How Fragile is China:  
Issues Determining Its Future  
Dr. Paul E. Schroeder

China is widely misunderstood today. There are two main viewpoints. 

First, China pursues its export-led development model that absorbs American manufacturing jobs in its march to become “the factory of the world.” Asian nations fear it will quietly become the hegemon in the region. The United States and Europe fear its potential rise to superpower status, changing forever the nature of international relations. 

Second, is China’s economic growth slowing, prompting calls for a new development model that could change the nature of Chinese society? While China has absorbed American manufacturing jobs, is it also losing jobs? And while China’s importance as a major player in Asia is certain, can it attain superpower status to challenge the United States? 

Scholarship on the country’s future is split into two competing camps of optimists and pessimists. Optimists believe the growth of China’s economy, led by private entrepreneurs, will lead to democracy. Pessimists do not. Rather, they believe that the many challenges facing the regime makes it fragile. This, in turn, does not bode well for democratic reforms. 

The seminar examines this debate while delving into China more deeply to consider those variables that challenge the regime. The goal is an understanding, not only of the scholarly debate on China, but of the challenges China faces as it pursues its goals of growth and power. 

As a Departmental Seminar in the Sages program, the goal is also to provide an opportunity for in-depth research in political science and to come to an understanding of how political scientists differ in their research methods and conclusions.

Topics to be discussed include China’s governmental organization as the last remaining powerful communist country; a comparison of former Communist countries in Europe; and variables that impact China today, including politics, economics, societal, and foreign policy issues.
Course Requirements

Success in this seminar depends greatly on attendance, reading, and class participation. **Attendance will be taken and participation noted.** Attendance and seminar participation account for 30% of your grade.

Other assignments include two short papers and a final research paper with oral presentation. First, you are to write two five-page papers examining different challenges that impact China’s future development. **Topics must be approved in advance.** Each of these two papers accounts for 15% of your grade for a total of 30%. **Paper One is due February 5. Paper Two is due March 5. Deadline extensions are given only for illness that is confirmed by a doctor. A deduction of five points will be charged for each day late without formal approval.** A bibliography (or Works Cited) page is to be included. It does not count toward the total number of pages required. **Do not** rely entirely on internet sources.

Second, you are to write a 20 to 25-page research paper on one challenge China faces that impacts its future development. **The chosen issue must be approved in advance. A first draft is due April 16.** This draft will be the basis of a 10-minute oral presentation of your findings presented during class on April 16, 19, 21, and 23. Oral presentations will be given alphabetically. Orals and final paper are worth 40% of your grade.

Your research should include a description of the challenge; its impact on China’s society and on other development issues; the actors involved at what level of government; the organizational constraints that impact its resolution; the political and economic constraints that impact its resolution; and how China has addressed the issue to date. **The Final Paper is due April 26.**

Reading Material

Books for sale at the University Bookstore are as follows:

Additional reading material is listed with an * on the schedule and is available via the Case Blackboard. Feel free to include readings other than those listed.

**Periodicals**

Helpful periodicals for this course include but are not limited to:


**Schedule**

*All dates for class discussion are tentative and subject to change.*

**January 11**  
Introduction

**January 13 & 15**  
Contention

*Charles Tilly & Sidney Tarrow: Contentious Politics, 2007.*

*Cheng Li: China’s Changing Political Landscape, 2008, pp. 1-12.*


*Yu Keping: Democracy is a Good Thing” in Beijing Daily News, October 23, 2006.*
January 20  Organization of the People’s Republic of China –

**Government**


**Military**

See [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/cmc.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/cmc.htm)


*Nicholas Lardy, C. Fred Bergsten, Charles Freeman, Derek Mitchell, China’s Rise, Challenges and Opportunities*, Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2008, Ch. 9.

**JANUARY 18  NO CLASS**

Comparative Communism

January 22 & 25  Europe


**JANUARY 26  ASIAN STUDIES DISCUSSION SERIES**

Paul Schroeder: *How Fragile is China?*
First in a series of talks sponsored by Case Western Reserve University’s Asian Studies Program. Time and location to be announced.


January 27 & 29  China –


*Brzezinski*, op. cit., Chapters 13-16.
Political Variables

February 1 & 3  Optimists –


*Dali L. Yang: Remaking the Leviathan: Market Transition and the Politics of Governance in China, Chs 1-2


February 5 PAPER ONE DUE

February 5 & 8  Pessimists –


*Susan L. Shirk: China, Fragile Superpower, Oxford University Press, 2007, Chapters 1-3

February 8 & 10  Adaptation

*David Shambaugh: China’s Communist Party, Atrophy and Adaptation, University of California Press, 2008, Chapters 6, 7 and 8.


*Dali L. Yang: Remaking the Chinese Leviathan, Chapter 9,
February 12  Limits


Economic Variables

February 15 & 17  Export Development Model –

*Barry Naughton: *The Chinese Economy*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007, Chapter 4

February 17 & 19  Need for a New Model

*European Chamber: *Overcapacity in China: Causes, Impacts and Recommendations*, December 1, 2009

Social Variables

February 22  Corruption


February 24 & 26  Society

*Yu Keping: *Democracy is a Good Thing*, chapters 4-6.
March 1  Labor

See http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/
See http://www.cato.org/events/china/papers/jie.html
See http://econ-www.mit.edu/files/691

March 3  Legal System


MARCH 5  PAPER TWO DUE

March 5  Public Health


MARCH 8, 10 & 12  SPRING BREAK

March 15  Movie on China’s Environment

March 15 & 17  The Environment

Elizabeth Economy: The River Runs Black, Cornell University Press, 2004, Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 8.
*Nicholas Lardy, C. Fred Bergsten, Charles Freeman, Derek Mitchell, China’s Rise, Challenges and Opportunities, Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2008, Chapter 7.

March 19 & 22  Rise of NGOs

*Qiusha Ma: Non-Governmental Organizations in Contemporary China, Routledge, 2006, Chapters 2-4 and Conclusion.
*Yu Keping: Democracy is a Good Thing, chapters 4-6, Reprise.
Foreign Policy Variables

March 24 & 26  General

* Thomas Robinson & David Shambaugh: Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice (Studies on Contemporary China)

March 29  Power


March 31  National Security

* Robert Sutter, op. cit., Chapter 5.

April 2  Soft Power


April 5  Regional Power


April 7 & 9  U.S. & China Relations

* Richard Rosecrance & Gu Guoliang: Power and Restraint, 2009, Introduction, Chapters 1, 3-5 plus Chapters 9, 10, 12, 13.
April 12 & 14  Control


*Nicholas Lardy, C. Fred Bergsten, Charles Freeman, Derek Mitchell, China’s Rise, Challenges and Opportunities*, Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2008, Chapter 3.

April 16  Draft of Final Paper Due

April 16  Oral Presentations Begin

April 26  Final Paper Due

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