

Politics and Society in Contemporary China *(final proposal – course design by Dr. Tom Lairson, Rollins)*

Catalogue Description:

China has experienced extraordinary levels of political, economic and social turmoil coupled with breathtaking change over the past century. The end of a dynasty, a civil war, invasion and occupation, revolutionary modernization and extreme political difficulties, radical reversal from communism to a version of capitalism, and extraordinary rates of economic growth resulting from rapid integration into the world economy: all this and more in the space of 100 years. This course is designed to introduce students to contemporary China with an overview of these developments and a more detailed look at current social, political, economic and environmental issues.

Extended Description:

The recent history of China is in sharp contrast to the historical background of most students in the program. Understanding China requires an appreciation of these differences because this history shapes and defines the broad array of ideas, politics, actions and choices in China and does so in ways most students will find difficult to appreciate. This course is designed to convey a broad sense of this experience and will help students link this past to contemporary issues and problems. For example, the conflict between China and Taiwan is closely linked to the civil war in China and the extended conflict after 1949. Additionally, the combination of Japanese invasion, Cold War, and Cultural Revolution shaped choices by Chinese leaders leading to the radical reorientation of economic policy beginning in 1978. At the same time, some issues are related to problems with little parallel in China's recent past. Among others, these include: Defining and enforcing economic rules for an entire nation, many of which conflict with traditional culture; addressing an environmental crisis of monumental proportions; adjusting to the social and political tensions generated by rapid economic change; and managing global relations from a newfound position of strength.

Goals:

- ⊗ Provide students with an understanding of recent Chinese history
- ⊗ Develop the tools that will enable students to analyze a broad array of contemporary issues and problems
- ⊗ Organize thinking among students around both domestic and international developments
- ⊗ Promote the ability to think in terms of relationships among political, economic, social and ideological processes and changes

Outcomes:

- ⊗ Understands major political and social developments in China and Asia from 1900 – present
- ⊗ Articulates main issues in the international relations of China since 1972 (US, Japan, Russia, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, new economic diplomacy)
- ⊗ Articulates social questions in contemporary China: environment, women, religion, democracy, health
- ⊗ Articulates the nature and effects of radical social changes in China
- ⊗ Articulates links between past events and contemporary problems
- ⊗ Articulates strengths and weaknesses of present political system
- ⊗ Articulates major political issues associated with economic reform
- ⊗ Articulates main issues of China's international relations
- ⊗ Articulates primary difficulties of transformation to modernity in China

Specific Field Experiences:

Shanghai is an important center for the events of the course. It was a major location for imperialism, civil war, Cultural Revolution, and economic change. Here are examples of field experiences tied to the content of this course:

1. There are several **buildings on the Bund built between 1900 and 1930**. Students will visit the area and initially catalogue the names and basic histories of these buildings. They will also engage in more background research on the country of the builder and how that country entered China and its role in China during the period the building was built.
2. **Urban History Museum** – useful as a way to provide a physical experience of Shanghai - Students will locate pictures of Shanghai in 1970s or early 1980s and compare to pictures today
3. **Visit residence of Sun Yat-sen, residence of Chiang Kai-shek, and Shikumen**, which is the site of the First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party
4. **Visit Nanjing and sites of civil war events** in the 1930s and 1940s
5. **Meetings with Shanghai government officials**
6. **Meetings with Chinese Communist Party officials** in Shanghai
7. **Visit vicinity of coal-fired power plants** – develop data on the number of plants needed for electricity for Shanghai and the costs of scrubbers to reduce pollution
8. **Visit rural villages**, perhaps west of Nanjing, to get a better sense of how most Chinese live (in concert with Chinese Culture and History Course)
9. **Visit Hangzhou** where much of Taiwan's investment in China is located
10. **Visit Jewish history museum in Shanghai** for information about how Shanghai became home to many Jews in the 1930s.

Graded Events:

- Three essay exams
- Group presentations
- Class participation
- Two papers (contingent on the availability of research library resources)
 - Report on topic relating to contemporary China (from list to be supplied)
 - Report on field experience (relate to historical and/or contemporary topic)

Outline of Major Topics:

- Western Imperialism and the Collapse of the Qing Dynasty (1900-1912)
- The Warlord Era, World War I and Communism in China (1912-1927)
- Civil War and World War II (1927-1945)
- Communist Victory and the Development of Communism (1945-1965)
- The Cultural Revolution and the Decline of Communism (1966-1978)
- China's International Relations: Soviet Alliance and Conflict; the Vietnam War and Détente with the United States (1950-1979)
- Deng Xiaoping and Revolutionary Economics (1978-1989)
- Conflicts over development and democracy: Tiananmen Square (1985-1995)
- Integration with the World Economy (1989-2007)
- Economic Growth: Success and Inequality
- China's Rise and U.S. Relations
- China's Rise and Relations with Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Southeast Asia
- China's Rise and the Search for Energy
- The Nature of Communism in China
- Environmental Crisis in China
- Issues of Gender in Contemporary China

Potential Course Materials:

Jasper Becker, *Dragon Rising: An Inside Look at China Today*

C. Fred Bergsten, et al. *China, The Balance Sheet: What the World Needs to Know Now About the Emerging Superpower*

Christina Gilmartin, et al. (eds.) *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*

Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security*

Yasheng Huang, *Selling China: Foreign Direct Investment During the Reform Era*

Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution Through Reform*

Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy*

Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*

Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh (eds.) *Chinese Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*

David Shambaugh, (ed.) *Power Shift: China and Asia's new Dynamics*

John Bryan Starr, *Understanding China: A Guide to China's Economy, History, and Political Culture*

Credit Hours

These course credit assumptions are based on the standard Carnegie Hours/Units requirements:

- 16 Week Format, 4 Units, 4 Credits
(Basic formula: 1 unit equals 1 hour of lecture, or 2 hours lab with homework, or 3 hours lab without homework.)

Normal schedule would be 1 hour of content for 4 days (Monday through Thursday). In a given semester, some days will be replaced by activities and Friday is also open to host activities. As necessary, it is possible to include a weekend excursion that begins on Friday and ends Sunday afternoon. *Note: due to the synergy between this course and the Chinese Culture and History course, field experiences and syllabi will often be coordinated.*

