Chinese Politics: State and Society in China PLSC 300D

Accreditation through Loyola University Chicago

Please Note: This is a sample syllabus, subject to change. Students will receive the updated syllabus and textbook list prior to the start of each semester.

Course Number: PLSC 300D

E-mail: academics@thebeijingcenter.org

Course Description

Few countries have experienced such rapid and profound political, economic and social changes as China has during the past several generations and decades, and fascinating debates continue within the government and society about what type of country China should become and how the Chinese people should achieve their dreams.

This course examines interactions between the Chinese state [or government] and Chinese society. We will explore how the Chinese state and Chinese society converge and cooperate—and increasingly collide and conflict—in a number of realms. The course will focus on China since 1978, from the beginning of China’s “reform and opening up”.

We will use a multi-disciplinary approach and macro and micro perspectives to examine interrelated and overlapping topics such as:

- Interactions between the state and Chinese young people, including university students
- Women’s issues in contemporary China
- The state and sports: the Olympic Movement and China
- The development of China’s “middle class” and its impact on politics and society
- The Chinese government’s relations with business enterprises and entrepreneurs
China’s environmental crisis: the response of the state and society
Relations between the state and the media, including the Internet
Possibilities for greater political participation, contentious politics, and the development of a vibrant “civil society” in contemporary China.

Throughout the course, we will explore the evolving dynamics of state-society relations in contemporary China. For example, we will discuss Andrew Mertha’s fascinating study about the politics of hydropower China, China’s Water Warriors: Citizen Action and Policy Change. Writing in 2008, Mertha argued that this case represents:

“. . . a sea change in the structure and process of politics in just the last decade or so. The contemporary politics of hydropower have provided an unprecedented degree of political pluralism to the Chinese policy process, in which government agencies in opposition to these hydropower projects seamlessly ally themselves with NGOs [non-governmental organizations] and, more important. . .with the public and the press.”

In his seminal study, The Logic and Limits of Political Reform in China. Fewsmith has argued:

“There is no question that NGOs and other interests are crowding into the [political] space in a way unprecedented in post-1949 China, but the key question is whether these new societal interests can translate their energies into meaningful political reform.”

Class sessions will include brief lectures, critical analysis and discussion. Discussions will focus on the assigned readings. We will also view and discuss several short videos. Readings include articles and books by political scientists, economists, sociologists, and anthropologists, as well as journalists, government officials, and business leaders. Students will read the work of both Chinese and non-Chinese authors.

Course Outcomes

• Students will learn about the complex relations between the state and society in contemporary China.
• Students will learn how the Chinese government interacts with major sectors of Chinese society, such as the media, business organizations, and social activists.
• Students will gain competence in analyzing and discussing these interactions in a sophisticated manner.
• Students will better understand the potential, as well as the obstacles, for creating and sustaining a vibrant “civil society” in contemporary China.
• Students will hone their skills in research, critical analysis, informed discussion and
writing.

**Attendance Policy**

The instructor expects all students to attend all sessions of the course—and to arrive on time. (Students will be excused for emergencies or medical reasons.)

**Academic Honesty Statement**

Please see the following link, and read the text carefully:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

**Assessment**

The instructor expects all students to participate actively and intelligently in class discussions. Intelligent participation does **not** mean merely opening your mouth and speaking a lot. Interesting questions and provocative insights will be highly valued. For each class discussion, students should come prepared with thoughtful comments about the readings. *For example:* What important issues do the readings explore? What are the merits and limitations of specific articles and their arguments? How and why do specific articles and authors help us to understand contemporary China? Students will serve as discussants during some class sessions and lead discussions about specific issues or assigned readings. Details will be explained during the course.

**Midterm and Final Exam**

Students will write a midterm exam and a final exam. Students will have some choice of questions to answer. The format will be “open book” and “take home”. The instructor will give possible questions to students about one week in advance. The due dates will be announced at the beginning of the semester and will follow the TBC academic calendar (midterm week, October 24-28; finals week, December 12-16.)

