INTL 8395 Contemporary Chinese Politics*

Dr. Rongbin Han
<hanr@uga.edu>

Class Time: Thursdays, 3:00-5:50 pm (Candler 117)
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 pm & by appointment (322 Candler Hall)

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 better understanding of broader themes such as state-society relations, authoritarian politics, 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?

Recommended Books (You do not have to purchase all of them)

* The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; changes may be made by the instructor when necessary. Students need reasonable classroom accommodations, please approach the instructor.
*Additional readings will be distributed by the instructor or available online.*

**Recommended for students wish to learn more about Chinese history and politics:**


**Course Requirements and Grading Criteria**

**Final Grade Ranges:**

- A: 93 – 100
- A-: 90 - 92
- B+: 87 - 89
- B: 83 - 86
- B-: 80 - 82
- C+: 77 - 79
- C: 73 - 76
- C-: 70 - 72
- D: 60 - 69
- F: 0 - 59

**Participation (20%)**

Please attend classes regularly and actively engage in discussion.

**Reading Responses (15%)**

Write two responses (each should be 3 pages, double spaced) based on 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.

**Movie Review (5%)**

Write a review (800-1000 words) for the movie you pick for Week 5.

**Book Review Essay (20%)**

Write a book review of one or more books related to themes discussed in the course. You may consult the instructor for the book. The essay shall summarize the argument, compare/contrast the book to course readings and other studies, and offer your own critique. Focus on analysis/critique and develop one coherent theme rather than providing a “laundry list.”

**Research/Policy Paper (40%)**

Write a research or policy paper on a topic of your choice upon the approval of the instructor. The research paper can be exploratory in nature or hypothesis-testing. But it should start from an empirical or theoretical puzzle, and then use empirical data to address the puzzle. The end product can be a full-fledged research paper, or a sufficiently developed research design. The policy paper should focus on a policy-related topic. It shall provide a detailed description of the context and importance of the topic/policy challenge, discuss the policy options, and provide policy recommendations with justifications. You will have the opportunity to present their project 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. 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.
Resources
UGA has a vast array of resources to support students facing challenges. Please don't hesitate to speak with me or contact these resources directly. Note that UGA faculty and staff are obligated to report any knowledge of sexual assault/relationship violence to UGA's Equal Opportunity Office. UGA's Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (info below) can speak to students confidentially.

- **Office of Student Care & Outreach** (coordinate assistance for students experiencing hardship/unforeseen circumstances) – 706-542-7774 or by email sco@uga.edu
- **Counseling and Psychiatric Services** (CAPS) - 706-542-2273 (during regular business hours)  
  *After Hour Mental Health Crisis: 706-542-2200 (UGA Police—ask to speak to the CAPS on-call clinician)*
- **Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention** – 706-542-SAFE (The advocates at RSVP can provide student confidentiality).

Some Additional Ground Rules
Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may **NOT** make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (August 15). Course Introduction
Suggested readings: Kenneth Lieberthal, Governing China (W. W. Norton & Co., 2004).

Week 2 (August 22). State of the Field & Getting China Right despite the Challenges
Memos from Dr. Xu Xu and Dr. Rory Truex on Getting China Right.
Suggested Readings: Allen Carlson, Mary Gallagher, Kenneth Lieberthal and Melanie Manion, Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies (Cambridge, 2010); Maria Heimer and Stig Thogersen (eds.), Doing Fieldwork in China (University of Hawaii Press, 2006).
Discussants: 1) 2)

Week 3 (August 29). Economic Reform and Political Economy
Barry Naughton, The Chinese Economy (The MIT Press, 2007), Chapters 3-8, 10, 12, and 13.
Discussants: 1) 2)

Week 4 (September 5). No Class; Instructor out of town for APSA.
Pick a movie/documentary related to China and watch it. Write a movie review.
Week 5 (September 12). Political Stagnation or Deep Reform (before Xi)?

Discussants: 1) 2)

Week 6 (September 19). Varieties of Social Activism & State Responses (Since Tiananmen)


Extended Reading: Zhao Dingxin, The Power of Tiananmen (University of Chicago Press, 2004);
Discussants: 1) 2)

Week 7 (September 26). Land Politics


Discussants: 1) 2)
Week 8 (October 3). Middle Class, Civil Society, Public Sphere, and Social Capital?
Bruce Dickson, *Red Capitalists in China* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), Chapter 1. Discussants: 1) 2)

Week 9 (October 10). Media Politics
Maria Repnikova, *Media Politics in China* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), Parts I & II.
Extended Reading: Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008);
Discussants: 1) 2)

Week 10 (October 17) Cyber Politics
Extended Reading: Rongbin Han, Contesting Cyberspace in China (Columbia UP, 2018); Margaret Roberts, *Censored* (Princeton UP, 2019).
Discussants: 1) 2)
**Week 1 (October 24). Chinese Nationalism**


# Recommended Movie: Warrior Wolf 2

Discussants: 1) 2)

---

**Week 2 (October 31). Fragmented Authoritarianism and Authoritarian Responsiveness?**


Discussants: 1) 2)

---

**Week 3 (November 7). Authoritarian Resilience or the Coming Collapse?**


Discussants: 1) 2)
Week 14 (November 14). China and the World
Rush Doshi; Jessica Chen Weiss and James B. Steinberg; Paul Heer; Matt Pottinger and Mike Gallagher, “What Does America Want From China? Debating Washington’s Strategy—and the Endgame of Competition,” Foreign Affairs (July/August 2024).
Council on Foreign Relations, China’s Belt and Road Implications for the United States (March 2021).
Discussants: 1) 2)

Week 15 (November 21) Class Presentation/Discussion
Please email your proposal or paper to the class before the presentation. Include in your email your major concerns and the types of comments and suggestions you look for.

Week 16 (November 28) Thanksgiving break, no class

**************Book Review due (December 5) **************
************** Research Paper due on December 8 by 11:59pm **************