably linked to Shenzhen – and how this is affecting startup formation and scaling.
- Understand how the Silicon Valley model has taken root in Shenzhen, how Shenzhen continues to differ from other Chinese cities, and how this has contributed towards Shenzhen dethroning Silicon Valley as the global leader in hardware entrepreneurship.
- Understand what the dynamics found in Hong Kong and Shenzhen imply for the future of the digital ecosystem across the world.

### **Course Requirements**

- Complete all pre-departure reading and writing assignments.
- Attend all lectures, presentations and site visits in Hong Kong during the academic program
- Complete and deliver a team presentation on the final day of the academic program
- Complete all post-program written assignments

### Pre-departure Reading and Writing Assignments

*Reading Assignments.* Prior to arriving in Hong Kong, students will be expected to have read materials to be assigned in January 2020 given the rapidly changing nature of the situation in Hong Kong.

*Writing Assignment.* Students are required to review the materials listed above and must write a 500 to 750-word essay, due 24 hours before the start of the program. Please submit your assignment to email: gnweek@ust.hk. The essay should answer: *What are the key differences between the US-centric and Chinese digital ecosystems? What are the key implications of these differences?*

### Lectures, Presentations, and Site Visits

The academic program will run from Monday through Friday the week of 9 March 2020. During this program students will attend lectures given by the instructor and guest speakers and conduct two company visits. A preliminary schedule is provided below.

- Monday (9 March): Introductory lecture by the instructor on the distinction between the global and Chinese Internet ecosystems and Hong Kong as the meeting point for these ecosystems.
- Tuesday (10 March): Guest lectures on Hong Kong's technology and entrepreneurship ecosystem (morning).

Company visit to a representative Hong Kong technology company (afternoon).

- Wednesday (11 March): Guest lectures on Shenzhen's technology and entrepreneurship ecosystem (morning). Company visit to a representative Shenzhen-style technology company based in Hong Kong (afternoon).
- Thursday (12 March): Instructor lecture on the broader implications of the clash of digital civilizations (morning). Students would have time to prepare for their presentations the next day (afternoon).
- Friday (13 March): Final presentations by student teams evaluating specific business opportunities (morning and early afternoon). Wrap-up lecture by the instructor (later afternoon).

### Team Presentations

Students will be divided into four-person teams, selected to maximize geographic diversity. Each team will identify an aspect of the clash between global and Chinese digital ecosystems – or one specific to Hong Kong or Shenzhen under consultation with the instructor. During the afternoon of the final day each team will make a 12-minute presentation to the entire group that summarizes what they have learned during the week. At least two members of each team must participate in the presentation.

### Individual Final Report

After the completion of the program, each student must write a 500-word essay addressing the following:

- How do I personally intend to apply what I have learned in Hong Kong?
- What has inspired me? How might I act on that inspiration?
- After I return home, what specific actions will I take to leverage what is going on in Hong Kong?

Due on 11:59pm on Friday, 20 March 2020 (Hong Kong time). Please submit your assignment to email: [gnweek@ust.hk](mailto:gnweek@ust.hk)

### **Grading**

While the grading policy of this program is Pass/Fail, some educational institutions may require a letter grade. Students will be graded on the pre-visit report, the team presentation and the final individual report. The grades for the team presentations will also contribute to individual final grades.

The instructor will grade the students based on the following criteria:

- Pre-Departure Assignment (25%)

- Team Presentation (50%)
- Final Written Report (25%)

Passing grade will be granted if they can achieve B or above as equivalent. Grades range in equal increments from A+ to F. A failed course (graded F) cannot be credited toward a program. C- to D- grades are not used in postgraduate courses. For calculating grade point averages, numerical grade points are assigned to each course grade. The grades used are shown in the following table.

<u>Letter Grades</u>	<u>Grade Points</u>	<u>Definitions</u>
A+	4.3	Excellent Performance
A	4.0	
A-	3.7	
B+	3.3	Good Performance
B	3.0	
B-	2.7	
C+	2.3	Marginal Performance
C	2.0	
F	0.0	

#### *Attendance Policy*

Attendance and full participation are essential to the experiential learning for intensive programs. All students must attend all required sessions which may include lectures, speaker sessions and company visits. Attendance will be taken at every session on every day of the program. Required sessions are marked on the syllabus. Due to the importance of the learning experience, failure to attend or arriving late to a required session will result in a lower final grade for the course. Any session or assignment that is missed will result in the deduction of a half letter grade.

**Instructor**

Joon Nak Choi, PhD



Professor Joon Nak Choi (JC) has straddled careers in academia, management consulting, and entrepreneurship across the United States and Asia. He has taught corporate strategy, globalization, and the Asia-Pacific context at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Stanford University, and New York University Shanghai. He also founded machine learning startup Zectr in Hong Kong and worked at management consultancy Novantas in New York.

His recent books, Strategic, Policy and Social Innovation for a Post-Industrial Korea: Beyond the Miracle (ed. Routledge) and Global Talent: Skilled Labor as Social Capital in Korea (Stanford University Press), mirror his own experience seeing how interpersonal relationships make globalization work. He has also authored editorials for the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong and the Maeil Kyungjae Daily in Seoul, two of the most widely circulated newspapers in Asia.

Professor Choi holds a PhD and a MA from Stanford University and an AB from Brown University.