**Research Project and Presentation**

Students will complete a research project on a topic that we have examined in class—or a closely related topic—and give an in-class presentation of about 20 minutes during the final week of the course. This project will enable students to learn in greater depth about particular topics that interest them. The instructor will ask the students to give periodic updates about their research projects.
Grading for the Course

Grading will not be “on a curve” but in accordance with the quality of each student’s work.

(1) 40 percent—general class preparation and contributions to class discussions

(2) 20 percent—midterm exam

(3) 20 percent—final exam

(4) 20 percent—research project and presentation

General Guidelines for Students

All work must be completed and submitted on time in order to receive full credit. If you are ill or unable to hand in an assignment on time, notify the instructor by email before the deadline, and we will make alternative arrangements.

The instructor expects students to come prepared for each class and to engage in the discussions. You should examine all ideas critically. You should critically analyze the readings, the instructor’s arguments, as well as the comments of fellow students. All of this must be done in a spirit of mutual respect.

Readings

Required Texts: (Students should purchase prior to coming to China)

- TBC will prepare and distribute copies of key readings for the students. Students will not be expected to buy books in the United States and bring them to China, although they may wish to purchase (in hard copy or e-copy) some of the recommended texts, which will also be placed on reserve in the TBC library.
- Students should find time to view the documentary: “China: A Century of Revolution” [DVD], which will be on reserve in the library.
- Students are encouraged to read (and share) interesting articles about Chinese politics and society from Chinese media such as China Daily, South China Morning Post [Hong Kong], CCTV [China Central Television]; sophisticated western media and media from other parts of the world; as well as other sources.

Class Schedule

Session One
Introduction to the course, including requirements and expectations
Introduction of major topics and issues of the course
Introduction of ourselves

Session Two
Discussion of how the Chinese state and the government are organized and how they operate
Discussion of major challenges facing the Chinese state


--Elizabeth J. Perry. “Sixty is the New Forty’ (or Is It?): Reflections on the Health of the Chinese Body Politic”
--Arthur Kleinman. “Health, Subjectivity, and Moral Change in China”
--Martin King Whyte. “Myth of the Social Volcano: Popular Response to Rising Inequality in China”

Session Three

Session Four


Session Five


Session Six
Women’s Issues in China
Students should carefully review the websites of important women’s organizations in China, such as:
Beijing Zhongze Women’s Legal Aid Center: www. women-legalaid.org.cn
Interviews with and materials about important Chinese women leaders: Wu Qing, Guo Jianmei, Yang Lan, Fu Ying


Midterm week

Session Seven
The Chinese State and Sports
Beijing Olympic Games and other major sporting events in China, such as the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games, the Shenzhen 2001 Universiade (World University Games), and the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games


Chapter 6 “From Earthquake to Olympics: New Trauma, New Glory”


--Packet of materials about the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games
--Packet of articles about the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games by American journalists
Session Eight
China’s “middle class” and its impact on China’s politics, society, and economy;
The impact of China’s “middle class on the world


Session Nine
Relations between the government and enterprises, including SOEs (state-owned enterprises);
Relations between the government and entrepreneurs


Chapter 3: “So Good, You Suck Your Fingers”, pp. 57-76

Session Ten
China’s environmental crisis: the response of the state and society
State-society interactions concerning environmental issues

Required readings:
Selected chapters from:


Other important materials/sources:
Websites of important environmental groups in Beijing:
Many interesting reports related to the environment are listed at the bottom of the website of Jennifer L. Turner, Director of the Woodrow Wilson Center China Environment Forum http://www.wilsoncenter.org/staff/jennifer-l-turner

Interviews with and materials about Ma Jun, a Chinese environmental activist


Session Eleven
Relations between the state and the media [including the state-owned media]/Internet in China

Selections from:


Other important materials and sources:
Students should buy and critically read the China Daily and explore the website (especially the English-language website) of CCTV, Chinese Central Television.


--Articles from the Western media about the Chinese media.
--Videos about Chinese media by Chinese and non-Chinese media

Session Twelve
Possibilities for greater political participation, contentious politics, and the development of a vibrant “civil society” in contemporary China.


Session Fourteen
Final Discussions
Presentations of Students
Final due