

GPPS 404: Chinese Politics: Fall 2023

Instructor: Michael Thompson-Brusstar

Email: mthompsonbrusstar@ucsd.edu

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30PM - 1:50PM

Location: Robinson Auditorium 3201

Office Hours: 11:20AM-12:20PM Tuesdays and Thursdays at 21CCC: [Sign up here](#)

Teaching Assistant: Geoffrey Hoffman

Email: gjh@ucsd.edu

Office Hours: Fridays 3PM–4PM on Zoom: [Link](#)

Course Description and Objectives:

This course provides a comprehensive examination of the rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and of the contemporary structure of the party-state. It also provides a preliminary examination of key issues confronting the regime. The first section of the course will introduce students to China's revolutionary past, which gave rise to the current system of Communist Party rule. The second part of the course will examine some formal and informal features of the regimes. Finally, several key issues in the contemporary period will be examined.

By the end of this course, students will have learned the following:

- An in-depth history of the Chinese Communist Party, including its origins and knowledge of crucial turning points that led to its current institutional form.
- A thorough understanding of the core formal and informal institutions in the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government, including party committees, party congresses, the State Council, line ministries, factions, and local authorities.
- The mechanism by which party politics and policies affected crucial distributive and economic policies in China in the past thirty years, including agricultural, fiscal, banking, and industrial policies.
- The rationale and tools that the ruling Chinese Communist Party uses to stay in power, including grassroots repression, censorship, and external interference and influence operations.
- An overview of the history and objectives of China's foreign policy, especially with the US.

Notes: (1) the content in this course may infringe on the People's Republic of China National Security Law of Hong Kong. (2) This class is completely committed to a free inquiry and open discussion with no taboos, as long as it takes place with mutual respect and professionalism. If you are concerned, please contact me via email or email me about a phone conversation. (3) Please note that plagiarism is taken very seriously in this class. All cases of plagiarism will be prosecuted fully according to university policy. Please see [here](#) to read about your responsibility for maintaining academic integrity.

Evaluation:

- 20% discussion questions on Canvas each week
 - These questions should be critical reflections after having done the reading about where questions remain or how the topics of the week relate to the overall themes of the course.
- 10% in-class participation and attendance
 - Attendance is taken, and active participation of students in class is part of this grade.
- 10% reading presentations
 - Students will present in groups on the topics of the readings once during the course. See the “On Presentations” section for details.
- 30% midterm (in class on November 9th)
 - An “identification” and short-essay based exam will be given on the 9th.
- 30% final research / analytical paper (due via Canvas on December 11th at 5 pm)
 - A cumulative research and analysis paper.

Course Structure:

Active participation and critical discussion of course material are crucial for retention and mastery. To this end, this course will generally follow a “mixed” lecture-discussion structure. The room is not optimized for this, but we will make do.

Generally, Tuesdays will open with questions on the readings and discussion in our “seminar groups,” each of which will be *facilitated* (not *led*) by myself or Geoff. After discussions have concluded, we will consolidate what we discussed as a whole class; I will take notes and make them available as review material for the midterm and final exam. Tuesdays will conclude with a lecture on the main points that remain, broader context, or extensions of the material.

Thursdays will then see presentations on the readings by a group of students (~20m) on the readings **for Thursday**; the students will then answer questions from the class (~10 minutes); if the class doesn’t have questions, I am happy to pose some. As on Tuesdays, class on Thursdays will conclude with a short lecture extending the points made in the readings.

On Presentations:

Presentations should cover the main events or arguments of the readings for that Thursday, and situate them in terms of the themes of the course; if possible, they should critically evaluate the arguments and evidence by raising questions or alternative explanations; it is acceptable (indeed, encouraged) but **not** mandatory to do outside reading to help place arguments and evidence in context. Presentations should be no less than 15 minutes in length; aim for 20. **Every** student in the group should be prepared to answer questions on the arguments, events, and evidence used in the readings for which their group presents, and **everyone** should participate in presenting the content. Slides are suggested but not required; student groups should decide how the time and presentation can be best managed to convey the information clearly and succinctly.

On Discussions:

This course is committed to the spirit of free inquiry while maintaining professionalism and mutual respect. Some ways to maintain this environment are: to address critiques to ideas or works rather than to individuals; to assume a common goal of understanding; and to acknowledge when more evidence or research is needed to resolve a question. Finally, *discussions are about learning, not about only speaking if you know you are correct!* Many topics we discuss in the course are questions whose answers are revised as we encounter new evidence, and we learn best together. To preserve this spirit of inquiry and our freedom to make mistakes and learn from one another, please note that (excepting approved disability accommodations) **the use of recording devices of any kind to take photographs, audio or video recordings during class violates both course policy (and California State Law),** and will be addressed accordingly.

