

Politics and Society in Contemporary China

Instructor: Yujeong Yang
Office hours: TBD

Course Description

This course provides upper-level undergraduate students an introduction to the main issues of contemporary Chinese politics and society. This course aims to understand China by locating it into a comparative politics perspective. China has risen from a deeply impoverished socialist country to the world's second largest market economy. Yet various social issues and political problems accompanied by rapid economic growth pose challenges to Chinese social and political stability. How has China accomplished its phenomenal economic growth and what are the costs China has paid for it? How are the social and political issues challenging further economic and social development of China? This course attempts to address these questions by exploring crucial historical events that have happened since 1949, institutional structures, and cutting-edge social issues that characterize today's Chinese society.

This course is divided into three parts. In the first part, the course locates contemporary China into a comparative and historical context by exploring important historical events in Chinese history, including the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the market reform, the Tiananmen incident. In the second part of the course, students will examine institutional frameworks that characterize the Chinese society. In the third part of the course, students will browse various social issues engendered by the above mentioned historical legacies and institutional arrangements, such as urban-rural divide, social unrests, and media control.

Reading List

Electronic copies of all assigned chapters and journal articles will be posted on the course website.

Students are expected to have completed the reading in advance.

Assessment

Midterm	25 %
Final	25 %
Pop quizzes	25 %
Book Review	15 %
Class attendance and participation	10 %

- Midterm and final (25% each)
 - The midterm and final will each take up 20% of your grade. Both midterm and final are comprised of multiple choice questions, true and false questions, and short essays. Going over the quizzes from the past lectures, reviewing the lecture slides, and reading the assigned materials will be the best way to prepare for the exam. The midterm will cover materials from Week 2 to Week 7 and the final will cover materials from Week 8 to Week 15.
- Pop quizzes (25%)
 - There will be five pop-up quizzes based on reading. Students will have 15 to 20 minutes to take the quiz. The quizzes will be returned and reviewed at the next lecture. The questions from quizzes are highly likely to be recycled for the Midterm and Final. The quizzes are mainly comprised of multiple choice questions.
- Book Review (15%)
 - Select one book discussing politics, society, or history of China (post 1949) and write a short book review. The book review should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font. Students may also write a review of a movie or documentary about China, but should first consult with the instructor. Students first state the title and author of the book (or documentary) they've read, summarize the main arguments and findings of the book (1 page maximum), and discuss what they've learned, whether they agree with the argument, and how it relates to class, and how it furthers their understanding of the Chinese society.
- Class attendance and participation (10%)
 - Attendance will be taken for each session. You can only be excused for missing class if you have a medical note from a doctor of official reason approved by the instructor. Those students who observe a religious holiday on a class day should contact the instructor within the first two weeks in order to receive an excused absence. Each subsequent absence will reduce their grades by 0.5 points.
 - Students are highly encouraged to ask and answer questions and participate in class discussion as well. Participation points come from critical comments during class and coming to office hours.

Policies

Classroom Environment

This class is a safe space for open and lively discussion which may even deal with contentious and sensitive political issues. For any reason, I will never allow any personal attacks on any member of this class. Insulting or threatening comments may result in a reduction of the participation grade. If there's any one who feels threatened or insulted, please contact me immediately to resolve the problem.

Cell Phones

Cell phones are not allowed during the class. Text messaging is not allowed either. Students are asked to turn their cell phones off or on silent during class. If a student's cell phone rings or vibrates during section, he/she will have to bring a treat for everyone to the class. (Same rule applies to the instructor!)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at least two weeks prior to the time when the accommodation will be needed. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

Course schedule and reading list

1. Overview: China in Comparative and Historical Context

- Discussion Questions:
 - Why do we study Chinese politics?
 - How does the study of Chinese politics innovate our understanding of politics?
 - How have the tumultuous historical changes happened after 1949 shaped the Chinese society today?
- Required reading:
 - *A Century of Revolution* Part I (documentary)

2. The Communist Rise in Power: Finding State Legitimacy

- Discussion questions:
 - Given the history of Communist Revolution, where does the state's legitimacy and power come from?
 - How did the CCP seize the power in the absence of well-established state institutions and bureaucracy? What can we learn about the state formation process from the early history of the People's Republic of China?
- Required reading:
 - Naughton, Barry. Chapter 3. The Socialist Era, in *The Chinese economy: Transitions and Growth*. MIT press, 2007.
 - Lieberthal, Kenneth. *Governing China: From revolution through reform*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995: 83-98.

