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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?

- 2) Identify the methodology that the author(s) use to support their argument, in one sentence.
- 3) Give one important insight and/or fact that you gained from this reading, again in one sentence. That is, what do you now understand or know that you didn't before doing this reading? What was most valuable to you about this reading?
- 4) Give one major critique of the reading, again in one sentence - consider methodology, logic, biases, omissions, etc. Do the author(s) prove their argument convincingly? Statements such as "this work is out-dated" or "this work only covers some phenomenon or cases" need to be substantiated: how do new or other phenomena/cases challenge or improve their arguments?

The reviews are due each **Sunday** *no later than midnight* via MyCourses, beginning on Week 3. These brief reviews are meant to encourage you to think about the readings before you come to class. You must answer all four questions for each reading, and the answers must reflect a solid understanding of the readings (i.e., don't try to do this after skimming the first and last paragraphs of an article).

You may have one late and/or incomplete review during the semester without penalty, as long as it is completed by the last seminar on April 12. Each further late and/or incomplete review will reduce your final grade for this section of the course by one letter-grade step (e.g., A to A-). *All reviews* must be handed in and be complete by midnight on April 12 - any missing reviews at that point will each reduce the final letter grade for this part of the course by two steps (e.g., A to B+).

#### Active Seminar Participation (10%)

You should participate actively and regularly in class discussions. Part of this participation will be up to you (offering informed comments and questions during our discussions), and part will be determined by the luck of the draw. When we begin to discuss each reading, one student will be chosen at random to start the discussion by giving a short (about one minute) summary of the specific work in question. You should be able to remind the class of the author(s) main argument and methodology (i.e., how do they support the work's claims?), and provide a few initial comments.

In-seminar discussions will be recorded. Should you not be able to participate in one session, you will need to watch the recorded session and submit a 2-page (500 words max) comment addressing some of the issues and questions raised in the discussions about the readings. This discussion note needs to be submitted to *MyCourses* by midnight the following Monday. Late submissions are penalized by one letter-grade step per day (e.g., an A note submitted one day late becomes an A- note, etc.).

#### Analytic Essays (25% \*2)

You will write 2 analytic essays over the course of the semester that discuss issues of your choice raised by the required readings. You should structure your essays not as literature reviews but as topic or problem-focused essays, in which you present an argument dealing with a particular research area (or areas) and use materials from the assigned readings to support your argument. There are many ways to accomplish this task. You might, for example, compare and contrast two authors' or two types of approaches to a particular theoretical issue, carefully specifying the grounds for your comparison. You might compare/contrast two or more authors' arguments in light of their methodologies, probing to what extent these methodologies can support the authors' conclusions. You may wish to focus exclusively on the readings from one particular week, or to compare readings across different weeks.

Make sure that your papers have a minimum of summary, are clearly argued, and do not wander from one unrelated point to the next. Most importantly, let me know in the introductory paragraph what your chosen

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.

Your papers should be 6-8 double-spaced pages (not counting the bibliography), with reasonable margins and in 12-point font. No outside reading is required or expected in writing these papers.

Submit your papers *via MyCourses*. Your first paper is due by midnight on **Friday, Feb 26**, your second paper is due by midnight on **Friday, Apr 16**. Those who have TA duties have one-week extension. Late papers are penalized by one letter-grade step per day (e.g., an A paper submitted one day late becomes an A-paper, etc.).

### **Important Notes**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

©All slides, video recordings, lecture notes, etc. remain the instructor's intellectual property. As such, you may use these only for your own learning (and research, with proper referencing/citation) ends. You are not permitted to disseminate or share these materials; doing so may violate the instructor's intellectual property rights and could be cause for disciplinary action.

The University recognizes the importance of maintaining teaching spaces that are respectful and inclusive for all involved. To this end, offensive, violent, or harmful language arising in contexts such as the following may be cause for disciplinary action: 1. Username (use only your legal or preferred name), 2. Visual backgrounds, 3. "Chat" boxes. To maintain a clear and uninterrupted learning space for all, you should keep your microphone muted throughout your class, unless invited by the instructor to speak. You should follow instructors' directions about the use of the "chat" function on remote learning platforms.

McGill University is on land that has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

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### **Schedule of Classes and Assigned Readings:**

1. **Introduction**  
-Introduction of course outlines;
2. **Frameworks for studying Chinese Politics**  
-Carlson, Gallagher, Lieberthal, and Manion (eds). *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. ([e-book](#))  
-Elizabeth Perry (1994) "[Trends in the Study of Chinese Politics: State-Society Relations](#)" *The China Quarterly* 139: 704-713;  
-Lowell Dittmer and William Hurst (2002/2003) "Analysis in Limbo: Contemporary Chinese Politics

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 *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change since the Great Leap Famine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) (e-book)  
 - Lowell Dittmer. 1978 “[Bases of Power in Chinese Politics: A Theory and An Analysis of the Fall of the Gang of Four.](#)” *World Politics*. Vol. 31, no. 1. pp. 26-55.  
 -Lowell Dittmer. 2001. “[The Changing Shape of Elite Power Politics,](#)” *The China Journal* 45: 53-67.

