

## INTL 8395 Contemporary Chinese Politics\*

Dr. Rongbin Han

<[hanr@uga.edu](mailto:hanr@uga.edu)>

Class Time: Wednesdays, 3:35-6:35 pm (Candler Hall 117)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-3:30 pm & by appointment (322 Candler Hall)

\* *Students need reasonable classroom accommodations, please see me after class.* \*

### Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces students to studies of contemporary China, with an emphasis on the reform era since 1978. There are three primary objectives: 1) to explore important political, cultural and economic trends in contemporary China, with special attention to the evolution of state-society relations; 2) to trace the development of contemporary Chinese studies and expose students to major debates in the field; 3) to promote our understanding of broader theoretical themes like authoritarianism, communist regimes, and development. The course will explore questions such as: How to understand Chinese politics in the lens of state-society relations? What are the major challenges to the authoritarian regime and what are its responses? What can we learn by examining the undergoing socio-political transition in China? How research on contemporary China draws from and informs social sciences?

### Books:

(1) Allen Carlson, Mary Gallagher, Kenneth Lieberthal and Melanie Manion, *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

(2) You-Tien Hsing, *The Great Urban Transformation: Politics of Land and Property in China* (Oxford University Press, 2010). [E-version at UGA library]

(3) Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth* (Cambridge, MA & London, England: The MIT Press, 2007).

(4) Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

(5) Minxin Pei, *China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy* (Harvard University Press, 2009). [E-version at UGA library]

(6) Andrew Wedeman, *Double Paradox: Rapid Growth and Rising Corruption in China* (Cornell University Press, 2012). [E-version at UGA library]

(7) Lily Tsai, *Accountability Without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

---

\* The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; changes may be made by the instructor when necessary.

(8) Zhao Dingxin, *The Power of Tiananmen: State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement* (University of Chicago Press, 2004). [E-version at UGA library]

(9) Maria Repnikova, *Media Politics in China: Improvising Power under Authoritarianism* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

*(9) Additional readings will be distributed by the instructor or available online.*

**\* Students with no previous knowledge on Chinese history and politics, please read the following books. See the instructor for additional suggested readings:**

Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949* (Stanford University Press, 1971).

Vivienne Shue, *The Reach of the State* (Stanford University Press, 1988).

Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution to Reform* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (W. W. Norton & Co., 2004).

### Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

Grading		Final Grade Ranges:		
• Attendance	25%	A 93-100	A- 90-92	B+ 87-89
• Reading Responses	15%	B 83-86	B- 80-82	C+ 77-79
• Book Review Essay	20%	C 73-76	C- 70-72	D 60-69
• Research Paper	40%	F 0-59		

*Participation (25%)* You are expected to attend classes regularly and actively engage in class discussion. Absences will be excused only in cases of serious health problems or family emergencies with the appropriate documentation.

*Reading Responses (15 %)* Write responses (3 pages, double spaced) to the assigned readings for the weeks of your choice and email them to the class by 5 p.m. three days before the class. The reading response may take a variety of forms, but should include basic ideas and arguments of the readings, and more importantly your own questions, comments, and reflections. You are also welcome to draw on materials outside assigned readings.

*Book Review Essay (20%)* Write a book review of one or more books related to themes discussed in the course. You may choose books outside the list upon consulting with the instructor. In the essay, you shall summarize the argument, compare/contrast the book to course readings and other studies, and offer your own critique. You shall focus on analysis/critique and develop one coherent theme rather than providing a “laundry list” of comments.

*Research Paper (40%)* Write a paper on a topic of your choice upon the approval of the instructor. The paper should start from an empirical or theoretical puzzle, present relevant hypotheses based on theories/perspectives from the course and any other literature. Then discuss how the available evidence supports one hypothesis or another. It can be a full-fledged research paper, or at least something between a research design and a research paper. Students will have the opportunity to present their proposal or paper and solicit feedback from the class before submitting the final paper.

**Academic Honesty:**

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: [www.uga.edu/honesty](http://www.uga.edu/honesty). Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

**CLASS SCHEDULE****Week 1 January 10. Course Introduction**

Suggested readings: Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution to Reform* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (W. W. Norton & Co., 2004).

**Week 2 (January 17). State of the Field?**

# Harry Harding, "The Evolution of American Scholarship on Contemporary China," in David Shambaugh, ed., *American Studies of Contemporary China* (M.E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 14-40.

# Elizabeth J. Perry, "Trends in the Study of Chinese Politics: State-Society Relations," *China Quarterly* 139 (September 1994), pp. 704-13.

