
Modern Chinese Politics

Spring 2020



Dates / contact hours: (Times are in China) 9:00-10:00 Tuesdays, 21:00-22:00 Thursdays, subject to change

Academic credit: 4 DKU credits

Course format: seminar

Instructor's Information

Andrew MacDonald

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Office hours: TBD

Zoom office hour link: [My Zoom office](#)

My interest in Chinese politics comes from a long fascination with one of the most rapidly developing and changing countries in the world. I have long been interested in how everyday people in China experience China's dramatic transformation since 1979. I invite you to view examples of my work at: www.andrewmacdonald.org. If you're interested in my work I'm happy to chat further about it during office hours!

Contact Policy:

I urge you to think deeply about the material introduced in class during the evenings and on the weekends. In doing this thinking you will likely have questions.

You are also welcome (and encouraged) to schedule an office hour meeting with me to ask any question—silly, serious or anything in between.

If you are unable to schedule an online meeting, my general policy is that I answer email during work hours (I sometimes try to have my own home life!) and I promise a response within 24 hours. Usually I answer student emails in the afternoons.

What is this course about?

How is the Chinese political system organized? What are the rules, both formal and informal, about how policy is made in China? What determines whether a policy actually works in China? How do everyday people experience politics in China?

This class introduces you to readings, arguments, and concepts that begin to explore the answers to these questions. We are not going to fully answer these questions in this class, but my hope and goal for the class is that you can start to recognize systematic patterns and a logic of action in how the Chinese political system operates.

Another goal of the class is to become more comfortable reading academic texts. The reading load for the class is not particularly heavy but we will be engaged in close readings of key texts for the class and that should help you develop the skills to read and understand dense academic arguments.

What this class is **NOT** about is having a general debate on the merits of the Chinese political system. Many of you may have strong views about the Chinese political system overall or certain features of the Chinese political system. The primary goal of this class is to describe, analyze, assess and unpack the system as it is. There is space for discussion about whether certain changes would be appropriate or useful to the current system but the discussion must be respectful and grounded in the course materials and readings. I will cut short classroom discussion that leads toward unproductive general philosophizing about China.

What background knowledge do I need before taking this course?

None

What will I learn in this course?

Upon completing the course, you will develop the following abilities:

- Define key features of the Chinese political system
- Explain how the Chinese political system developed into its present state
- Discuss recent developments in China in a more systematic way
- Relate news articles about China to academic literature and concept introduced in class
- Compose a coherent argument linking several developments in Chinese politics to each other
- Evaluate key features and challenges facing the Chinese political system in the future

What will I do in this course?

We will meet virtually twice a week. Generally, the first online meeting will not require any preparation and will be some type of activity. The second meeting will be a normal discussion section.

Neither session is required, either due to time differences or because of poor internet connectivity. However, if you miss any session, you will have make-up assignments that will be due instead. In short, if you can make the online sessions, you should do your utmost to participate.

How can I prepare for the class sessions to be successful?

The best way to prepare for our online discussions is to do the readings carefully. I suggest that as you read, you keep a notebook near you.

While reading, have three separate pages. First, make a running list of questions as you do the readings. Second, make note of any interesting observations or thoughts you have responding to the readings. Third, have a section that includes any references or connections to previously studied material.

Making lists 1) and 2) will make it very easy to complete the required homework for the week and 3) will make your discussion participation be especially well informed and interesting.

What required texts and videos will I need?

China's Political System by Sebastian Heilmann
Politics in China, edited by William Joseph

We will also read a number of other articles in class. Some of these will be academic articles and others will be popular articles. The articles will be available on Sakai.

In addition, as part of our course, you will be accessing content available through Coursera for DKU. This content will include video lectures, online readings, practice quizzes, and, in some cases, online discussions.

Please enroll in the following two courses:

- Chinese Politics Part 1 – China and Political Science
- China’s Economic Transformation Part 1: Economic Reform and Growth in China

You can do so through the “Coursera for DKU” portal, which allows you to enroll in the Coursera course without any additional registration fee. Coursera recommends using a VPN to access their materials.

1. Go to this url: <https://coursera.org/programs/coursera-for-dku-qa3sb>.
2. Once there, click the “Join for free” button in the middle of the screen.
3. Click “Login with Duke University”. A screen will appear with a place to login with your NetID. Do so.
4. You will receive an email to confirm your Coursera membership. Follow the directions in the email and your registration with Coursera will be complete.
5. If you have any problems with this process, please let me know.

How will my grade be determined?

