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. A few short years ago some characterized the relationship as generally constructive but fragile, with potentially sharp security dilemma dynamics beginning to emerge. Others claimed that economic interdependence between the two countries created a “mutually assured destruction” relationship that induces caution or provides “ballast” that steadies the political-military relationship. Now, however, a majority in both capitals believe the relationship is fundamentally conflictual with differences in strategic interests, ideology, regime type, and/or power trends pushing the relationship toward greater instability and volatility.

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: There is a useful guide to reading political science articles in the Week 1 module on the course website: Amelia Hoover Green “How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps” (Drexel University 2013) (WP). I strongly recommend taking a look at it before you start the readings for the course.

NOTE: For those of you who want more background in the domestic political history and the political system of the PRC you should consult, Anthony Saich, The Governance and Politics of China. (Palgrave, 2015) and take a look at Congressional Research Service “China’s Political System in Charts” (Nov 2021)

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 8) (20%)
• Final paper (30-35 pages, due mid May TBD) (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.

See the Appendix for additional important information about the course.
WEEK 1 (Jan 27) INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH SEMINAR

Topics include:
• basic organization and themes of the course

WEEK 2 (Feb 3) OVERVIEW AND THE CURRENT STATE OF THE RELATIONSHIP

Topics include:
• the general history of US-China relations from 1949 through to the Trump Administration
  • We will build a timeline of major events and watersheds in US-China relations (e.g. Korea War, various Taiwan crises, Vietnam War, normalization, China’s open door policy, Tiananmen, Belgrade embassy bombing, South China Sea, economic interdependence, relative decline of US power, growing US-China ‘great power competition’ etc)


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

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

Transcript of US-China meeting, Anchorage Alaska, March 2021 (or watch the video here)

Foreign Minister Wang Yi comments on US-China Relations (November 2021) and December 30 (question 3)


WEEK 3 (Feb 10) PUTTING TOGETHER A RESEARCH PAPER

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

• James Rosenau, “Toward Thinking Theory Thoroughly” in James Rosenau and Martha Durfee, eds., Thinking Theory Thoroughly: Coherent Approaches to an Incoherent World, Westview Press, 1995, pp.177-190. (WP)

• Charles Lave and James March, An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences (Harper and Row 1975) Chp. 2, pp. 10-42 (WP)

• Department of Government: A Guide to Writing a Senior Thesis in Government pp,3-10

WEEK 4 (Feb 17) 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)

Feng Zhang, “The rise of Chinese exceptionalism in international relations” European Journal of International Relations 19(2) (2011), 305–328 (HOLLIS)


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


WEEK 5 (Feb 24) 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

Shanghai communiqué
Normalization Agreement
Taiwan Relations Act (Chp 48, Sections 3301-3303)
Arms Sales communiqué
The Six Assurances
PRC Anti-secession law (2005)

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


Derek Grossman “Biden Administration Shows Unwavering Support for Taiwan” (Taipei, Prospect Foundation, October 12, 2021)

Holly Zhang and Ben Freeman “The Taiwan Lobby” (Center for International Policy April 2021)
WEEK 6 (Mar 3) IDEOLOGY

Topics include:
- democratic peace theory
- 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 (2020) Section 1, and pp.72-76

Human Rights Record of the United States in 2020 (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)

China Foreign Ministry, “The State of Democracy in the United States” (December 2021)

For reference:


WEEK 7 (Mar 10) POWER I

Topics include:

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


Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2021 (pp.i-39) (preface - Chp1)

China’s National Defense in the New Era (Beijing 2019) (read sections 1 and 2 carefully, skim the rest)


Kurt Campbell on China and Asia (October 2020) (video, not required, but useful)

WEEK 8 (Mar 24) POWER II

Topics include:

• security competition and friction (maritime issues, cyber; AI)
Ronald O’Rourke, U.S.-China Strategic Competition in South and East China Seas: Background and Issues for Congress (CRS, December 2021), pp. 1-24

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)


