

Politics of China 中国政治

Politics 141 • Class Number 10406 • Fall 2024
University of California, Santa Cruz
Prof. Benjamin L. Read

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Course web site: <https://canvas.ucsc.edu/>
Instructor's web site: <https://benread.net>
Course meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:00a to 9:35a, in Stevenson 175
Office hours: Tues 10:00-11:00 in 157 Merrill Faculty Annex, or Wed 2-3 on Zoom, or by appointment
Sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/benreadofficehours>
Date of this syllabus: October 10, 2024. Subject to change; websites will have latest version

Overview:

Home to more than one-fifth of the world's people, China compels our attention for many reasons—particularly its authoritarian political system, which contrasts sharply with liberal democracies. This course aims to help the student acquire an understanding of this state's tortuous political development, its recent rise to global prominence, its prowess and its pathologies, how it works and how it doesn't work. The first two sessions provide essential background to the People's Republic, and the next six sessions cover essential episodes in the first four decades of the PRC, looking at the Communist Party's efforts to transform Chinese society, the Cultural Revolution, and the tensions and achievements of the early reform era, including the 1989 protest movement. The second half of the course explores themes and topics that are vital for understanding the politics of today's China. These include the institutions through which China is governed, the current state president and party secretary Xi Jinping, political participation (e.g., village elections and popular protests), media and public opinion, associations and civil society, China's state-capitalist mode of economic development, and topics in public policy. We also look at the special regions of Hong Kong and Xinjiang. No background in the study of Asia is assumed for this undergraduate course.

Readings:

We will read several chapters from the following book. **Our library has access to it** as an e-book, and I will post the assigned chapters to the course Canvas site (<https://canvas.ucsc.edu>). If you much prefer paper versions of books, you might consider buying it.

- William A. Joseph (ed.), *Politics in China: An Introduction, fourth edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024, ISBN: 9780197683217). We are using this edition, and not the 1st/2nd/3rd editions.

The many other required readings will be available on the course Canvas site.

Assignments and Ground Rules:

- Please read the following carefully before deciding to stay enrolled in this course.
- **Self-introduction:** please send me an email in the first week of class introducing yourself. You may wish to lay out such basic facts as your year in school; college; major; prior courses (if any) in Asian languages, history, or politics; international travel experience (if any); future career interests. I'd also like to know what you're most excited about in school and in your life; any challenges you're facing; and anything else you would like me to know about you. It can be useful for me to know such things, but really I am just curious to know whatever you would like to tell me about yourself.
- **Attendance:** Attending class, on time, is firmly required. I'm not indifferent to whether you're there or not. Quite the contrary: it matters a lot to me, and more importantly, to you. Your being there helps you learn and makes the class work. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Good attendance is rewarded

with a modest bonus. Unexcused absences will lower your quarter grade. Three percentage points will be deducted from your course grade for every unexcused absence. To put that in perspective, the difference between a B+ and a C+ is ten percentage points. It is entirely possible to fail the course through non-attendance; this has happened before. I am quite understanding about family emergencies, illness or other serious exigencies, and will treat them as excused absences. If you miss class, explain the circumstances via email (in advance if possible).

