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 is designed to enable students to analyze 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, the students are expected to understand and evaluate how China has defined and confronted the challenges of political and economic development, nation-building, social transformation, and international relations. Finally, the students should be able to assess the prospect of the 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 Monday, December 10 in class. 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) [Recommended]
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 27: Introduction**

- Course Syllabus

**August 29-September 5: Historical Background**
A. The Decline of Imperial China  
B. The Pre-Revolutionary Era


**September 7-12: The Communist Revolution**
A. Early Struggles and the Sino-Japanese War  
B. The Civil War and the Eventual Success  


**PART II: THE MAOIST ERA**

**September 14-21: Early Political and Economic Transformation (1949-1965)**
A. Consolidation  
B. Great Leap Forward


A. The Cultural Revolution  
B. Stalemate and Succession

- Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 565-617

**October 1-5: 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 8-12: Beginning of the Reform Era
A. Initiation of Reforms
B. Early Reforms

October 15-19: Tragedy and Recovery
A. The Tiananmen Incident
B. Recovery

October 22: In-Class Midterm

October 24-27: Deepening Economic Reforms
A. Political Economy
B. Successes and Failures

October 29-November 2: Political Reforms
A. Political Reforms
B. Will China Democratize?
- Joseph, *Politics in China*, 165-190

November 5-9: Social Transformation
A. Social Conditions
B. Rise of Nationalism
November 12-16: China’s Foreign Policy after the Cold War
A. The Taiwan Issue
B. China and the United States: Containment or Engagement?

- Joseph, Politics in China, 367-380
- Avery Goldstein, Rising to the Challenge, 1-81, 136-203

November 19: In-Class Debate: Is China a Threat to the United States?

- Avery Goldstein, Rising to the Challenge, 81-135

November 26-30: 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

PART IV: PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

December 3-7: Facing Challenges
A. The Coming Transformation
B. The Current Leadership

- Joseph, Politics in China, 120-124
- Avery Goldstein, Rising to the Challenge, 204-219
- Cheng Li, “China’s Team of Rivals,” Foreign Policy (March/April 2009)

December 10: The Future of China
A. Discussion: Assessing China
B. Final essay due