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Office Hours: zoom on Tuesday 10-11am and by appointment

## CONTEMPORARY CHINESE POLITICS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

POLI 645  
Winter 2021 (Jan 4- Apr12)  
Mondays, 11:35am-1:05pm

### Course Description:

The China experience has invited scholarly attention because of its stable one-party rule accompanied by rapid economic growth that began more than three decades ago. To what extent can we analyze China through the lens of existing theories in political science? In what ways can the study of Chinese politics contribute to the scholarship of comparative politics? This is a graduate seminar that focuses on the comparative implications of the China case. While its substantive focus is on China, the course situates the case of China into broad literature of comparative politics, including state building, political economy of growth, contentious politics, and authoritarian rule.

There are five to seven article-length readings assigned each week. Required readings should be completed by the date corresponding with the topic as indicated on this syllabus. For each topic, the readings are chosen to encompass (to the extent possible) 1) background literature on specific topics of comparative politics; 2) analytic surveys or literature reviews on the topic; 3) studies presenting different views concerning the topic; and 4) recent studies that reflect the current state of the field on the topics.

### Course Obligations

This course emphasizes reading and digesting a large amount of material in order to give you an advanced understanding, as well as a basic background, of Chinese politics. All readings are selected from e-journals and e-books and will be available via the library. For those readings that you may have difficulties of locating online, I have uploaded them to MyCourses and indicated so next to the readings.

Your grade is based on 5 weekly reviews (40% of your grade), active seminar participation (10%), and two 8-10 pages analytic essays (25% each, for a total of 50%).

The originally scheduled in-person three-hour seminar is changed into a 1.5-hour in-seminar discussion (fixed-session) and a 1-hour voluntary subgroup discussion. In so doing, we expect to address some of the equity issues caused by remote teaching. The official seminar schedule (11:35am-2:25pm) may be challenging for some students who live in a different time zone. Remote teaching also requires stable internet connection from students. Furthermore, online courses require intense attention, which can be too demanding for some.

The 1-hour subgroup discussion per week is on a voluntary basis. However, I highly recommend forming a group of four or five students to go through each reading and prepare for in-seminar discussion on Friday. The shortened fixed session means that discussions in the seminar may have a higher pace. Subgroup discussions will help you prepare for in-seminar participation.

### Weekly Reviews (8% \*5)

Between Week 3 and Week 13, you need to hand in 5 weekly reviews of your choice. These reviews need to answer the following four questions for *each* assigned reading of *that week*:

1) Sum up the most important argument of each reading in **one or two sentences**. What major point are the

author(s) trying to make?

focus is, how you are going to analyze it, and what your main argument will be. Spelling, grammar, and style count. Use the author-date in-text reference system and include a complete bibliography.

amid the Maturation of Reform” *Issues & Studies* 38/39(4/1): 11-48 ([MyCourses](#));  
-Kevin J. O'Brien (2011) “[Studying Chinese Politics in an Age of Specialization](#)” *The Journal of Contemporary China* 20(71): 535-41.

**Topic I: (The Post-Revolutionary) State Building and Transition**

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**3. State Building**

-Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1966)  
([MyCourses](#))

-Ezra Vogel, “From Revolutionary to Semi-Bureaucrat: The ‘Regularisation’ of Cadres;” *The China Quarterly* (CQ), No. 29 (1967), pp. 36-60.

**4. State Failure**

-James Scott, *Seeing like a State* (Yale University Press 1999). Part I & Part II. ([e-book](#))

-Andrew G. Walder. 2016. “Rebellion of the Cadres: The 1967 Implosion of the Chinese Party-State,” *The China Journal* (CJ). Volume 75, Issue, pp. 102 – 120.

**5. Transition: Continuity and Change**

-Dali L. Yang



- Bill Hurst et al. "Reassessing Collective Petitioning in Rural China: Civic Engagement, Extra-State Violence, and Regional Variation," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (2014), pp. 459-482.
- Juan Wang, "Shifting Boundaries between the State and Society: Village Cadres as New Activists in Collective Petition," *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 211 (2012): 697-717.
- Ching Kwan Lee and Yonghong Zhang. 2013. "The Power of Instability: Unraveling the Microfoundations of Bargained Authoritarianism in China," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 118, No. 6, pp. 1475-1508.

### 13. **The Checks (?): Media & Legal Institutions**

- Ya-Wen Lei. "Freeing the Press: How Field Environment Explains Critical News Reporting in China" *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 122, No. 1 (2016), pp. 1-49.
- Rachel E. Stern and Jonathan Hassid, "Amplifying Silence: Uncertainty and Control Parables in Contemporary China," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 10 (2012), pp. 1230-1254.
- Daniela Stockmann & Mary E. Gallagher, "Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (2011), pp. 436-467.
- Juan Wang and Sida Liu, "Ordering Power under the Party: A Relational Approach to Law and Politics in China,"