Assessment: Grades in the class will be determined by:

- *Participation (10% of grade):* Participation will not be counted by the number of times you speak in the Zoom sessions but instead by the quality of your comments. If you are unable to attend the Zoom sessions, participation will be counted by the quality of your make-up material. You will self-assess your participation (including participation in group presentations) in the middle of the term and again at the end of the term.
- *Pre-Class Warmups (10% of grade):* Before the Thursday online discussion, there will be a series reading questions posted on Sakai. You must answer, with one paragraph, two separate questions. You must answer one question for each unit assigned for the week. Reading responses are due on Sakai two hours before the start of the discussion section.
- *Group Video Projects (25% of grade):* During weeks 2, 4, and 6, your group (group assignments will be announced on March 28) will make a video presentation using Zoom that analyzes a news article on Chinese politics, using that week’s readings as a basis to understand the subject/story referenced in the article.

Be creative! There will be extra points available for the presentation that was most creative and the presentation that made me laugh the most. Have fun with the presentation and use memes, funny images, etc. but must have an overall good quality of analysis. The presentation must be at least 5 minutes long. These are due on Saturday at 11:59 pm China time.

- *Midterm Papers (30% of grade):* These papers will require you to select one news article regarding a Chinese political development and then discuss the development in light of readings from, for the first paper, Weeks 1-3 and the second paper Weeks 4-5. Make an argument as to how the article relates to the readings.

A draft of the papers with an outline of key points, article chosen, and a thesis statement is due on April 7th and 21st at 7:00 am China time. The finished papers are due on Week 3 and Week 5. 750 words per paper. DUE April 12th and 25th at 11:59 pm China time.

- *Final Paper (25% of grade)*: The final paper will require you to select at least two articles about a Chinese political development and discuss the development from as many different perspectives about Chinese politics as you think appropriate based on our readings in Class. Make an argument for why they are connected and reference the materials in class and some of your own research to connect the news article and our readings. 1500 words. DUE May 8 11:59 pm China time.

Grading Scale

The grading scale is as follows:

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|----|-----|--------------|
| A+ | 4.0 | 100- 98 |
| A | 4.0 | 97 - 93 |
| A- | 3.7 | 92-90 |
| B+ | 3.3 | 89 - 87 |
| B | 3.0 | 86 - 83 |
| B- | 2.7 | 82 - 80 |
| C+ | 2.3 | 79 - 77 |
| C | 2.0 | 76 - 73 |
| C- | 1.7 | 72 - 70 |
| D+ | 1.3 | 69 - 67 |
| D | 1.0 | 66 - 63 |
| D- | 1.0 | 62 - 60 |
| F | 0 | 59 and below |

What are the course policies?

Late Homework Policy:

Homework forms an essential part of the learning process for the class. You will need to turn in your homework at the specified due dates.

Because of the nature of online courses, you get one free 48 hour pass to turn in an assignment late without penalty (cannot be used on the final however, due to when grades must be submitted). Homework submitted late under this policy cannot be submitted any later than the 48 hours after the original due date.

Late homework beyond the first late assignment submitted will be penalized 50% not to because I enjoy being mean but because the homework is such an essential part of our class environment. I will not accept homework later than 48 hours after the due date.

Collaboration Policies:

You are expected to strictly adhere to the Duke Kunshan University Community Standard in all of your work and participation, and violations will be enforced. More details can be found in Duke Kunshan University Academic Polices (add link to the policy).

All work must be done exclusively by the individual to whom it has been assigned. Collaboration on assignments, the use of previously assigned homework, quizzes and answer keys, outside sources or outside aids (both written and electronic) are not allowed unless explicitly noted in the assignment guidelines. All cases of suspected cheating will be referred for adjudication to the Dean's Office. Any violation for which a student is found responsible is considered grounds for failure in the course.

It may sound cliché to say, but if you cheat and copy others' answers or papers you are only cheating yourself; you will not learn how to write and succeed in college. Cheating is ultimately self-defeating so for both of our benefit, please, don't do it. If you are having trouble completing any of the assignments and feel tempted to cheat, please contact me directly instead with the difficulties you are having.

Sharing of Student Opinions/Work/Recordings with Those Outside of Class:

Given the sometimes-sensitive nature of our course content, I have a zero-tolerance for sharing other student's work, opinions, or recordings of class with anyone not enrolled in our class unless you receive explicit permission.

You may share general class sentiment to others outside of class – you can discuss with others outside of class that, for example, the class debated issue x, with most in favor of issue x with some other students opposed.

You may not share any opinions or class work that is identifiable to any individual student. This prohibition includes sharing opinions or work in a way that avoids directly naming the student but provides enough detail that they may be identified. You may not record class Zoom sessions and share that recording with anyone not enrolled in class.

I take violations of this rule seriously and will report all violations to the Dean of Students, with a possible punishment being receiving an F for the class, in addition to other punishments as the circumstances warrant.

What is the expected course schedule?

Each week, we will cover two distinct areas of content, usually areas that are related to each other.