Required Texts:

O'Brien, Kevin J., and Lianjiang Li. 2006. *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ([electronic version available via UCSD](#))

Fravel, M. Taylor. 2008. *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. ([electronic version available via UCSD](#))

Pantsov, Alexander V., and Steven I. Levine. 2012. *Mao: The Real Story*. New York: Simon & Schuster. ([electronic version available via UCSD](#))

Koss, Daniel. 2018. *Where the Party Rules: The Rank and File of China's Communist State*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ([electronic version available via Cambridge Core](#))

Shih, Victor. 2022. *Coalitions of the Weak: Elite Politics in China from Mao's Stratagem to the Rise of Xi*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ([electronic version available via Cambridge Core](#)).

Readings not from required texts are available in the "Readings & Resources" folder in the "Files" section of the course Canvas site. **Please alert us by email if something is missing.**

Week 0: The Beginning and the Rise of "Mountaintops"

Thursday September 28

Heilmann, S., & Perry, E. J. (2011). Embracing uncertainty: Guerrilla policy style and adaptive governance in China. In *Mao's Invisible Hand* (pp. 1-29). Harvard University Asia Center.

Karl, Rebecca E. *Mao Zedong and China in the twentieth-century world: A concise history*. Duke University Press, 2010, 1-49.

Week 1: The Rise of “Mountaintops” and Consequences

Tuesday, October 3

Gao, Hua. 2018. *How the Red Sun Rose*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press. Chapter 1, “The Origins of the Disagreements between Mao and the Central Leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.”

Thursday October 5

Sheng, M. (2011). Mao and Chinese Elite Politics in the 1950s: The Gao Gang Affair Revisited. *Twentieth-Century China* 36(1), 67-96.

Shih, Victor. 2022. *Coalitions of the Weak*. Chapter 3.

Week 2: Victory, Transformation, Rebellion

Tuesday October 10

Pantsov, Alexander V., and Steven I. Levine. 2012. *Mao: The Real Story*. Chapters 24-33.

Thursday October 12

Shih, Victor. 2022. *Coalitions of the Weak*. Chapter 2, 4, 5.

Week 3: Formal Institutions: Elite Institutions and Policy Process

Tuesday October 17

Lawrence, Susan V. 2013. China’s Political System and Leaders in Charts. *Congressional Research Service*. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R43303.pdf>.

Lieberthal, Kenneth. 2003. *Governing China*. New York: W.W. Norton. 186-240.

Grunberg, Nis, and Vincent Brussee. 2022. “The Central Commission for Deepening Reform as Policy Accelerator.” In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*, ed. F. N. Pieke and B. Hofman. [Singapore: NUS Press](#).

Thursday October 19

Shih, Victor. 2021. “China’s Leninist Response to Covid-19: From Information Repression to Total Mobilization.” In *Coronavirus Politics: The Comparative Politics and Policy of COVID-19*, edited by Scott L. Greer, Elizabeth J. King, Elize Massard da Fonseca, and Andre Peralta-Santos, 67-85. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Shih, Victor. 2022. "Age, Factions and Specialisation in the Path to the New Leadership at the 20th Party Congress." In *CPC Futures: The New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*, ed. F. N. Pieke and B. Hofman. [Singapore: NUS Press](#).

Week 4: Center-Local Politics and Grassroots Institutions

Tuesday October 24

Koss, Daniel. 2018. *Where the Party Rules: The Rank and File of China's Communist State*. Chapters 3-4.

Edin, Maria. 2003. "State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective." *China Quarterly* 173: 35-52.

Audin, Judith, and Jerome Doyon. 2019. "Intermediary Political Bodies of the Party-state: A Sociology of Mass and Grassroots Organisations in Contemporary China." *China Perspectives* 2019 (2): 3-8.

Thursday October 26

Li, Hongbin and Li-An Zhou. 2005. "Political turnover and economic performance: the incentive role of personnel control in China." *Journal of Public Economics* 89 (9-10):1743-62.

Naughton, Barry. 2007. *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Chapter 18.

Week 5: Factions

Tuesday October 31

Nathan, Andrew J., and Kellee S. Tsai. 1995. "Factionalism: A New Institutional Restatement." *China Journal* 34: 157-92.