- **Classroom participation and etiquette:**
 - Come prepared for class, and contribute actively to class discussion. Participation in class counts for part of your class grade.
 - Please do not use electronic devices (computers, tablets, phones) in class.
 - Please use the bathroom prior to the start of each session, and try not to disrupt class by getting up at other times except in cases of utmost urgency. If you need to leave class early, please let me know ahead of time.
- **Reading:** This course involves a substantial amount of reading and you are required to do it. Readings must be completed before the class meeting for which they are assigned (except the first day). Note that although I have strived to make it easy for you to find the readings, it is your responsibility to obtain and read these items. In particular, download the electronic readings ahead of time. I will circulate discussion questions at least 24 hours before class to help guide you and to set the stage for in-class discussion.
- **Email:** You must use and regularly check your official UCSC email account, i.e., the one that AIS sends mail to. Make sure Canvas sends announcements to this account.
- **Grading:** Most assignments are scored on a 0-100 scale, where 90-100 is an A, 80-89 is a B, etc. Grades of A minus or higher are reserved for work of exceptionally high quality. The grade of B is for work that is truly good although not great. The grade of C is for minimally acceptable work.
- **Grade weighting:** Your final grade for the quarter will be calculated per the following, though the exact percentages are subject to adjustment.
 - Class participation: **20 percent**
 - In-class writing assignments: **25 percent**
 - Take-home midterm examination (due via email Sunday, October 27, 2024, 6pm): **20 percent**
 - Final exam (Monday, December 9, 2024, noon to 3pm): **35 percent**
- **Time commitment:** The UCSC Academic Senate reminds us: “Systemwide Senate Regulation 760 specifies that one academic credit corresponds to three hours of work per week for students during a 10-week quarter. This means that the average workload for a 5-credit course is 150 hours or 15 hours per week.” With this in mind, expect to spend each week, on average:
 - Lectures and discussion: 3 hours and 10 minutes
 - Reading, note-taking, the take-home midterm, and review for the final exam: 11 hours and 50 minutes, i.e., something like 5 hours for each class session.
- **Accommodations:** UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. We would also like to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. We encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.
- **Course materials:**
 - **Slides and audio recording:** Within a few days after each lecture I will post the slides and an audio recording. The recording is mainly in case you had to miss class for some good reason. Please bear in mind that these are for your personal use only and shouldn't be distributed or posted on the public internet. The Academic Senate has asked faculty to include a note to this effect, as follows:
 - **Warning from the university about distribution of lecture notes and materials:** Please note that students may be disciplined for selling, preparing, or distributing course lecture notes, including notes created independently by students. The unauthorized sale of lecture notes, handouts, readers or other course materials is a violation of campus policies as well as state law. Violation by distribution to the public may also constitute copyright infringement subject to legal action.

Part I / Fundamentals and Pre-PRC Background

Thursday, September 26, 2024: [First Meeting]

- Evan Osnos, “China’s Age of Malaise,” *The New Yorker*, October 23, 2023
- William A. Joseph, “Studying Chinese Politics,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 1, pp. 3–29 [partial chapter with basic background on China and approaches to the study of China]

Tuesday, October 1, 2024: [Essential Legacies from China’s Ancient and Recent Past]

- R. Keith Schoppa, “From Empire to People’s Republic,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 2, pp. 41–71
- Peter J. Seybolt, *Throwing the Emperor from His Horse*, preface and pp. 1–30

Part II / The People’s Republic of China, 1949–1989

Thursday, October 3, 2024: [Socialist Transformation and Class Politics]

- Frederick Teiwes, “Mao Zedong in Power,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 3, pp. 72–85 [partial chapter]
- William A. Joseph, “Ideology and China’s Political Development,” in *Politics in China*, chapter 6, pp. 161–189 [partial chapter]
- Peter J. Seybolt, *Throwing the Emperor from His Horse*, pp. 31–49 (chapters 2 and 3)

Tuesday, October 8, 2024: [The Great Leap Forward and Campaign-Style Governance]

- Frederick Teiwes, “Mao Zedong in Power,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 3, pp. 85–94 [partial chapter]
- Peter J. Seybolt, *Throwing the Emperor from His Horse*, pp. 51–64
- Yang Jisheng, part of “Anxious in Anhui,” chapter 8 of *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine, 1958–1962* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), pp. 269–286 [partial chapter]

Thursday, October 10, 2024: [The Cultural Revolution and State Mobilization of the “Masses”]

- Frederick Teiwes, “Mao Zedong in Power,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 3, pp. 95–114 [partial chapter]
- Elizabeth J. Perry and Xun Li, “Rebels: The Workers’ General Headquarters,” in *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 29–69

Tuesday, October 15, 2024: [The 1980s and the Political Crisis of 1989]

- Bruce Gilley, “Deng Xiaoping and his Successors,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 4, pp. 118–128 [partial chapter]
- William A. Joseph, “Ideology and China’s Political Development,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 6, pp. 189–193 [partial chapter]
- Peter J. Seybolt, *Throwing the Emperor from His Horse*, pp. 77–88 on decollectivization and the state of the village as of the late 1980s
- Prior to class, watch the 3-hour documentary “Gate of Heavenly Peace” (1995), by Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon. It’s available online (Part I: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Gtt2JxmQtg> Part II: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0lge4fWkWI>) and in the McHenry Library media center.