Setting the Stage – Modern Chinese History

- **Week 1 Unit 1. Introduction, History, and Geography of China**

Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*, Chapter 1 (on Sakai)
Zoom video on geography (on Sakai)

- **Week 1 Unit 2. Post-Mao Reforms**

Coursera Chinese Politics – Video 5.2
Politics in China, Chapter 4:124-134
Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*, Chapter 4: 85-100 (on Sakai)
Coursera Chinese Politics – Video 5.3

Week 1 Online Session 1 (Tuesday, Mar 24): Introductions, concept map

Week 1 Online Session 2 (Thursday, Mar 26): Discussion section

- **Week 2 Unit 1. Tiananmen and After**

Politics in China, Chapter 4:135-150

Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*, Chapter 4: 100-109 (on Sakai)

Coursera Chinese Politics – Video 5.6

Coursera China's Economic Transformation – Video 1.5

- **Week 2 Unit 2. China's Political Economy**

Politics in China, Chapter 8:285-307

Heilmann, 207-212 (4.5), 226-241 (4.8-4.10)

Coursera China's Economic Transformation – Video 1.6

Coursera China's Economic Transformation – Video 5.4

Naughton, Barry. "Is China Socialist?." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31.1 (2017): 3-24.

Week 2 Online Session 1 (Tuesday, Mar 31): Video screening (Gate of Heavenly Peace)

Week 2 Online Session 2 (Thursday, Apr 2): Discussion section

Institutions in China

Midterm Paper 1 Draft Due Tuesday, April 7th at 7:00 am

- **Week 3 Unit 1. The Workings of Government**

Heilmann, 46-62 (2.1-2.2), 76-84 (2.4), 114-125 (2.9)

Pei, Minxin. "Bureaucratic strategies of coping with strongman rule: How local officials survive in President Xi Jinping's new order," *China Leadership Monitor*, 60 (2019).

- **Week 3 Unit 2. The Party**

Coursera Chinese Politics – Videos 1.3-1.8

Politics in China, Chapter 6:201-227

Week 3 Online Session 1 (Tuesday, Apr 7): Paper workshop

Week 3 Online Session 2 (Thursday, Apr 9) Discussion section

Midterm Paper 1 Due Sunday, April 12th at 11:59 pm China time

- **Week 4 Unit 1. The Leadership**

Heilmann, 166-192 (3.3-3.8)

Politics in China, Chapter 6:227-234

Wu, Guoguang, "From the CCP Dilemma to the Xi Jinping Dilemma: The Chinese Regime's Capacity for Governance," *China Leadership Monitor*, 63 (2020).

Coursera Chinese Politics – Videos 2.4-2.6

- **Week 4 Unit 2. The Local State**

Heilmann, 85-93, 99-108 (2.5, 2.7-2.8.1)

Cai, Yongshun, "Power Structure and Regime Resilience: Contentious Politics in China." *British Journal of Political Science*, 38 (2008).

Coursera China's Economic Transformation – Videos 2.2, 5.3

Week 4 Online Session 1 (Tuesday, Apr 14): Debate
Week 4 Online Session 2 (Thursday, Apr 16): Discussion section

State and Society

- **Week 5 Unit 1. Political Control & Rural Society**

Heilmann, 242-258 (5.1-5.3)
Politics in China, Chapter 9:317-346
Coursera Chinese Politics – Video 4.3
YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tB7sTTmRg>

- **Week 5 Unit 2. Urban Society & Social Organizations**

Heilmann, 259-274 (5.4-5.5)
Politics in China, Chapter 10:347-370
Cornell Lecture series video: <https://www.cornell.edu/video/timothy-oakes-the-urban-ideology-in-china>

Week 5 Online Session 1 (Tuesday, Apr 21): Paper workshop
Week 5 Online Session 2 (Thursday, Apr 23): Discussion section

Midterm Paper 2 Due Saturday, April 25th at 11:59 pm China time

- **Week 6 Unit 1. The Internet & Media**

Heilmann, 274-280 (5.6)
Politics in China, Chapter 15:440-454
This American Life - Mr. Chen Goes to Wuhan: <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/695/everyones-a-critic/act-two-10>

- **Week 6 Unit 2. Minorities, Religion, and Social Protests**

Heilmann, 281-297 (5.7-5.9)
Lily Tsai, “Constructive Noncompliance,” Comparative Politics 47:3 (2015): 253-27
Princeton Lecture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H0GPKrB2FQ>
USC Lecture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26puyHShcUw>

Week 6 Online Session 1 (Tuesday, Apr 28): Video screening: Under the Dome
Week 6 Online Session 2 (Thursday, Apr 30): Discussion section

Closing Arguments

- **Week 7 Unit 1. Future Challenges to the Chinese System**

Heilmann, 398-418
Carl Minzner. 2015. “China After the Reform Era,” Journal of Democracy 26(3): 120-143.

- **Week 7 Unit 2. The China Model Part II**

Heilmann, 419-427

Daniel Bell et al. "Is the China Model Better Than Democracy?" The China File. Available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/19/china-democracy-theory-communist-party-politics>

Week 7 Online Session 1 (Tuesday, May 5): Discussion section

Week 7 Online Session 2 (Thursday, May 7): Debate

FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 8 at 11:59 pm, EDT