MacFarquhar, Roderick. 1997. *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution Volume III: The Coming of the Cataclysm 1961-1966*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Selections (on Canvas).

Thursday November 2

Shih, Victor, Wei Shan, and Mingxing Liu. 2010. "Gauging the Elite Political Equilibrium in the CCP: A Quantitative Approach Using Biographical Data." *China Quarterly* 201: 79-103.

Shih, Victor, Christopher Adolph, and Mingxing Liu. 2012. "Getting Ahead in the Communist Party: Explaining the Advancement of Central Committee Members in China." *American Political Science Review* 106 (1): 166-87.

Chen, Ting, and James Kai-sing Kung. 2019. "Busting the 'Princelings': The Campaign Against Corruption in China's Primary Land Market." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134 (1): 185-226.

Week 6: Political Economy + In Class MidtermTuesday November 7

Ma, Xiao, *Localized Bargaining: The Political Economy of China's High-Speed Railway Program*, Chapters 1 and either 2 or 3.

Zhang, Changdong, *Governing and Ruling: The Political Logic of Taxation in China*, Chapters 1 and either 2 or 3.

Chen, Ling. *Manipulating Globalization: The Influence of Bureaucrats on Business in China*, chapter 1 and either 3 or 4.

Thursday November 9**IN CLASS MIDTERM**

Week 7: Protests and “Stability Maintenance”Tuesday November 14

O'Brien, Kevin J., and Lianjiang Li. 2006. *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*. All chapters.

O'Brien, Kevin J., and Yanhua Deng. 2015. “The Reach of the State: Work Units, Family Ties, and ‘Harmonious Demolition.’” *China Journal* 74: 1-17.

Thursday November 16

Greitens, Sheena Chestnut, Myunghee Lee, and Emir Yazici. 2019. “Counterterrorism and Preventive Repression: China’s Changing Strategy in Xinjiang.” *International Security* 44 (3): 9-48.

Carter, Erin Baggott, and Brett Carter. 2020. “Focal Moments and Protests in Autocracies: How Pro-democracy Anniversaries Shape Dissent in China.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64 (10).

Week 8: CensorshipTuesday November 21

Shirk, Susan L. 2010. *Changing Media, Changing China*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1-33.

Roberts, *Censored*, selections.

Gierow, Hauke Johannes. 2014. Cyber Security in China: New Political Leadership Focuses on Boosting National Security. *China Monitor* 20.

Tai, Qiuqing. 2014. "China's Media Censorship: A Dynamic and Diversified Regime." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 14: 185-209.

Miller, Blake. 2018. "The Limits of Commercialized Censorship in China." Working paper.

No class November 23 (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 9: Foreign Policy and Overseas Work

Tuesday November 28

Fravel, M. Taylor. 2008. *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*. Chapters 1, 4-6.

Thursday November 30

"How China's 'sharp power' is muting criticism abroad." *Economist*, December 14, 2017.

"West suspicion of China infiltration absurd." *Global Times*, December 12, 2017.

Cai, Peter. 2017. "Understanding China's Belt and Road Initiative." *Lowy Institute*, March 22, 2017.

Kardon, Isaac B., and Wendy Leutert. 2021. "Pier competitor: China's power position in global ports." *International Security* 46 (4).

Week 10: Bureaucracy and anti-corruption

Tuesday, December 5

Zhou, X., Ai, Y. and Lian, H. (2012), "The Limit of Bureaucratic Power in Organizations: The Case of the Chinese Bureaucracy," Courpasson, D., Golsorkhi, D. and Sallaz, J.J. (Ed.) *Rethinking Power in Organizations, Institutions, and Markets (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Vol. 34)*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 81-111.

Ding, Iza, and Michael Thompson-Brusstar. "The Anti-Bureaucratic Ghost in China's Bureaucratic Machine." *The China Quarterly* 248, no. S1 (2021): 116-40.

Thursday December 7

Erik Wang (2022). "Frightened Mandarins: The Adverse Effects of Fighting Corruption on Local Bureaucracy." *Comparative Political Studies*, 55(11), 1807–1843.

Jiang, Junyan, Zijie Shao, and Zhiyuan Zhang. "The Price of Probity: Anticorruption and Adverse Selection in the Chinese Bureaucracy." *British Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 1 (2022): 41–64.

Li, Zeren, and Melanie Manion. "The Decline of Factions: The Impact of a Broad Purge on Political Decision Making in China." *British Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 3 (2023): 815–34.

FINAL PAPER DUE on Canvas on Monday, 12/11/2023 at 5 PM