

STATE AND SOCIETY IN CHINA

The Beijing Center for Chinese Studies

Fall, 2010

Wednesdays, 915-1200, TBC Classroom 434

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an examination of how the Chinese state is organized and operates; how Chinese society is composed and conducted; and how the two converge, cooperate and, increasingly in a number of realms, conflict. We will examine a broad swath of the Chinese system, but we will also attempt to address the various complexities of contemporary China with this bilateral and bidirectional focus. The course is also meant to compel you to engage with the material both inside and outside the classroom, and be able to bring what you learn to where you live, and vice versa.

We will start at the end, instead of the beginning. We will look at contemporary China first, and then move backwards into the roots and reasons for current circumstances.

Please note that the readings are extensive: they are also not meant to be inclusive. Use the assigned materials as leverage to open more doors and wedges to hold them open for further inspection. China is a maze, and one is continually looking for ways in, as well as places to contemplate its many characteristics.

Students will be expected to address these and other aspects of Chinese state and society in the midterm and final examinations, as well as through additional readings that will be provided. Usually, these readings will be sent via email, though some may be provided in hard copy.

COURSE OUTCOMES

The purpose of this course is to begin to comprehend and to start to speak about the Chinese system in a more sophisticated way. As the course progresses, students will become more familiar with the structure and process of the Chinese government, as well as be more deeply acquainted with the contours and byways of Chinese society. News developments and additional information that emerges will be distributed, so that students might also be aware of unfolding stories in the country. Because there will be Chinese vocabulary terms distributed frequently, students will also expand their understanding of Chinese and be able to see the meanings and connections between language, the state, and the society.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT

Grading will rely on two pillars: active, engaged, and informed class participation (25% of your final grade); and a midterm and final examination (75% as a whole, though the assessment of each will vary depending upon your performance, with the likely distribution being weighted more heavily towards the final—giving you ample opportunity to improve as the semester proceeds).

A substantial portion of your grade then is informed, insightful, and provocative contributions to the dialogue with each other and with the readings in class. If you are accustomed to being passive in the classroom, I encourage you to leave the course at the outset. I expect you to be prepared to speak in class: to answer questions that I and your colleagues pose; to offer comments on the readings and musings of others inside and outside class; and to be able to develop the ability to express your questions and your views without rancor or judgment. You should seek to contribute in significant ways to our efforts to unearth, expose, and engage with Chinese politics and society.

Depending upon the level and quality of the sorts of participation outlined above, there may be other measures used to evaluate this portion of your grade, possibly of a written nature or a presentation that might expand the points made in class. A continuing controversy or an unresolved debate might spur me to ask you to expand upon your notions in a written format.

Please note that the examinations will largely be take-home essay exercises, but there may be an in-class component involved that would be required. You now have some notice of that event, and you should prepare for an abrupt evaluation around those dates in case it occurs. That is, you should think about potential scenarios in which the material that has been assigned might be addressed by you in some creative fashion. Anticipation is the stepmother of advancement.

For those students concerned about what may seem to be an open-ended character in some of the assignments and responsibilities, kindly be aware that we are studying a fast-moving set of objects called “China”. Events here tend to subvert and sometimes upend the best-laid plans of observation and analysis.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Being in class also means participating in the lectures and discussions throughout the course. Attendance in my courses is mandatory and a timely appearance is required, unless exceptional circumstances intervene. We will speak of what these “exceptional circumstances” might entail during the first week of the course but, in the main, they involve a severe health emergency or family crisis. I trust that the material and the discussions that it inspires will serve as more than adequate justification for you attending the class for every session.

ACADEMIC HONESTY STATEMENT

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

http://www.luc.edu/cas/pdfs/CAS_Academic_Integrity_Statement_December_07.pdf

REQUIRED TEXTS

Teresa Wright, *Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era* (Stanford University Press, 2010)

Richard McGregor, *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers* (NY: Penguin, 2010)

John Pomfret, *Chinese Lessons: Five Classmates and the Story of the New China* (NY: Holt, 2007)

Ian Johnson, *Wild Grass: Three Stories of Change in Modern China* (NY: Vintage, 2005)

Richard Evans, *Deng Xiaoping and the Making of Modern China* (NY: Penguin, 1995)

CLASS SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

September 8: Introduction, Outline And Beginnings

This week, we will look at the structure and direction of the course. I will also begin to lecture on the Chinese political structure and contemporary scene.

Kerry Dumbaugh and Michael F. Martin, *Understanding China's Political System*, Congressional Research Service, December 2009. This document will be emailed to you for reading after the class session is completed.

Begin to read John Pomfret, *Chinese Lessons: Five Classmates and the Story of the New China* (NY: Holt, 2007). You may read the book at your own pace but have it completed by the midpoint of the semester—that is, by the midterm examination.

HOW IS THE CHINESE STATE ORGANIZED AND HOW DOES THE CHINESE STATE OPERATE?

September 15: What Is The Architecture Of Political Power In China?

In this week, we will examine the framework in which Chinese politics is conducted, and begin to see how the arrangements of power shape the decisions that are made.

Richard McGregor, *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers* (NY: Penguin, 2010), Prologue, and chapters 1-4.

September 22: What Is The Process Of Politics Within The Confines Of The System?

Richard McGregor, *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers* (NY: Penguin, 2010), chapters 5-8.

NB Classes scheduled to be held on September 29 and October 6 will convene at a later date, to be announced.

AND WHERE DID ALL OF THIS COME FROM?

October 13: Revolutionary?

Richard Evans, *Deng Xiaoping and the Making of Modern China* (NY: Penguin, 1995), chapters 1-7.

We will also begin to look at *China: A Century of Revolution*—a 6-hour documentary highlighting the development of modern China.

October 20: Reformer?

Richard Evans, *Deng Xiaoping and the Making of Modern China* (NY: Penguin, 1995), chapters 8-13.

October 27: Resurrection or Reversal?

Richard Evans, *Deng Xiaoping and the Making of Modern China* (NY: Penguin, 1995), chapters 14, 15, and Epilogue.

Midterm examination and exercises held during this week.

November 3: Trip to Guilin

There is no class scheduled, though I would advise you to take some of the assigned readings for the weeks to come, in order to complete at least some of them during your trip.

**WHAT IS CHINESE SOCIETY COMPOSED OF
AND HOW DOES CHINESE SOCIETY OPERATE?**

November 10: Reform Or Resistance Or Something Else?

Teresa Wright, *Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era* (Stanford University Press, 2010), chapters 1-2.

Viewing of a documentary by Sue Williams, *Young and Restless in China* (2008)

-----What Does Society Think About The Options Of Change?

Teresa Wright, *Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era* (Stanford University Press, 2010), chapters 3-5.

NB that two class sessions will be held this week. The exact time and location will be announced.

November 17: W(h)ither Society?

Teresa Wright, *Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China's Reform Era* (Stanford University Press, 2010), chapters 6-7.

November 24: Who Acts, Who Decides, And Why?

Ian Johnson, *Wild Grass: Three Stories of Change in Modern China*, part 1

December 1: What Physical And Psychic Transformations Has Reform Wrought?

Ian Johnson, *Wild Grass: Three Stories of Change in Modern China*, part 2

December 8: Where Does The Social Landscape Lead?

Ian Johnson, *Wild Grass: Three Stories of Change in Modern China*, part 3

This class session is a makeup session from October, scheduled for this Study Week.