SINO-US RELATIONS: THE EVOLUTION OF “GREAT POWER COMPETITION”
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Course Description: Various pundits have characterized the US-China relationship as THE most important bilateral relationship in the 21st century – though there are different reasons for saying so. Observers variously point to the impact of Sino-US conflict and cooperation on global economic development, on the stability of energy markets, on the political-military stability of Asia, the Middle East and Africa, on the uses of outer space, on global climate change, and on cyber-security among other issues. Needless to say there is no clear consensus among decision-makers, pundits, or academic analysts on either side as to how to characterize Sino-US relations. Until recently some characterized the relationship as generally constructive but fragile, with potentially sharp security dilemma dynamics beginning to emerge. Others claim that economic interdependence between the two countries has created a “mutually assured destruction” relationship that induces caution or provides “ballast” that steadies the political-military relationship. Still others — perhaps a plurality in both capitals — now believe the relationship is fundamentally conflictual with differences in strategic interests, ideology, regime type, and/or power trends pushing the relationship toward eventual conflict.

This course focuses on the theoretically informed study of changing levels of conflict and cooperation in US-China relations, across a number of domains. “Theoretically informed” means that you will also read about some theories of international relations that might help explain changing levels of conflict and cooperation.

The course is also a research seminar. In addition to reading and discussing materials about contemporary Sino-US relations, the assignments in the class will focus on the process of writing a major research paper (30-35 pages) on a topic of your choice. The course will help you go through the main steps in conducting this research, from choosing a puzzle in US-China relations, to becoming familiar with the primary and secondary materials related to your topic, to developing preliminary hypotheses and alternative explanations, to putting together a research design to test your hypotheses, then to writing up the final paper. This involves a lot of work over the semester, and is not something that can be done in a couple of weeks at the end of the semester. YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT FOR THE CLASS IS TO LOOK THOUGH THE SYLLABUS EARLY ON, EXAMINE THE TOPICS WE COVER, AND TAKE A QUICK LOOK AT SOME OF THE READINGS TO GET A HEAD-START IN THINKING ABOUT A POTENTIAL TOPIC THAT INTERESTS YOU AND THAT IS DO-ABLE. I WILL
ARRANGE INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH ALL OF YOU ABOUT 3 WEEKS INTO THE COURSE TO DISCUSS YOUR PRELIMINARY RESEARCH INTERESTS AND IDEAS.

Readings: Readings are available either online (hyperlinked), or on the course web page (WP) or through e-journals in the Harvard library system (HOLLIS). The readings are a combination of short(ish) primary materials and documents and lengthier secondary analyses.

[NOTE: For those of you who want more background in the domestic political history and the political system of the PRC you might consult, Anthony Saich, The Governance and Politics of China. (Palgrave, 2015)]

PLEASE CHECK THE ONLINE SYLLABUS EACH WEEK PRIOR TO THE NEXT WEEK’S SESSION. SOMETIMES THERE MAY BE MINOR, LAST MINUTE CHANGES IN THE READINGS.

Grading: The breakdown of the grading is as follows:

- Class participation and short assignments (30%)
- Research design (due April 1) (20%)
- Final paper (30-35 pages, due May 13) (50%)

The content and due dates of all assignments will be explained in more detail in class, and will be announced with plenty of warning. PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT THE DUE DATES ABOVE AND PLAN YOUR SEMESTER WORK SCHEDULE ACCORDINGLY.

Grading will be based on a combination of factors: theoretical understanding and creativity, empirical thoroughness and accuracy (including use of primary materials), logic, care and precision in the presentation of work, effort and progress over the semester. For general guidelines as to what kind of work qualifies for different grade levels see the Faculty Handbook on grading.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense. Plagiarism is intellectual and literary theft, so please read and familiarize yourself with the advice on the “avoiding plagiarism” provided by the Harvard College writing program’s page on “Using Sources”. If you are still uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism please do not hesitate to contact me.

Students with Disabilities: Anyone in the class who has a disability that may require some modification in seating or class requirements please see me as soon as possible. The
Student Disability Center has additional information and resources and can be found at Suite 727W Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Campus Center (617-495-1859).

Sexual and Gender Harassment: For resources related to reporting, responding to, or observing sexual and gender harassment see the Harvard Title IX resources: https://titleix.harvard.edu/options.

WEEK 1 (Jan 29) INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH SEMINAR

Topics include:
• basic organization and themes of the course

WEEK 2 (Feb 5) OVERVIEW AND THE CURRENT STATE OF THE RELATIONSHIP

Topics include:
• the general history of US-China relations from 1949 through to the Trump Administration


US National Security Strategy (December 2017) p. 25


Open Letter 1: “China Is Not an Enemy” (July 2019).