### **Topic II: The Political Economy of Growth**

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#### **6. Explaining Growth: Credible Commitment, Principal-Agent Problem, Property Rights**

- Steven Solnick, “[The Breakdown of Hierarchies in The Soviet Union and China,](#)” *World Politics*, Vol. 48 (1996), pp. 209-238.  
 - Gehlbach, Scott and Philip Keefer, “[Investment without Democracy: Ruling-party institutionalization and credible-commitment in autocracies,](#)” *Journal of Comparative Economics*, Vol. 39 (2011), pp. 123-139.  
 - Minxin Pei, “[Microfoundations of state-socialism and Patterns of Economic Transformation,](#)” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1996), pp. 131- 145.  
 - Qian Yingyi, Gabriella Montinola and Barry Weingast, “[Federalism, Chinese Style,](#)” *World Politics*, Vol. 48 (1995), pp. 50-81.  
 - Yasheng Huang, “[Political Institutions and Fiscal Reforms in China,](#)” *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 48, No.1 (Jan/Feb 2001), pp. 16-26.

#### **7. Explaining Growth: The State, The Sequence, and the Market**

-Jean Oi, 1995. “[The Role of the Local State in China’s Transitional Economy,](#)” CQ, No. 144, pp.1132-1149.  
 - Juan Wang, *The Sinews of State Power* (New York: OUP, 2017), Introduction, chapters 2-3. [E-book](#).  
 -Ling Chen, 2014. “[Varieties of Glocal Capital and the Paradox of Local Upgrading in China,](#)” *Politics and Society*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2014), pp. 223-52.  
 -Lynette H. Ong, “[Between Developmental and Clientelist States: Local State Business Relationships in China,](#)” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2012), pp. 191-209.

### **Topic III: The Authoritarian Rule**

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#### **8. Various Challenges and Solutions**

- Zhu Jiangnan, Zhang Dong, "Weapons of the Powerful: Authoritarian Elite Competition and Politicized Anticorruption in China," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 50, Issue 9, 2017.
- Andrew Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2003), pp. 6-17.
- Li Cheng, "The End of the CCP's Resilient Authoritarianism? A Tripartite Assessment of Shifting Power in China," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 211, Issue 3 (2012), pp. 595-623.
- Cai Yongshun, "Power Structure and Regime Resilience: Contentious Politics in China," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 38(2008), pp. 411-432
- Peter Lorentzen, Pierre Landry, and John Yasuda, "Undermining Authoritarian Innovation: The Power of China's Industrial Giants," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (2014), pp. 182-194.

## 9. Information and Communication

- Peter Lorentzen, "China's Strategic Censorship," *AJPS*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (2014), pp. 402-414.
- Jeremy Wallace, "Juking the Stats? Authoritarian Information Problems in China," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (2016), pp. 11-29.
- Huang Haifeng, "A War of (Mis)Information: The Political Effects of Rumors and Rumor Rebuttals in an Authoritarian Country," *British Journal of Political Science*, (first published online July 2015)
- Huang Haifeng, "Propaganda as Signaling," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (2015), pp. 419-444.
- Juan Wang, "What's Wrong with Corruption? Messages from Confessions in China," *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 2018.

## 10. Civil Society or State Corporatism

- Tony Saich, "Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 161 (2000), pp. 228-258. (NGOs)
- Lily Tsai, "Constructive Noncompliance," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2015), pp. 253-279.
- Yuen Yuen Ang, "Authoritarian Restraints on Online Activism Revisited: Why 'I-Paid-A-Bribe' Worked in India but Failed in China," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 47 (1), pp. 21-40.
- Kevin O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (1996), pp. 31-55.
- Bruce Dickson. 2000-2001, "Cooptation and Corporatism in China: The Logic of Party Adaptation," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 115, No. 4, pp.517- 540.
- Zheng Yongnian and Wu Guoguang, "Information Technology, Public Space, and Collective Action in China," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (2005), pp. 507-536.

## 11. Political Participation

- Melanie Manion, " 'Good Types' in Authoritarian Elections: The Selectoral Connection in Chinese Local Congress," *Comparative Political Studies* (first published online June 2014).
- Cai, Yongshun "Managed Participation in China," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No. 3 (2004), pp. 425-451.
- Rory Truex, "Consultative Authoritarianism and Its Limits," *Comparative Political Studies* (first published online in June 2014).
- Meng Tianguang et al. "Conditional Receptivity to Citizen Participation: Evidence from a Survey Experiment in China," *Comparative Political Studies* (first published online, December 2014).
- Chen Jidong, Jennifer Pan, and Xu Yiqing, "Sources of Authoritarian Responsiveness: A Field Experiment in China," *AJPS*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (2016), pp. 383-400.

## 12. Mobilization and Demobilization

- Jeffrey Becker, "The Knowledge to Act: Chinese Migrant Labor Protest in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 11 (2012), pp. 1379-1404.
- Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," *APSR*, Vol. 107, No. 2 (2013), pp. 326-343.
- Diana Fu, "Disguised Collective Action in China," *CPS*, 2017, Vol. 50, Issue 4, pp. 499-527.

- 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," *Asian Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-18.
- Minzner, Carl F. 2011. "China's Turn against Law," *American Journal of Comparative Law* 59: 935-984.
- Benjamin L. Liebman. "The Media and the Courts: Towards Competitive Supervision?," *CQ*, Vol. 28 (2011), pp. 833-850.
- Sida Liu and Terence Halliday, "Political Liberalism and Political Embeddedness: Understanding Politics in the Work of Chinese Criminal Defense Lawyers," Vol. 45, Issue 4 (2011), pp. 831-866.