Main Idea: How China Works

Questions:

China is not rising. It has risen. Though it has problems, its economy is robust and its activities in the world are equally so.

This poses a question raised by Frederick Engels: Has political reform become an economic necessity? Put another way, does politics yield to the dictates of economic development?

Chinese politics remains much as it always has. The country has wrestled with Weber’s three types of legitimacy: traditional, in which people go along because that is all they know; charismatic, in which they go along with a great leader such as Mao Zedong; and rational-legal, which China has tried since the death of Deng Xiaoping but is often overshadowed by the rise of a new great leader, e.g. Xi Jinping. The basic three questions China has and continues to ask are what is the best form of government, how to achieve that form, and how to maintain legitimacy. China has wrestled with each in 1895, 1905, 1911, 1915, 1919, 1921, 1927, 1949, 1979, and 2013.

Questions of the best form of government and whether it can foster legitimacy abide.

These basic questions are the core of this course. The course take-away is an understanding of China’s political culture, how the government is organized, the ideology – or lack thereof – that stands behind its organization, China’s policy process, the social changes brought on by economic reforms and generational change, political contention, government fragility or adaptation, and whether these last two issues will prompt change in the regime.

Assessment of your work will depend on how well you prepare in advance of class.

The course is comprised of an explanation and discussion of topics concerning Chinese political life. Consult the schedule for the topics as well as assigned reading.

Periodic seminar discussions will examine a variety of examine issues of interest to you. Success in these exercises depends on attending class regularly and doing assigned readings. It also depends on you – bring questions we can consider.
Tasks:

- Regular attendance is worth 15% of the final grade.
- Seminar Participation sessions (worth 20% of the final grade).
- One in-class true/false/multiple choice midterm on October 19 (worth 30% of the final grade)
- One in-class true/false/multiple choice final exam on December 12 (worth 35% of final grade)

Books to Buy:


Additional reading material is listed with an * on the schedule and is available via Case Canvas. Use readings other than those listed.

Sample Periodicals to Read

- *New York Times* (search icon for China)
- *Washington Post*
- *Wall Street Journal*
- “China World News” via *The Guardian*
- *The Economist + Its China Briefing*
- *China Quarterly*
- *China Digital Times*

**East Asia Forum**

**China Research Center**

**Tea Leaf Nation**

**Foreign Affairs**

**Foreign Policy**

**China Leadership Monitor**

**The Diplomat**

**South China Morning Post**

**Office Hours:** Thursday 1-2 pm or by appointment at 315 Mather House.
Tentative Schedule
(Subject to Change)

January 14 & 16  
*Our first understanding is to consider questions about China, including the analytical framework of Fragmented Authoritarianism. Further, what are the basic elements of culture.*

*Reading:*  
Kenneth Lieberthal: “The Fragmented Authoritarianism Model.”

January 21 & 23  
*What is meant by Chinese culture? What is Confucianism?*

*Reading:*  
*Stephen Angle: Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy*, Introduction.

January 28  
*How does culture and Confucianism translate into political culture? What are China’s two political cultures? What impact do both of these have on political change?*

*Reading:*  

January 30  
Seminar Questions
February 4

*The People’s Republic of China has a rich ideological history in Marxism, Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. Does this package of communist ideology remain salient for China today? What has replaced it? How does this impact China’s foreign relations?*

**Reading:**


*Yu Keping:* “Ideological Change and Incremental Democracy in Cheng Li, ed. *China’s Changing Political Landscape*, Ch. 3.


February 6 & 11

*The Chinese State includes the country’s political structure and leadership at the national and sub-national levels. These include the Communist Party, the Chinese government, the military, universities and research institutes, and non-governmental organizations. How does the structure lead to networked leadership? How does a networked leadership exercise power? China’s organization presents one of three major obstacles for Chinese political change.*

**Reading**


February 13 & 18  How does structure influence China’s policy process?

Reading  
*Pierre F. Landry: Decentralized Authoritarianism in China, Chapter 1  
David M. Lampton: A Plum for a Peach: Bargaining, Interests, and Bureaucratic Politics.”  
*Paul Schroeder: China’s Achilles Heel, (unpublished), An occasional paper for the Political Science Faculty at Case Western Reserve University, January 6, 2014.

February 20  Seminar Questions

February 25  How has China’s economic reforms produced the growth? What process did China follow to realize such growth? What limitations are there on China’s further development -- decentralization and corruption?

Reading:  

February 27  Between the two-part economic reform process came the Tiananmen interlude, begun on April 15, 1989, continuing on with thousands of Chinese protesting for more openness, and ending June 4 in the shooting death an unknown number of citizens.

Reading:  

Film  
Tiananmen Square Declassified.  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lA8BW4uEgRA
### March 3
Midterm Exam Review

### March 5
MIDTERM EXAM

### March 9-13
Spring Break

### March 17
The many economic changes in China have brought with them numerous social pressures.

*Reading*

*Minxin Pei: China’s Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy, Harvard University Press, 2006, Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, and Conclusion*

### March 19
Analyzing social movements and contentious politics.

*Charles Tilly & Sidney Tarrow: Contentious Politics, 2007, Chapters 1-3.*  

### March 24
Contentious politics in China

*Reading*

*Wenfang Tang: Populist Authoritarianism, Oxford University Press, 2016, Chapter 1*  
*December Green & Laura Luehrmann: Contentious Politics in Brazil and China, Westview Press, 2016, Chapter 1*

### March 26
Seminar Questions
March 31 & April 2

The transformation of Chinese society, including social pressures caused by economic growth and social change.

Reading:

*YiYi Lu: “NGOs in China” in Yongnian and Fewsmith.
*Yu Keping: Democracy is a Good Thing The Brookings Institution, 2009, Chapters 4 and 6.

April 7 & 9

Contention in the Chinese issues of labor, the environment, and corruption revealing the imperative for some type of political reform.

April 14 & 16

Will economic and social pressures create a need for political and bureaucratic reform? How do these pressures impact control by the Communist Party? This includes examination of the changing face of the Party, the contentious politics of leadership change, and the ongoing debate regarding economic and political reform.


April 21

China in the Age of Xi Jinping: fragility and adaptation on the midst of social change.

Reading


James McGregor: No Ancient Wisdom, No Followers, Chs 4-5


*Huang Zeping: “Xi Jinping says China’s Authoritarian system can be a model for the world” in Quartz, March 9, 2018.

April 23

*It Does Not Reboot

Paul Schroeder’s Last Lecturer