# Bruce Gilley, "Paradigms of Chinese Politics: Kicking Society Back Out," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20: 70 (June 2011), 517-533.

# Kevin O'Brien, "Studying Chinese Politics in an Age of Specialization," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20: 71 (2011), pp. 535-541.

Discussants: 1)

2)

**Week 3 (January 24). Doing Research in China**

Allen Carlson, Mary Gallagher, Kenneth Lieberthal and Melanie Manion, *Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies* (Cambridge, 2010).

Suggested Reading:

Maria Heimer and Stig Thøgersen (eds.), *Doing Fieldwork in China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2006).

Discussants: 1)

2)

## *Economic Reform and Political Implications*

### **Week 4 (January 31). Economic Reform**

Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth* (Cambridge, MA & London, England: The MIT Press, 2007), Part I & II, particularly Chapters 3-8, 10, 12, and 13. Chapters 15, 18, 20 can be skipped if you are not super interested.

# Jean Oi, "Fiscal Reform and the Economic Foundations of Local State Corporatism in China," *World Politics*, 45: 1 (October 1992): 99-126.

# Yingyi Qian, "How Reform Worked in China," in Dani Rodrick, ed., *In Search of Prosperity* (2003): 297-333.

# Shu-yun Ma, "Understanding China's Reform: Looking beyond Neoclassical Explanations," *World Politics* 52: 4 (July 2000): 586-603.

# Wing Thye Woo "The Real Reasons for China's Growth." *The China Journal* 41 (Jan., 1999): 115-137.

Suggested additional readings:

Edward S. Steinfeld, *Forging Reform in China: The Fate of State-Owned Industry* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Discussants: 1)

2)

### **Week 5 (February 7). Political Stagnation or Deep Reform?**

# Kellee Tsai, "Capitalists without a Class: Political Diversity among Private Entrepreneurs in China," *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (November 2005): 1130-1158.

# Mary Gallagher, "Reform and Openness: Why Chinese Economic Reforms Have Delayed Democracy," *World Politics* 54:3 (April 2002): 338-372.

# Lowell Dittmer and Guoli Liu (eds.), *China's Deep Reform: Domestic Politics in Transition* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), introduction and Chapter 2.

# Young Nam Cho, "From 'Rubber Stamp' to 'Iron Stamps': The Emergence of Chinese Local People's Congresses as Supervisory Powerhouses," *China Quarterly* 171 (September 2002): 724-40.

# Melanie Manion, "When Communist Party Candidates Can Lose, Who Wins? Assessing the Role of Local People's Congresses in the Selection of Leaders in China," *China Quarterly*, 195 (September 2008): 607-30.

# Mary Gallagher, "Mobilizing the Law in China: 'Informed Disenchantment' and the Development of Legal Consciousness," *Law and Society Review* 40:4 (2006): 783-816.

# Kevin J. O'Brien and Rongbin Han, "Path to Democracy? Assessing Elections in Rural China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 18:60 (June 2009): 359-78.

Discussants: 1)

2)

## *Varieties of Social Activism and State Responses*

### **Week 6 (February 14). The Trauma of Tian'anmen**

Zhao Dingxin, *The Power of Tiananmen: State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement* (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

# Nathan, Beha, Perry, Wasserstrom, O'Brien, Lee & Friedman, and Yang, "China Since Tiananmen," *Journal of Democracy* 20:3 (July 2009): 5-40.

Discussants: 1) 2)

### **Week 7 (February 21). Varieties of Social Activism**

Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

# Marc J. Blecher, "Hegemony and Workers' Politics in China," *China Quarterly*, 170 (2002): 283-303.

# Yongshun Cai, "China's Moderate Middle Class: The Case of Homeowners' Resistance," *Asian Survey* 45:5 (2005): 777-99

# Rachel Stern, "From Dispute to Decision: Suing Polluters in China," *China Quarterly* 206 (June 2011): 294-312.

# Yanhua Deng and Kevin O'Brien, "Relational Repression in China: Using Social Ties to Demobilize Protesters," *China Quarterly* 215 (2013): 533-552.

# Rachel Stern and Jonathan Hassid, "Amplifying Silence: Uncertainty and Control Parables in Contemporary China," *Comparative Political Studies* 45: 10 (2012): 1230-1254.

# Ching Kwan Lee and Yonghong Zhang, "The Power of Instability" *American Journal of Sociology* 118:6 (2013): 1475-1508.

Discussants: 1) 2)

### **Week 8 (February 28). Media Politics**

Maria Repnikova, *Media Politics in China: Improvising Power under Authoritarianism* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

# Daniela Stockmann and Mary Gallagher, "Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China," *Comparative Political Studies* 44:4 (2011): 436-467.