Open Letter 2: “Stay the Course: Confront China’s Totalitarian Expansionism,” (July 2019)


WEEK 3 (Feb 12) PUTTING TOGETHER A RESEARCH PAPER

Topics include:
- how to think theoretically
- research paper expectations
- research design
- methodological options


https://urs.iq.harvard.edu/book/know-it (skim and familiarize for future reference)


WEEK 4 (Feb 19) HISTORY I

Topics include:
- historical memory
- China’s “Century of Humiliation”
- US primacy
- US and Chinese exceptionalisms


Helda Restad, American exceptionalism : an idea that made a nation and remade the world (Routledge 2014) pp.1-18 (WP)


Newt Gingrich “A Nation Like No Other: Why American Exceptionalism Matters” *Human Events* (June 2011)


Vice-President Mike Pence Remarks on the Administration’s Policy Toward China *(Hudson Institute, October 2018)*

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WEEK 5 (Feb 26) HISTORY II

Topics include:

- the Taiwan issue and Chinese historical memory
- the Taiwan issue and the credibility of US commitments
- the Taiwan issue in domestic politics in both China and the US

Steven Goldstein *China and Taiwan* (Polity: 2015) (WP)

Susan Lawrence “The Trump-Tsai Call and the United States' "Unofficial" Relationship with Taiwan” Dec 8, 2016


**Shanghai communiqué**

**Normalization Agreement**

**Taiwan Relations Act** (Chp 48, Sections 3301-3303)

**Arms Sales communiqué**

**The Six Assurances**

**PRC Anti-secession law (2005)**
WEEK 6 (Mar 4) IDEOLOGY

Topics include:
  • democratic peace theory
  • norms and international relations
  • human rights
  • anti-communism
  • anti-liberalism and the “China Model”
  • influence operations and the US reaction

Bruce Russett, Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post Cold War World, (1995), pp. 3-42. (skim chp 1; read chp. 2 for its hypotheses) (WP)


State Department Country Reports on Human Rights – China (2018)

Human Rights Record of the United States in 2018 (State Council Information Office)

Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere A Notice from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China’s General Office (Document No.9 April 2013)

Guo Ji “The Profound Institutional Crisis of the West” Qiu Shi (October 2011)


Elizabeth Economy “Yes, Virginia, China Is Exporting Its Model” (Council on Foreign Relations, December 2019)

For reference:


WEEK 7 (Mar 11) POWER I

Topics include:

- power transitions
- US and Chinese assessments of power trends
- US and Chinese military interactions


Asst. Sec of State Kurt Campbell on the “pivot” (YouTube, especially from 5:00 to 13:00 – about 8 minutes)


Peoples Liberation Army, China’s Military Strategy (Beijing 2019) (read sections 1 and 2 carefully, skim the rest)


WEEK 8 (Mar 25) POWER II

Topics include:

- security competition (cyber; maritime issues, AI)
- security cooperation (military-military exchanges)

Ronald O’Rourke, U.S.-China Strategic Competition in South and East China Seas: Background and Issues for Congress. (CRS, December 2019).
Asian Maritime Transparency Initiative (Island Tracker) (skim rest of website to familiarize)


Andrew Chubb “Xi Jinping and China’s maritime policy” (Brookings Institution, January 2019)


Ye Zheng “From Cyberwarfare to Cybersecurity in the Asia Pacific and Beyond” in Jon R. Lindsay et al, eds, China and Cybersecurity (Oxford 2015) pp.123-137 (WP)


April 1 (NO CLASS)

WEEK 9 (Apr 8) ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE I

Topics include:
  • theories of interdependence
  • trade and investment relations
  • technology cooperation and competition


Economic and Trade Agreement Between the USA and the PRC(Phase 1) (January 15, 2020)


The China Footprint (Macropolo 2019) (familiarize yourself with the basic data on economic activity from China in the US)


Sec State Mike Pompeo speech to Silicon Valley, Jan 2020.


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**WEEK 10 (Apr 15) ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE II:**

Topics include:

- Domestic politics: actors and interests
- decoupling?

*Peter Navarro “Death By China”* (movie, 2016) (watch before class)


*How China’s Largest TV Maker Invested in Georgia to Globalize its Brand* (Paulson Papers on Investment, 2017)
American Chamber of Commerce, Beijing, Business Climate Survey 2018, pp.32-51


American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, Business Report 2017 pp. 4-23 (update)


Daniel Rosen et al “Financial Decoupling: What Are We Really Talking About?” (Rhodium Group, October 2019)

WEEK 11 (April 22) RACE, ETHNICITY: DOES IT MATTER?

Topics include:
  • role of racial and ethnic stereotyping
  • identity difference and foreign policy


Committee of 100, US-China Public Perceptions, 2017 (skim findings) pp, 14-22

WEEK 12 (Apr 29) SUMMARY

Topics include:
  • the nature of US-China rivalry
    - security dilemma?
    - power transition?
    - existential threat?
Aaron L. Friedberg (2018) “Competing with China”, *Survival*, 60:3, 7-64 (HOLLIS)


Huiyun Feng, Kai He, Xiaojun Li, *How China Sees the World: Insights from China’s International Relations Scholars* (Palgrave MacMillan 2019) chapter 3 (WP)