Course Description

This is a graduate course designed to provide an in-depth survey of the main theoretical, empirical, and methodological approaches to the study of Chinese politics, and to situate these approaches within the broader field of comparative politics. Although familiarity with China’s political history or culture may be helpful and even desirable, it is not a prerequisite. The first part of the course covers the recent political history of China, emphasizing the period after 1949. In the second part of the course, we turn to a closer examination of key issues in the contemporary study of Chinese politics, including elite politics, political institutions, economic reform, political participation, social movements, national identity, and international factors. Students will be exposed to the key secondary literature on these subjects. Finally, we will conclude with an assessment of the nature and the future of the current Chinese regime. The course aims to prepare interested graduate students not only for further research and teaching about China, but also for research that involves comparison with other cases and on comparative politics more generally.

Course Requirements

Your grade in this course will be determined in the following manner:

- Seminar participation: 20%
- Oral presentations: 20%
- Take-home midterm: 30%
- Literature review: 30%

Class attendance and active, informed participation are mandatory. Students must complete the assigned readings prior to the seminar meetings. The oral presentations require each student to analyze and report on a number of assigned readings for a given week. The written assignments will include a mid-term take-home essay exam and a double-spaced 15-20 page literature review surveying and assessing the relative merits of different major approaches and arguments in the study of a particular topic in contemporary Chinese politics. Although this is not a research paper, you need to go beyond the assigned readings for your selected topic as you generate a wide-ranging critical survey of books and articles. You are encouraged to consult the instructor on the topic of your literature review. The literature review is due in the last class of the
semester on Tuesday, December 5. Late papers without university-approved reasons will result in grade reduction.

Readings

Books

David Lampton, *Following the Leader: Ruling China, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014)

Websites

China Leadership Monitor; ChinaFile; China US Focus

All the required books (under $30 each) are available at Mary Jane Books. The rest of the readings could be found on the course’s Blackboard. Those marked with “available on-line” can be retrieved by clicking on “E-Journals” from the Libraries web page and typing in the title of the journal in the search box. The suggested websites should be browsed regularly.

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August 29: Introduction

- Course Syllabus

PART I: POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE PRC

September 5: Communist Revolution


**September 12: Chinese Politics under Mao**

- Kissinger, *On China*, 113-320

**September 19: The Reform Era**

- Kissinger, *On China*, 321-446

**PART II: KEY ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE POLITICS**

**September 26: The Leadership**

- David Lampton, *Following the Leader: Ruling China, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014)

**October 3: Political Institutions**

October 10: Economic Reforms I: A Chinese Miracle?


October 17: Economic Reforms II: Issues and Problems


October 24: Political Participation

October 31: Social Movements


November 3, 3:00 PM: Avery Goldstein talk at UAlbany (Attendance required)

- “China’s Grand Strategy under Xi Jinping: Origins, Content, and Implications”

November 7: No Class

November 14: Nationalism and National Ideology


November 21: China and the World

**PART III: CONCLUSION**

**November 28: China’s future**

• Discussion on the 19th Party Congress

**December 5: Final paper due**

**Recommended Additional Readings on Modern Chinese History**

• Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China, 3rd Ed.* (W. W. Norton, 2012)
• Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution* (Belknap, 2008)