POLITICAL POWER IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA
Political Science 642, Fall 2013
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30–3:45, 1140 Grainger Hall
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Political Science and Public Affairs

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In an era of reform that began in the late 1970s, China has followed a unique path of development to achieve extraordinary economic growth. Evidence of the economic transformation is striking, indeed, overwhelming. To observe the more modest political change requires more powerful analytic lenses, however. Equipping you with lenses so that you can critically gauge the foundations and fault lines of political power in contemporary China is the main goal of this course.

Expectations


Course website. On the course website at Learn@UW, you will find the reading materials and whatever PowerPoint slides accompany lectures—as well as other materials, such as midterm and final examinations from previous years. I recommend you download onto your laptop or print out the PowerPoint slides before class and take lecture notes organized around them.

Respect for others. Please respect others in the classroom. Be in class and seated before 2:30 so that you do not disturb others, including me, with a late arrival. If you use a laptop to take notes in class, stay on task so that your laptop screen content does not distract those seated near you. If you are not observing laptop protocol, I will close your laptop.

Absence due to illness. Students with influenza-like illness (fever of 100 degrees F or higher, with a cough or sore throat) should not come to class or to my office hours until fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medications. If you experience symptoms of influenza-like illness, please send me an e-mail explaining your absence. We will work something out.

Special accommodations. If you need special accommodations to enable full participation in this course, please let me know in the first few weeks of class. Information will remain confidential. You also may wish to contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center at 608.263.2741 regarding campus policies and services.

Evaluation

I will evaluate your performance on five in-class quizzes, contributions to Thursday discussions, a midterm and a final examination, and a short written assignment. Quizzes take place on Thursdays and focus on the preceding Tuesday’s lecture. The written assignment is due on February 14. The midterm
examination is in class on March 19, the final examination is at 7:45 a.m. on May 13. Each quiz counts 2 percent toward your course grade, cumulative contributions to discussions 5 percent, the written assignment 15 percent, and the midterm and final examinations 30 and 40 percent, respectively. Do not make arrangements that conflict with examination dates.

Lectures, Readings, Assignments

1. January 22 and 24—The Weight of the Past


2. January 29 and 31—Conceptualizing the Chinese State


Thursday discussion assignment: Read the discussion with Bruce Gilley about the future of democracy in China at http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=8710. This is not a mainstream view. What are the prospects for democracy in China and what makes you think so? Is this simply the wrong question to be asking?

3. February 5 and 7—The Political Economy of Rapid Growth

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTSQozWP-rM. China bashing: are you scared (angry) yet?

Thursday discussion assignment: Read Gordon G. Chang,” The Coming Collapse of China: 2012 Edition,” Foreign Policy, December 29, 2011. This is not a mainstream view. Is China on the verge of collapse? What makes you think so (or not)? Is this simply the wrong question to be asking?

4. February 12 and 14—Communist Party Rule

- Melanie Manion, Chinese Political Structures (figure).

Thursday written and discussion assignment due in class: Robert A. Dahl, in Democracy and Its Critics (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 52–64, describes a Leninist-type polity as guardianship. Read and concisely summarize Dahl’s description of guardianship. Then answer the following questions. Is the description normatively neutral? Can you see an argument in support of this sort of polity? What are the dangers, if any, to guardianship? For guidelines on assignment
5. **February 19 and 21—Political Elites and Elite Politics**


Thursday discussion assignment: In China Vitae [http://www.chinavitae.com/](http://www.chinavitae.com/), look up biographic information for any current member of the Politburo other than Xi Jinping. Be prepared to present important details about the life of this Politburo member in class.

6. **February 26 and 28—Governance**


7. **March 5 and 7—Elections and Representation**


Thursday discussion assignment: Read Tianjian Shi and Jie Lu, “The Shadow of Confucianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 4 (2010): 123–130. If accurate, what are the implications for regime legitimacy and regime stability of this description of democratic representation in China? Is this a normatively satisfying state of affairs in your view?

8. **March 12 and 14—Petitions, Protest, and Political Dissidence**


Thursday discussion assignment: At [http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/china/jingshen.html](http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/china/jingshen.html), read and compare Wei Jingsheng’s 1978 manifesto on the “fifth modernization” with the 2008 manifesto,
Charter 08, signed by thousands, at [http://www.charter08.com/charter08.php](http://www.charter08.com/charter08.php).

**MARCH 19: IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

9. **March 21: 围棋—The Chinese Game of Strategy**
   Guest lecture by David Weimer, Edwin E. Witte Professor of Political Economy

**MARCH 23–31: SPRING RECESS**

10. **April 2 and 4—Law, Corruption, and Human Rights**


11. **April 9 and 11—Information Revolution, Information Control**


   Thursday discussion assignment: Read “Voices from the Blogosphere I and II” from *China Story Yearbook 2012: Red Rising, Red Eclipse* (Canberra: Australian Centre on China in the World, Australian National University, 2012), especially if you don’t read Chinese or don’t browse Chinese online media. How threatening is the information revolution to the political regime?

12. **April 16 and 18—Religion and New Spiritual Movements**


   Thursday discussion assignment: What does the popularity of (and official response to) Falun gong suggest about threats to communist party rule? Is (was?) Falun gong a greater threat than organized religions? Why or why not?
13. April 23 and 25—The Reach of the State: Population Planning and the Floating Population


14. April 30 and May 2—Minority Nationalities and the Question of Tibet


15. May 7—China as a Regional and Global Player


16. May 9—How Do We Know What We Know? How Can We Learn More?

MONDAY, MAY 13, 7:45–9:45 a.m.: FINAL EXAMINATION
CHECK COURSE WEBSITE FOR LOCATION