3. When State Fails: Great Leap Forward

- Discussion Questions:
 - Why was it impossible to correct the tragic disaster? Would it have been different had the China under Mao been a democracy country?
 - What was the political consequences of the historical trauma? How does it affect economic reform in China?
- Required reading:
 - Chan, Alfred L. *Mao's crusade: politics and policy implementation in China's great leap forward*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
 - Yang, Dali L. *Calamity and reform in China: State, rural society, and institutional change since the Great Leap Famine*. Stanford University Press, 1996.

- Kung, James Kai-sing, and Shuo Chen. "The tragedy of the nomenklatura: Career incentives and political radicalism during China's Great Leap famine." *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 1 (2011): 27-45.

4. Government Shutdown in an Authoritarian Regime: The Cultural Revolution

- Discussion questions:
 - How does the Chinese Cultural Revolution resemble and differ from the U.S. government shutdown of 2011?
 - What does the Cultural Revolution tell us about the nature of authoritarian regime?
 - What political lessons has the Chinese elite learned from the Cultural Revolution? How has it affected the current Chinese political institutions and reform processes?
- Required reading:
 - Lieberthal, Kenneth. *Governing China: From revolution through reform*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995: 99-121.
 - Matt Schiavenza, China's 10-Year Government Shutdown, *The Atlantic*, Oct 15 2013. Available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/10/chinas-10-year-government-shutdown/280501/>

5. How does Reform Start?: The Market Reform of the late 1980s

- Discussion questions
 - What did the Chinese elite do to carry out economic reform without threatening their monopoly on power?
 - How does the reform process in China differ from that of other Post-Communist countries?
- Required reading:
 - Naughton, Barry. *The Chinese economy: Transitions and Growth*. MIT press, 2007: 85-97.
 - Shu-Min, Huang. Chapter 8. Prosperous Years, in *The Spiral Road: Change in a Chinese village through the eyes of a Communist Party leader*. Waveland Press, 2013: 136-150.
- Supplementary reading:
 - Buck, Trevor, Igor Filatotchev, Peter Nolan, and Mike Wright. "Different paths to economic reform in Russia and China: Causes and consequences." *Journal of World Business* 35, no. 4 (2000): 379-400.

6. Failed Democratization? : The Tiananmen incident of 1989

- Discussion questions:
 - Why did protests in East Germany lead to democratization while protests in China led to the consolidation of the authoritarian ruling? When does economic growth bring democratization and when does it fail to do so?
 - How does the Tiananmen incident affect the political system of the CCP today?
- Required reading:
 - The Gate of Heavenly Peace (documentary)
 - Thompson, Mark R. "To shoot or not to shoot: Post-totalitarianism in China and Eastern Europe." *Comparative Politics* (2001): 63-83.

7. State and Market : Socialist Market Economy

- Discussion questions:
 - What is the role of the state in making a market economy? How did the CCP reform its system to make a transition to a market economy?
 - How does the second phase of the market reform differ from the market reform before 1993?
- Required reading:
 - Naughton, Barry. *The Chinese economy: Transitions and Growth*. MIT press, 2007: 98-113.
 - Qian, Yingyi, and Jinglian Wu. "China's Transition to a Market Economy." In Nicholas C. Hope, Dennis Tao Yang, and Mu Yang Li. *How Far Across the River* : Stanford , CA: Stanford University Press, 2003: 31-63.

8. Party-state relations in China

- Discussion questions:
 - How is the relationship between party and state in China different from state-party relations in the United States?
 - How is the institutional arrangement of China different from that of other non-democratic countries?
 - How do the unique institutional features help the Chinese Communist Party maintain power?
- Required reading:
 - Susan Lawrence and Michael F Martin, "Understanding China's Political System," (Congressional Research Service, 2012).
 - Lieberthal, Kenneth. Chapter 6. The Organization of Political Power and Its Consequences: The View from the Outside, in *Governing China: From revolution through reform*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995: 83-98.

