POL 16: Politics of Global China

Part IIB HSPS Tripos 2023/2024

Course Organiser:
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Michaelmas Term:
Lectures on Tuesdays, Weeks 1-8, 11am in Room 11, Sidgwick Lecture Block

Lent Term:
Lectures on Tuesdays, Weeks 1-8, 11am in Alison Richard Building, Room SG2

Supervisors:
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Dr. Linda Qian lq236@cam.ac.uk
Outline:

China’s increasingly prominent role in the world has attracted all kinds of attention, ranging from adulation to anxiety and war-mongering. Despite the spotlight given to Global China, much of it uncovers only glimpses and shadows. The reason for this is that it focuses on only part of the picture. It is difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle China’s global aspirations from its domestic politics. This paper will begin with an overview of twentieth-century history in China, with special attention given to pivotal moments in the history of the People’s Republic of China. During the Michaelmas Term, the paper will delve into the core issues of domestic politics, including: legitimation, ideology, and discourse; organisation and institutions; political economic models and their internal tensions; energy and environmental politics; as well as, China’s borderlands and minority nationalities. In the Lent Term, the paper will expand its scope to track several of the multiple trajectories and disputed impacts of China’s presence across the globe. Throughout the paper, it will be necessary to reflexively grapple with how concepts and narratives come with their own sedimented histories and normative inscriptions. Any engagement with Global China requires an attentiveness to multiple voices and perspectives, which are too often submerged in the framing of US-China rivalry.
Supervisions:

Supervision for this paper will be centrally organised across Michaelmas and Lent terms. Each term will have three supervisions based on two papers and one oral presentation, for a total of six supervisions across both terms.

Assessment:

There will be a one five-hour written examination. Candidates must answer three questions with a limit of 4,500 words. Revision will be organised in the Easter Term.

Online Resources:

Sinocism: https://sinocism.com/

ChinaFile: https://www.chinafile.com/

The China Project: https://thechinaproject.com/


Made in China Journal: https://madeinchinajournal.com/

Global China Pulse: https://thepeoplesmap.net/globalchinapulse/

People’s Map of Global China: https://thepeoplesmap.net/
Reading the China Dream: https://www.readingthechinadream.com/

Lausan: https://lausancollective.com/

Chuang: https://chuangcn.org/about/

Podcasts:

Sinica: https://www.chinafile.com/library/sinica-podcast

Pekingology: https://www.csis.org/podcasts/pekingology
Lectures Michaelmas Term:

Lecture 1. *Historical Foundations*

Core Reading:


110-192.

*Suggested Supervision Question:* Why is Beijing concerned about “historical nihilism?”

Further Reading:


Evan Osnos, “Does Xi Jinping’s Seizure of History Threaten his Future?” *The New Yorker,*

Lecture 2. Legitimation, resilience or collapse? Three approaches

Core Reading:

Legitimation


Resilience


Collapse


*Suggested Supervision Question*: What are the underlying epistemological assumptions that guide the main approaches to the study of politics in China?

**Further Reading:**


Lecture 3. *Political Institutions*

**Core Reading:**

Susan V. Lawrence, Susan and Micheal F. Martin, “Understanding China’s Political System.”


*Suggested Supervision Question:* To what degree is Chinese politics institutionalized?

**Further Reading:**

*On Cadres:*


*On Bureaucracy:*


*On Security:*


**Lecture 4. Power and Space**

**Core Reading:**


Wei Zhu, “Grid Managers, the Moral Logic of Guan, and State-Society Dynamics in China,”

Suggested Supervision Question: Was China's “Zero Covid” response an exportable/replicable model?

Further Reading:

Urban China


Rural China


Julia Chuang, Beneath the China Boom: Labor, Citizenship, and the Making of a Rural Land Market.


Pandemic Response


**Lecture 5. Political Economy**

**Core Reading:**


*Suggested Supervision Question:*

What concept best describes China’s political economy?
**Further Reading:**

*Macroeconomic Trajectories*


*Debates*


*Labour*
Proletarian China: A Century of Chinese Labour, edited by Ivan Franceschini and Christian Sorace,

Verso (2022).


(2005).


Rural Development

Kristen E. Looney, Mobilizing for Development: The Modernization of Rural East Asia. Cornell


Lecture 6. Ecological Politics

Core Reading:

Anna-Lora Wainwright, “Removing Mountains and Draining Seas,” in Afterlives of Chinese
Communism: Political Concepts from Mao to Xi, edited by Christian Sorace, Ivan Franceschini,


Chris Buckley. “China’s Role in Climate Change, and Possibly in Fighting It.” New York Times,


Li Shuo, “Is China really leading the clean energy revolution? Not exactly.” The Guardian,

July 6,

2023: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jul/06/china-clean-energy-revolution-coal-power

Suggested Supervision Question: To what extent is China capable of leading a green energy transition at home and globally?

