Political Science/East Asian Studies 373  
Government and Politics of the People’s Republic of China  
State University of New York at Albany  
Fall 2009

Professor Cheng Chen  
Office: Milne Hall 214A  
Phone: 591-8724  
E-mail: cchen@albany.edu

Course Description

This course introduces students to the government and politics of the People’s Republic of China, emphasizing events in the period since the Chinese Communist Party established its regime in 1949. It begins with a brief overview of China’s political history before 1949 in order to establish the necessary foundation for understanding the significance of subsequent events. The second part of the course analyzes the ways in which the Communist Party set out to reorganized China after the revolution, the consequences of these efforts, and the debates provoked within the elite and among the population. Next, the course focuses on the reform era in China. Specifically, we study how China has defined and confronted the challenge of economic development, nation-building, social transformation, and international relations. Finally, we assess the prospect of a Communist regime in China in light of its impressive achievements, painful failures, as well as current challenges. The objective of this course is to provide students with a broad survey of Chinese politics grounded in specific historical contexts. No previous knowledge of China’s history, culture, or language is required nor will such knowledge be assumed. This course fulfills the General Education requirement of “Regions beyond Europe.”

Course Requirements

There will be an in-class midterm exam and a take-home final essay exam, which is due on Wednesday, December 9 by two o’clock in the afternoon. The take-home essay exam is not a research paper and students need only draw on the readings and lectures for this course. In-class participation will count for 20% of the grade, the midterm 30%, and the take-home essay exam 50%. It is mandatory that all class members complete the assigned readings prior to the lectures.

Readings

Kenneth Lieberthal, Governing China: From Revolution through Reform, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004) [Required]
Jonathan D. Spence, The Search for Modern China, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999) [Recommended]
The above books are available at both the University Bookstore and Mary Jane downtown. The rest of the readings will be included in a course pack, available at Mary Jane.
PART I: THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

August 31: Introduction

- Course Syllabus

September 2-9: Historical Background (Class cancelled on September 4)
A. The Decline of Imperial China
B. The Pre-Revolutionary Era

- Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 1-39

September 11-16: The Communist Revolution
A. Early Struggles and the Sino-Japanese War
B. The Civil War and the Eventual Success

- Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 39-56

PART II: THE MAOIST ERA

September 18-23: Early Political and Economic Transformation (1949-1965)
A. Consolidation
B. Great Leap Forward

- Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 59-112

September 25-October 2: The Cultural Revolution (1966-1978)
A. The Cultural Revolution
B. Stalemate and Succession

- Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 112-122
- Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 565-617

October 5-9: China’s Foreign Policy during the Cold War
A. Sino-Soviet Alliance and Its Split
B. Sino-American Rapprochement

- Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 523-530, 553-559
PART III: THE POST-MAO ERA

October 12-16: Beginning of the Reform Era
A. Initiation of Reforms
B. Early Reforms

- Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 123-167

October 19-21: Tragedy and Recovery
A. The Tiananmen Incident
B. Recovery

- Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 171-242

October 23: In-Class Midterm

October 26-30: Deepening Economic Reforms
A. Political Economy
B. Successes and Failures

- Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 245-288

November 2-4: Political Reforms
A. Political Reforms
B. Will China Democratize?

- Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 289-314

November 6-9: Social Transformation
A. Social Conditions
B. Rise of Nationalism

November 11-16: China’s Foreign Policy after the Cold War
A. The Taiwan Issue
B. China and the United States: Containment or Engagement?
   - Kenneth Lieberthal, “Preventing a War over Taiwan,” *Foreign Affairs* 84:2 (March/April 2005): 53-63
   - Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, 1-81, 136-203

November 18-20: China and the World
A. China and Globalization
B. Contemporary China in Comparative Perspective
   - C. Fred Bergten et. al., *China: The Balance Sheet* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 73-117

November 23: In-Class Debate: Is China a Threat to the United States?
   - Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, 81-135

PART IV: PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

November 30-December 4: Facing Challenges
A. The Coming Transformation
B. The Current Leadership
   - Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, 204-219
   - Cheng Li, “China’s Team of Rivals,” *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2009)

December 7: The Future of China - Contrasting Views
A. Discussion: Assessing China
B. Review Session
   - Special issue on “China Rising,” *Foreign Policy* 146:44 (January/February 2005): 44-58