

## POP88324 Proseminar in Chinese Politics

Hilary Term 2025

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Office Hours: by appointment (email instructor)

### **Course Description:**

As a modern state, the People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to amaze and confound observers both inside and outside its borders. More than four decades after opening its doors to the outside world, China remains as important as it is misunderstood, especially in recent years, as it has reversed some of these fundamental trends toward reform and opening up. This course is designed to provide you with a road map to help understand the fascinating world of Chinese politics and the contemporary Chinese state by providing different perspectives on China's past achievements, its political and economic futures, and the global implications of China's rise. The course presumes no prior knowledge of China.

This course relies on vigorous (and rigorous) discussion and debate during our seminar meeting times. It is very important that you have mastered the readings *before* we meet. This will be the starting point of our seminar discussions each week. Towards that end, you will be required to prepare one to two page (in total) weekly memos on the readings in which you provide the following information on each reading (due the night before class):

**Argument:** a one-sentence statement of the thesis

**Literature review:** who and what is the piece responding to?

**Variables** (DV, INDV, and causal theory): if applicable

**Research design:** case selection, data generation, theory building and testing vs. description

**Critique:** You may discuss weakness(es) of the piece. However, also critically evaluate its merits. In other words, why was it published?

In addition to these memos and seminar participation, your grade will also be based on a policy analysis paper due at the end of the term. The policy analysis paper is where you choose a policy of your choice and dissect the background and purpose of the specific policy (approximately 5 pages). Websites where you can access policies will be provided by the instructor (English versions available).

**Assessment:**

Participation: 20%

Weekly Responses: 40%

Final Policy Analysis paper: 40%

**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1: The Chinese Communist Party**

- Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics in Mao's Court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the Early 1950s* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), chapters 1
- Charlotte Lee, *Training the Party: Party Adaptation and Elite Training in Reform-era China*, New York: Cambridge University Press (2015), chapter 1
- Yasheng Huang, *Inflation and Investment Controls in China*, New York: Cambridge University Press (1996), chapter 4, pp. 89-124.
- Christian Sorace, *Shaken Authority: China's Communist Party and the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2017), chapters 1
- Roderick MacFarquhar, "On Photographs," *The China Quarterly* 46 (Apr.-Jun., 1971), pp. 289-307

**[Recommended]**

- Victor Shih, *Factions and Finance in China*, New York: Cambridge University Press (2008), chapter 1 (Introduction)
- A. Doak Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, pp. 1-205

## Week 2: Political Institutions

- Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures and Processes*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1988), chapters 1, 3, and 4
- David M. Lampton, "The Implementation Problem in Post-Mao China," in Lampton ed., *Policy Implementation in Post-Mao China*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1987), pp. 3-24.
- Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Selective Policy in Rural China," *Comparative Politics* 31: 2 (1999): 167-186
- Iza Ding and Michael Thompson-Brusstar. 2021. "The Anti-Bureaucratic Ghost in China's Bureaucratic Machine." *China Quarterly* 248 (S1): 116-140.

### [Recommended]

- Gabriella Montinola, Yingyi Qian, and Barry R. Weingast, "Federalism, Chinese Style: The Political Basis for Economic Success," *World Politics* 48: 1 (1996): 50-81
- Andrew Mertha, "China's 'Soft' Centralization: Shifting Tiao/Kuai Authority Relations Since 1998," *The China Quarterly* 184 (December 2005): 792-810
- Andrew Mertha, "'Fragmented Authoritarianism 2.0': Political Pluralization in the Chinese Policy Process," *The China Quarterly* 200 (December 2009): 995-1012

## Week 3: Economy

- Susan Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1993), chapters 1, 3, and 4
- Barry Naughton, *Growing out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform, 1978-1993*, New York: Cambridge University Press, (1995), Introduction
- Yuen Yuen Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016, selected chapters

### [Recommended]

- Yasheng Huang, *Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics: Entrepreneurship and the State*, New York: Cambridge University Press (2008).

- Jean Oi, "The Role of the Local State in China's Transitional Economy," *The China Quarterly* 144 (December 1995): 1132-1149
- Margaret Pearson, Meg Rithmire, and Kellee S. Tsai, "Party-State Capitalism in China," *Current History*, Vol. 119, No. 819 (2020), pp. 207-213.
- Rory Truex, "Consultative Authoritarianism and Its Limits," *Comparative Political Studies* 50: 3 (2017): 329-361

#### **Week 4: State and Society**

- Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalist: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1986), chapters 1 and 5
- Brantly Womack, "Review Essay: Transfigured Community: Neo-Traditionalism and Work Unit Socialism in China," *The China Quarterly*, No. 126 (Jun. 1991), pp. 313-332 and Walder's Response.
- Lily Tsai, "Solidary Groups, Informal Accountability, and Local Public Goods Provision in Rural China," *The American Political Science Review* 101: 2 (May 2007): 355-372
- Diana Fu, "Disguised Collective Action in China," *Comparative Political Studies* (2016): 1-29
- Iza Ding, *The Performative State: Public Scrutiny and Environmental Governance in China*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2022).

#### **[Recommended]**

- Kevin O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics* 49:1 (October 1996): 31-55
- Jean Oi, "The Role of the Local State in China's Transitional Economy," *The China Quarterly* 144 (December 1995): 1132-1149
- Christopher Heurlin, *Responsive Authoritarianism in China: Land, Protests, and Policy Making*, New York: Cambridge University Press (2017), chapter 1

#### **Week 5: China and the World**

- Mini-presentations of your chosen policy

- Min Ye, *The Belt Road and Beyond: State-Mobilized Globalization in China: 1998–2018*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2020). Ch.1
- Sarah Cook. 2020. “Beijing’s Global Megaphone: The Expansion of Chinese Communist Party Media Influence since 2017.” Freedom House Report
- Trade War *TBA*