

Politics and Change in China

This course is an introduction to the history and politics of China. It is designed to help you understand the political history of China from 1840 to the present. Our goal is to develop a working knowledge of the how politics works in the People's Republic of China. We are especially interested in understanding the origins and nature of state power and legitimacy in contemporary China.

The course is divided into three parts. Part I (1840-1911) is devoted to understanding the collapse of the last dynasty--the Qing. Part II (1911-1949) is focused on the reasons for the success of the revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong. Part III (1949-2010) is concerned with the performance of the socialist government that has ruled China since the 1949 revolution. We will pay special attention to the causes and consequences of the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and the Tiananmen Protest Movement of 1989, and to the origins of the crisis of state legitimacy in present day China. We will compare China's crisis to that of other failed socialist systems, and we will explore whether China is a stable or unstable country. Lectures, readings, and class discussions will cover the entire modern period, but we will focus mainly on the 1911 to 2010 period.

There will be a two-part mid-term exam (40 per cent of grade), one out-of-class research exercise in which you will be asked to explore an a key issue in Chinese politics (20 per cent of grade), and one ten page term paper (40 per cent of grade). I will announce the dates of the two-part mid-term exam in class. Your term paper is due on Wednesday, December 8, 2010. Late papers will incur a grade penalty.

There are six required books for the course (Bianco, Meisner, Spence, Thaxton, Miles, and Qiu Xiaolong). However, you are required to read only Chapter 5 of Miles, so that you do not need to purchase his book. We will hold class discussions on several of the main books. Small "discussion teams," composed of three to five students, will cooperate in leading the discussion on assigned books. There also will be several films, and you are encouraged to participate in the discussion of each film.

Readings:

The following six books are required:

1. Bianco, Origins of the Chinese Revolution (Stanford)
2. Spence, The Gate of Heavenly Peace (Penguin)
3. Meisner, Mao's China and After (Free Press)
4. Thaxton, Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China (Cambridge)
5. Miles, The Heritage of Tiananmen (Michigan)
6. Qiu Xiaolong, The Death of A Red Heroine (Soho)

Political Science 33, Fall 2010, Mr. Thaxton

The following four books are *recommended*:

Frederic Wakeman, Jr., The Fall of Imperial China.

Jonathan Spence, Mao Zedong.

Ralph A. Thaxton, Jr., Salt of the Earth.

Cheng Li, Rediscovering China.

Jonathan Unger, The Transformation of Rural China.

Reading Schedule:

Week 1

Introduction. Lectures on Chinese geopolitics and on the fall of Imperial China.

Wakeman, all (Recommended)

Weeks 2-4

Bianco, all.

Films: "The Mao Years," Three Part Series.

Films: "China Yellow, China Blue," Two Part Series, to be viewed per my instructions.

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Week 5

Bianco, again.

Spence, all.

Week 6

Film: "To Live" (Zhang Yimou's adaptation of Yu Hua's novel, *To Live*)

Meisner, Chapters 1-7.

Week 7

Meisner, Chapters 8-13, especially on the Great Leap Forward and its Famine.

Thaxton, all.

Weeks 8-9

Thaxton, all.

Meisner, Chapters 14-20.

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Political Science 33, Fall 2010, Mr. Thaxton

Weeks 10-11

Film: "Hibiscus Town" (From Gu Hua's *Small Town Called Hibiscus*)

Film on Mao and the Cultural Revolution (if available).

Miles, selected chapters (your choice, but you are required to read only Chapter 5, "The Virus of Corruption").

Week 12

Meisner, Chapters 21-25, on the Reform Era.

Film: "The Accused"

Film: "The Story of Qiu Ju"

Film: "To Have or Have not: The Changing Face of China."

Week 13

Qiu Xiaolong, all and class discussion.

Film: "China's Unnatural Disaster: The Tears of Sichuan Province."

Everyone is required to attend this showing. We will have a class discussion of the film and its implications for the nature of state power and legitimacy in contemporary China.

Thaxton, Conclusion (again).

Week 14

Lecture, discussion, conclusion.