Further Reading:

Jerry Zee, Continent in Dust: Experiments in a Chinese Weather System, University of California Press


**Week 7: Borderlands**

**Core Reading:**


*Suggested Supervision Question:* Can China be characterized as a settler colonial state?

**Further Reading:**

*Ethnic Policy*

Thomas Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China*, University of California Press (2011).


Sinica Podcast: Tashi Rabgey and Jim Milward on China’s ethnic policy in Xinjiang and
Tibet, February 15, 2019: [https://thechinaproject.com/2019/02/15/sinica-podcast](https://thechinaproject.com/2019/02/15/sinica-podcast)


Tibet:


Xinjiang:


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*Online Resources:*
Xinjiang Papers ‘Absolutely No Mercy’:

Xinjiang Documentation Project (UBC): https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca

**Inner Mongolia**

Enze Han, “The dog that hasn’t barked: assimilation and resistance in Inner Mongolia, China.”


Thomas White, “Pastoralism and the State in China’s Inner Mongolia,” *Current History* (2021):

227-232.
**Week 8: Hong Kong**

**Core Reading:**


   1-22; 45-71; 122-150; 172-217.

*Suggested Supervision Question:* Were the Hong Kong protests (2019-2020) inevitable/avoidable?

**Further Reading:**


“Protest Tech: Hong Kong,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (website):


Lectures Lent Term

Lecture 1. *Global China*

Core Reading:

Ivan Franceschini and Nicholas Loubere, *Global China as Method*, Cambridge University Press

2022: 1-8; 20-47.


*Suggested Supervision Question:* Is “Global China” a coherent concept?

Further Reading:


(2017).

Andy Liu, “‘Chinese Virus,’ World Market,” *n + 1 magazine*, March 20, 2020

https://www.nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/chinese-virus-world-market/
Lecture 2. **Chinese Capitals**

**Core Reading:**


**Suggested Supervision Question:** Does Chinese capital(s) differ from other forms of foreign investment?

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Lecture 3. **China’s Global Infrastructure**

**Core Reading:**


Alessandro Rippa and Tim Oakes, “Infrastructural Thinking in China: A Research Agenda,”

1461-1485.


https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/04/opinion/sunday/china-colonial-power-jinping.html

Deborah Brautigam and Meg Rithmire, “There is No Chinese ‘Debt Trap’,” *The Atlantic*, February 6, 2021:

https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2021/02/china-debt-trap-diplomacy/617953/

*Suggested Supervision Question*: Do China’s infrastructural projects abroad represent a new model of global development or reproduce existing patterns of debt, dependence, and inequality?

**Further Reading:**

Alessandro Rippa, *Borderland Infrastructures: Trade, Development, and Control in Western China,*
Amsterdam University Press (2020).


https://madeinchinajournal.com/2019/07/23/futures-and-ruins-
the-politics-aesthetics-and-temporality-of-infrastructure/

**Lecture 4. China and the Seas**

**Core Reading:**


Aihwa Ong, “Buoyancy: Blue Territorialization of Asian Power,” in *Voluminous States: Sovereignty,*

https://amti.csis.org/island-tracker/

Suggested Supervision Question: How can two different conceptions of legality speak to each other?

Further Reading:


Week 5. China and Soft Power

Core Reading:


*Suggested Supervision Question:* Why does China struggle with soft power?

Further Reading:


Lecture 6: Sino-America Cold War(s)


Mao Zedong, “U.S. Imperialism is a Paper Tiger,” July 14, 1956:

[https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_52.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_52.htm)

Hal Brands and John Lewis Gaddis, "The New Cold War: America, China, and the Echoes of
History," *Foreign Affairs* 100, no. 6 (November/December 2021): 10-21.

Yao Yang, “Is a New Cold War Coming?” interview with Beijing Cultural Review, April 28, 2020, translated by David Ownby, *Reading the China Dream:*


**Correspondence**


*Suggested Supervision Question:* Is the “New Cold War” an accurate or misleading analogy to describe the current state of Sino-U.S. relations?

**Further Reading:**


Lecture 7: Geopolitics of Taiwan

Core Reading:


Historical Documents


Focus on Semiconductors:

Alex W. Palmer, “‘An Act of War’: Inside America’s Silicon Blockade Against China,” *New York*
Times, July 12, 2023:


Grey Anderson, “Strategies of Denial,” Sidecar, 2023:


Suggested Supervision Question: Discuss the geopolitical order from the perspective of Taiwan at different periods of history.

Further Reading


Week 8: China and the Future

Core Reading:


*Suggested Supervision Question:* Is China a status quo power?

**Further Reading:**