Suggested reading:

Daniela Stockmann, *Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Discussants: 1) 2)

## **Week 9 (March 7). The Power and Limits of the Internet**

# Guobin Yang, "The Internet and the Rise of a Transnational Chinese Cultural Sphere," *Media, Culture & Society* 25:4 (2003):469–490.

# Ashley Esarey and Xiao Qiang "Political Expression in the Chinese Blogosphere," *Asian Survey* 48 (2008): 752-772.

# Rongbin Han, "Defending the Authoritarian Regime Online: China's 'Voluntary Fifty-cent Army'," *China Quarterly*, 224 (December 2015): 1006-1025.

# Rongbin Han, "Withering Gongzhi: Cyber Criticism of Chinese Public Intellectuals," *International Journal of Communication*, 12 (2018): 1-22.

# Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," *American Political Science Review* (May 2013): 1-18.

# Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret Roberts, "How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, not Engaged Argument," *American Political Science Review* 111:3 (2017): 484-501.

# Yuen Yuen Ang, "Authoritarian Restraints on Online Activism Revisited: Why 'I Paid a Bribe' Worked in India but Failed in China," *Comparative Politics* 47:1 (2014): 21-40.

Suggested reading:

Rongbin Han *Contesting Cyberspace in China: Online Expression and Authoritarian Resilience* (Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

Discussants: 1)

2)

## **Week 10 Spring Break**

### **Week 11 (March 14). Land Politics**

You-Tien Hsing, *The Great Urban Transformation: Politics of Land and Property in China* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

# Meg Rithmire, "Land Politics and Local State Capacities: The Political Economy of Urban Change in China," *China Quarterly* 216 (2013): 872–895.

# Yongshun Cai, "Collective Ownership or Cadres' Ownership? The Non-agricultural Use of Farmland in China," *China Quarterly* 175 (2003): 662-680.

Discussants: 1)

2)

## **Week 12 (March 21). Civil Society, Public Sphere, and Social Capital?**

Lily Tsai, *Accountability Without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

# Gu Xin, "A Civil Society and Public Sphere in Post-Mao China? An Overview of Western Publications," *China Information* (1993-94): 38-52.

# Tony Saich, "Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China," *China Quarterly* (2000): 124-41.

Discussants: 1)

2)

### ***Fragmented Authoritarianism, Resilient Authoritarianism?***

## **Week 13 (March 28). Fragmented Authoritarianism?**

# Hehui Jin, Yingyi Qian, Barry R. Weingast, "Regional Decentralization and Fiscal Incentives: Federalism, Chinese Style," *Journal of Public Economics* 89: 9-10 (September 2005): 1719-1742.

# Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Selective Policy Implementation in Rural China," *Comparative Politics* 31:2 (January 1999): 167-86.

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

# Andrew Mertha, "'Fragmented Authoritarianism 2.0': Political Pluralization in the Chinese Policy Process," *China Quarterly* 200 (December 2009): 995-1012.

Discussants: 1)

2)

## **Week 14 (April 4). Authoritarian Responsiveness**

# Chen Jidong, Jennifer Pan and Yiqing Xu, "Sources of Authoritarian Responsiveness: A Field Experiment in China," *American Journal of Political Science* 60(2): 383-400.

# Lily Tsai, "Constructive Noncompliance," *Comparative Politics* 47:3(2015): 253-79.

# Peter Lorentzen, "China's Strategic Censorship," *American Journal of Political Science* 58:2 (2014): 402-14.

# Greg Distelhorst, "*Publicity-Driven Accountability in China: Qualitative and Experimental Evidence*," MIT Political Science Department Research Paper Working Paper 2012-24, <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2153057> (July 11, 2015).

Discussants: 1)

2)

**Week 15 (April 11). Authoritarian Resilience or the Coming Collapse?**

Minxin Pei, *China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

#Andrew Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003): 6-17.

# Cheng Li, "The End of the CCP's Resilient Authoritarianism? A Tripartite Assessment of Shifting Power in China," *The China Quarterly* 211 (September 2012): 595-623.

Suggested readings:

David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation* (University of California Press, 2009).

Discussants: 1)

2)

**Week 16 & Week 17 (April 18 & April 25) Class Presentation**

**Please email your proposal or paper to the class before the presentation. Please include in your email your major concerns and the types of comments and suggestions you look for.**

**\*\*\*\*\*Book Review Due today (April 25) \*\*\*\*\***

**\*\*\*\*\* Research Paper due on April 30<sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm \*\*\*\*\***