9. Central-local relations in China: Centrifugal and Centripetal

- Discussion questions:
 - Why the Chinese central government empowers local governments by granting them political discretion?
 - How does the central government constrains the empowered local actors from challenging the central authority?
 - How is the relationship between the central and local governments in China different from/ similar to the relationship between the federal and state governments in the United States?
- Required reading:
 - Lieberthal, Kenneth. Chapter 7. The Organization of Political Power and Its Consequences: The View from the Inside, in *Governing China: From revolution through reform*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995: 83-98.
 - Zheng, Yongnian. Chapter 1. Approaches to Central-local Relations in China. in *De facto federalism in China: Reforms and dynamics of central-local relations*. World Scientific, 2007: 1-31.

10. Rule of Law or rule by law ? : Legal Institutions in China

- Discussion questions:
 - Why does the authoritarian Chinese government develop the legal system that might limit their autonomy?
 - Who benefits from the Chinese legal system and who are marginalized from using the legal system?
- Required reading:
 - Yuhua Wang, *Tying the Autocrat's Hands: The Rise of the Rule of Law in China*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
 - Yuen Yuen Ang and Nan Jia, "Perverse Complementarity: Political Connections and the Use of Courts among Private Firms in China," *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 2 (2014).
 - Michelson, Ethan. "Climbing the dispute pagoda: grievances and appeals to the official justice system in rural China." *American Sociological Review* 72, no. 3 (2007): 459-485.

11. Controlling Mobility : Chinese localized citizenship institutions

- Discussion questions:
 - Why has the Chinese government stratified Chinese residents' citizenship by birthplace?
 - How has this localized citizenship institution consolidated social inequality?
 - Why is it so hard to reform the localized citizenship institutions? Who impedes the reform and why?
- Required reading:
 - Dorothy J Solinger, "Chapter 1. Introduction: Citizenship, Markets, and the State " in *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market* (Univ of California Press, 1999)
 - Kam Wing Chan and Will Buckingham, "Is China Abolishing the Hukou System?," *The China Quarterly* 195, no. 1 (2008).

12. Urban-Rural Divide

- Discussion questions:
 - What explains the urban-rural divide in China?
 - How does the urban-rural divide in China differ from that observed in other developing countries?
 - How does the urban-rural divide in China create a political and economic pressure on the Chinese government? Why can't (or doesn't) the Chinese government fix the divide?
- Required reading:
 - Wallace, Jeremy. Chapter 1. in *Cities and stability: Urbanization, redistribution, and regime survival in China*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
 - Yang, Dennis Tao, and Fang Cai. "The political economy of China's rural-urban divide." *How far across the River* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003: 389-416.

13. Protests and Social Movements in China

- Discussion questions:
 - Why do Chinese citizens protest? Who protests and why?
 - How do these protests and social movements affect the Chinese regime stability?
 - Why do Chinese (local) governments react differently to social movements and protests? When do they tolerate and when do they repress?
- Required reading:
 - Xi Chen, *Social Protest and Contentious Authoritarianism in China* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).
 - Kevin J O'Brien. "Rightful resistance." *World Politics* 49, no. 1 (1996): 31-55.
 - Cai, Yongshun. *Collective resistance in China: Why popular protests succeed or fail*. Stanford University Press, 2010.
 - China Labor Bulletin Strike Map

14. Media Control and Censorship in China

- Discussion questions:
 - Will internet and the development of technology threaten the regime stability of an authoritarian regime, like China?
 - How does the Chinese authority control media and information?
- Required reading:
 - Daniela Stockmann and Mary E Gallagher, "Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China," *Comparative Political Studies* 44, no. 4 (2011)
 - Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," *American Political Science Review*.

15. Escaping middle-income trap: China in 2030

- Discussion questions:
 - Can China avoid the middle-income trap?
 - Is the China's model of economic growth sustainable?
 - How do other East Asian countries and China diaspora countries escape the middle-income trap? Can China emulate the model used by its neighbor countries?
- Required reading:
 - World Bank. 2013. *China 2030 : building a modern, harmonious, and creative society*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
 - Can China Avoid the Middle-Income Trap? *Foreign Policy*. Mar 12, 2016.