Ben Buchanan, Fiona S. Cunningham “Preparing the Cyber Battlefield: Assessing a Novel Escalation Risk in a Sino-American Crisis” Texas National Security Review 3(4_Fall 2020 pp. 54–81

Lyu Jinghua “What Are China’s Cyber Capabilities and Intentions?” (International Peace Institute, March 2019)

ChinAI: Building and Stumbling Blocks For China’s AI Ambitions (Macropolo 2020)

China’s Plan to Lead in AI: Purpose, Prospects, and Problems (New America Cybersecurity Initiative Blog August 1, 2017)

WEEK 9 (Mar 31) 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) (skim pp. 1-1 to 6-2). For a summary of the trade deal see Karen Sutter “U.S. Announces Preliminary Phase One Trade Deal with China” (Congressional Research Service, Jan 2020)


The China Footprint (Macropolo 2019) (familiarize yourself with the basic data on economic activity from China in the US) Skim https://macropolo.org/know-the-numbers/ for PRC investment data on a state and country of interest. Also check this link for data on trade dependence for a state of interest to you: 2021 State Export Report (US China Business Council)


WEEK 10 (Apr 7) ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE II:

Topics include:

• Domestic politics: actors and interests
• decoupling?


How China’s Largest TV Maker Invested in Georgia to Globalize its Brand (Paulson Papers on Investment, 2017) pp.1-7; 41-49

US-China Business Council Membership Survey (2021). (skim for summarizing the policy concerns/interests of US businesses that deal with China.)


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


Julian Gewirtz “The Chinese Reassessment of Interdependence” The China Leadership Monitor (June 2020)

WEEK 11 (April 14) RACE, ETHNICITY: DOES IT MATTER?

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


Yinghong Cheng, Discourses of Race and Rising China (Palgrave 2019) chp 1 and 6 (WP)


CUSEF 2019 Chinese and American views of each other.pdf (WP)

United States Sinophobia Tracker (skim)
WEEK 12 (Apr 21) SUMMARY

Topics include:

- the nature of US-China rivalry
  - security dilemma?
  - power transition?
  - existential threat?


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


Reference (not required):


“Thucydides’s Trap? Historical Interpretation, Logic of Inquiry, and the Future of Sino-American Relations”
APPENDIX: Additional Important Information

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. Disability Resources has additional information and resources and can be found at Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Campus Center, Suite 900, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue (617-495-1859).

Standards of Conduct: We hope to create a rigorous but fun and rewarding learning experience. Among other things this requires civility and respect for all those in the classroom. Please re-read the FAS list of standards of conduct in the Student Handbook. The purpose of these standards is to enable students to be “free to pursue their work, under the safest and most equitable conditions the College can create”.

Sexual and Gender-based Harassment: Students should be familiar with Harvard’s Title IX policies concerning sexual and gender harassment. If you haven’t already, I strongly urge you to read Harvard’s policy statements. If you believe you or someone else in the class has experienced sexual or gender-based harassment, here are links to resources provided by the Office of Gender Equity. I and the teaching fellows are “responsible employees” under Title IX, and are obligated to report incidents of sexual or gender harassment.

Mental Health: Mental health is important for both personal wellbeing and therefore for learning. If you feel comfortable doing so, don’t hesitate to use the resources available through Harvard’s Counseling and Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Cell phones: Please turn off and put away your phones before lecture begins. If an emergency situation requires that you keep your phone on during lecture, please let me or the TFs know before the class.

Laptop/tablet use: You can use your laptop to take notes and to look up documents or information directly related to the lecture content. But please refrain from using email, from messaging, or from surfing sites unrelated to the course content during lecture. This is distracting to students sitting nearby. Current research suggests that people retain information better through the process of handwriting writing their notes rather than through typing them into computers.
**Recording:** If you intend to record the lecture or discussion sections for review later, please ask for permission ahead of time. Nothing that I or your classmates or guest speakers say in the classroom can be used or posted or expressed or repeated outside of course-related work (e.g. discussion sections, essays, exams) without prior permission.