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Chih-p' ing Chou: Anything Goes

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Preface

A continuation of *All Things Considered* (2001), *Anything Goes* is an advanced modern Chinese language textbook, focusing on newspaper commentaries, developed by the Chinese language program of Princeton University.

The book is targeted at American college students with three years or more of modern Chinese language instruction; its materials are sufficient for a semester's worth of classes that meet four times a week. Selections are primarily from local and overseas Chinese newspapers and magazines, and deal with topics related to the economic, cultural, social and political changes since the reform and opening up of China in the early 1980's.

With respect to the field of Chinese Studies, the interest of American university students is concentrated largely upon contemporary China, with *contemporary* referring often only to that which is *current* and of *this very instant*. To most American college students, for example, the 1949 Communist revolution has already become the fragment of a distant, ancient history. And as the Vietnam War slowly fades from their collective memory, the Cultural Revolution of 1966 to 1976 has also become a mere trace in the annals of history. To the typical American undergraduate, it would seem neither *current* nor *relevant* to study writings produced during the May Fourth Movement of the early twentieth century, the golden age of modern Chinese literature of the 1930's, or even the Cultural Revolution. Conscious of this fact, we have compiled this textbook, in hope that through it students will not only enhance their linguistic proficiency, but also gain a deeper understanding of contemporary China.

In the past few years, we have experimented with different projects amongst the advanced Chinese language textbooks published. To name just a few, there are *The USA in the People's Daily* (1993) and *All Things Considered*, which focus on newspaper readings; *China's Own Critics* (1993), a selection of essays on modern Chinese intellectual history; and *China's Peril and Promise* (1996) and *Literature and Society* (1999), which have selections on social studies and literary works. Each of these textbooks has a different emphasis, and belongs to a different genre. *Anything Goes* is an addition to the above series that takes one step further – towards the China we see before us today.

We do not attempt to shy away from Chinese political taboos: whether it be freedom of speech, the Taiwan/Hong Kong issue, or the relationship between economic development and social morality, these seemingly intractable topics are examined in the textbook through specific selections. We believe that controversy is essential to sparking engaging and meaningful discussion. And for practical pedagogical needs, we have also done necessary editing to the words and vocabulary of selected pieces.

This textbook adopts a juxtaposing format of traditional and simplified Chinese characters, although sentence patterns and exercises after each lesson are only in the simplified. Before its publication, *Anything Goes* was field-tested in both the East Asian

Studies Department of Princeton University as well as in the *Princeton in Beijing* intensive summer program, to the warm reception of students and teachers alike.

The texts of this book were either written, or selected and edited, by Chih-p'ing Chou; the vocabulary, sentence patterns, and exercises were developed by Hua-Hui Wei, Kun An, and Wei Wang. For editorial responsibility, the name of the editor of each selection is listed. In the editing process, Teng-Kuan Ng, Christopher Magriney, John Alvin, and Brian Skerratt read and made suggestions to the English vocabulary annotations of the manuscript, while Yali Shu and Yue Pan assisted in proofreading – to these parties we express our deep gratitude. Of course, we assume full responsibility for any errors that might be found in the textbook.

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