Part III / Key Themes and Topics in Contemporary Chinese Politics

Thursday, October 17, 2024: [The CCP’s Post-1989 Recovery and “Authoritarian Resilience”]

- Louisa Lim, “Student,” chapter 4 of *The People’s Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited* (Oxford

University Press, 2014), pp. 83–104

- William A. Joseph, “Ideology and China’s Political Development,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 6, pp. 193–195 [partial chapter]
- Andrew G. Walder, “Unruly Stability: Why China’s Regime Has Staying Power,” *Current History* (September 2009), pp. 257–263

Tuesday, October 22, 2024: [Structures of Governance]

- Cheng Li, “China’s Communist Party-State: The Structure and Dynamics of Power,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 7, pp. 208–242
- Bruce Dickson, “Introduction: The CCP’s Strategy for Survival,” in *The Dictator’s Dilemma: The Chinese Communist Party’s Strategy for Survival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1–29

Optional further reading:

- Richard McGregor, “The Keeper of the Files: The Party and Personnel,” in *The Party: The Secret World of China’s Communist Rulers* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), pp. 70–103

Thursday, October 24, 2024: [Xi Jinping]

- Alfred L. Chan, “The Rise and Rule of Xi Jinping (2012–present),” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 5, pp. 139–157
- Cai Xia, “The Weakness of Xi Jinping,” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2022) [also available in Chinese]
- William A. Joseph, “Ideology and China’s Political Development,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 6, pp. 195–203 [partial chapter]

Optional further reading:

- Ashley Esarey and Han Rongbin, eds., *The Xi Jinping Effect* (University of Washington Press, 2024)
- Elizabeth C. Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State* (Oxford University Press, 2018), chapters 1 “Introduction” and 2 “Heart of Darkness,” pp. 1–54

Sunday, October 27, 2024: [Take-home midterm] Due at 6pm

Tuesday, October 29, 2024: [Media, Internet, and Public Opinion]

- Wenfang Tang, “Public Opinion Survey and Authoritarian Resilience in China,” short paper presented at Chinese Politics Workshop, Harvard University, December 15, 2017, pp. 1–6
- Evan Osnos, “The Forbidden Zone,” *The New Yorker* (July 20, 2009) [on Hu Shuli and the news magazine she edited]
- Guobin Yang, “Internet Politics,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 16, pp. 469–486

Optional further reading:

- Elizabeth C. Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State* (Oxford University Press, 2018), chapter 3 “Chinanet,” pp. 55–90

Thursday, October 31, 2024: [CCP Mechanisms of Selecting and Correcting Leaders]

- Melanie Manion, *Political Selection in China: Rethinking Foundations and Findings*, Cambridge Elements, 2023 [read it all, but you only need to skim Section 2]
- Andrew Wedeman, “A Crushing Tide Rolling to a Sweeping Victory: Xi Jinping’s Battle with Corruption after Six Years of Struggle,” *China Currents*, September 9, 2019

Tuesday, November 5, 2024: [China’s Political Economy (1): Drivers of Growth and Competitiveness]

- David Zweig, “China’s Political Economy,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 9, pp. 294–334
- Arthur R. Kroeber, “Industry and the Rise of the Export Economy” and “Urbanization and Infrastructure,” chapters 3 and 4 of *China’s Economy: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016)

Optional further reading:

- James Fallows, “China Makes, the World Takes,” *The Atlantic* (July/August 2007), <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200707/shenzhen>

Thursday, November 7, 2024: [China’s Political Economy (2): What Remains of Socialism?]

- Barry Naughton, “Is China Socialist?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2017), pp. 3–24
- Kam Wing Chan, “China’s *Hukou* System at 60: Continuity and Reform,” *Handbook on Urban Development in China* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019)

Optional further reading and viewing:

- Martin King Whyte, “China’s Post-Socialist Inequality,” *Current History* (September 2012), pp. 229–234
- Leslie T. Chang, *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2009)
- Documentary: “We the Workers,” (2017) trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndY1294mVDk>
- Documentary: “Plastic China,” (2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3Oz7Yp40EY>

Tuesday, November 12, 2024: [The Political and Economic Elite]

- Desmond Shum, *Red Roulette: An Insider’s Story of Wealth, Power, Corruption, and Vengeance in Today’s China* (Scribner, 2021). We’ll read at least the introduction and chapters 5–9 (pp. 1–4, 71–136). I also recommend chapters 1 and 4, which provide background on Shum and Whitney Duan (Duan Weihong); these are optional.

Thursday, November 14, 2024: [Contention and Civil Society]

- Ai Weiwei, “Citizens’ Investigation” and “Disturbing the Peace,” chapters 15 and 16 of *1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows: A Memoir* (Crown Publishing, 2021), pp. 246–277
- Diana Fu, “Labor Organizations in China,” chapter 2 of *Mobilizing Without the Masses: Control and Contention in China* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 30–49

Tuesday, November 19, 2024: [Local Elections]

- Prior to class, watch the documentary “Wukan: China’s Democracy Experiment,” created by Lynn Lee and James Leong and broadcast on Al Jazeera. It’s in six parts, each about 20 minutes. Links and URLs:
[Part 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mglQckQGwbG) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mglQckQGwbG>
[Part 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0BEcmZuTCI) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P0BEcmZuTCI>
[Part 3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Dxb3sT4dB0) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Dxb3sT4dB0>
[Part 4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIMbmDBXoGg) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIMbmDBXoGg>
[Part 5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cfzn-3RCfFU) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cfzn-3RCfFU>
[Part 6](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wbZlyNFgn4) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wbZlyNFgn4>
- We will begin class with a writing assignment on the documentary.

Optional further reading:

- Monica Martinez-Bravo, Gerard Padró i Miquel, Nancy Qian, and Yang Yao, “The Rise and Fall of Local Elections in China,” *American Economic Review* Vol. 112, No. 9, pp. 2921–2958; summarized as SCCEI Brief
- Kevin J. O’Brien and Rongbin Han, “Path to Democracy? Assessing Village Elections in China,” *Journal of Contemporary China* Vol. 18, No. 60 (June, 2009), pp. 359–378

Thursday, November 21, 2024: [Policymaking]

- Sebastian Heilmann, “Policy-Making through Experimentation: The Formation of a Distinctive Policy Process,” in *Mao’s Invisible Hand: The Political Foundations of Adaptive Governance in China*, edited by Heilmann and Elizabeth J. Perry (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), pp. 62–101
- Peter Hessler, “How China Controlled the Coronavirus,” *The New Yorker*, August 10, 2020

Tuesday, November 26, 2024: [The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region]

- Sonny Shiu-hing Lo, “Hong Kong,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 19, pp. 554–577
- Browse: Kelly Ho, “Explainer: 7 Ways Beijing Reduced Democratic Representation in Hong Kong’s Elections,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, updated December 20, 2021
<https://hongkongfp.com/2021/05/28/explainer-7-ways-beijing-reduced-democratic-representation-in-hong-kong-elections/>
- Browse this list of protesters and pro-democracy activists arrested and imprisoned in the past few years:
<https://www.hongkongwatch.org/political-prisoners-database>

Optional further reading:

- Jiayang Fan, “Hong Kong’s Protest Movement and the Fight for the City’s Soul,” *The New Yorker*, December 9, 2019
- Sebastian Veg, “Legalistic and Utopian: Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement,” *New Left Review* 92 (March/April 2015), pp. 54–73

Thursday, November 28, 2024: [Thanksgiving] Holiday — no class meeting

Tuesday, December 3, 2024: [Xinjiang]

- Gardner Bovington, “Xinjiang,” in *Politics in China*, 4th edition, chapter 18, pp. 523–553
- Tahir Hamut Izgil, *Waiting to Be Arrested at Night: A Uyghur Poet’s Memoir of China’s Genocide*, translated by Joshua L. Freeman (New York: Penguin Press, 2023). Read at least the translator’s introduction, prologue, and chapters 3, 5, and 6 (pp. ix–xvii, 1–19, 48–57, 70–92).

Optional further reading:

- James Millward, “‘Reeducating’ Xinjiang’s Muslims,” *The New York Review of Books*, February 7, 2019
- *The Economist*, “Who is Chinese? The Upper Han,” November 19, 2016
- James Leibold, “The Spectre of Insecurity: The CCP’s Mass Internment Strategy in Xinjiang,” *China Leadership Monitor*, March 1, 2019

Thursday, December 5, 2024: [Debating How China is Governed]

- We will have an in-class debate about the merits and problems of China’s system of governance, considering all that we have read and learned
- “[China: Democracy that Works](#),” white paper issued by China’s State Council Information Office, December 2021. We will assign portions of this text to groups.

Optional reading:

- “[Dialogue on Democracy](#)” organized by Chinese state media and think tanks
- Bruce Dickson, “Defining Democracy,” chapter 6 of *The Dictator’s Dilemma: The Chinese Communist Party’s Strategy for Survival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 260–299
- A debate in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2013):
 - Eric X. Li, “The Life of the Party”
 - Yasheng Huang, “Democratize or Die: Why China’s Communists Face Reform or Revolution”

Final exam: Monday, December 9, 2024, noon–3pm

- Note that the final exam must be taken at the above time; alternative times cannot be arranged.