



ASIAN 366 : Controversies in Contemporary China

Instructor: Dr. Emily Wilcox
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Course Time and Location: MW 8:30-10:00PM, 2407 Mason Hall

Course Description

This is a seminar course that introduces students to current social issues in contemporary China. The course is organized around three themes: Unit One, titled “Economy, Inequality, and Environment,” focuses on the major economic and social problems that have resulted from China’s post-1978 market reforms and rapid economic growth—namely, increases in inequality, the issue of labor rights, and environmental degradation. Unit Two, titled “Education, Culture, and Family,” addresses longer-term problems that have faced modern Chinese society for over a century—design and content of the education system, management of ethnic and religious diversity and regional rights, family planning policies, and the disenfranchisement of women and people of minority sexual orientations. Unit Three, titled “Media and Politics,” deals with two issues that have long been sensitive topics of international critique—specifically, China’s Internet and media censorship policies and the issue of human rights as it relates to the question of democratic reform. Due to the complexity of the topics addressed in this course, students will be encouraged to see questions from multiple perspectives. To that end, there will be a strong emphasis on collaborative learning and interactive learning, culminating in a final group project.

Prerequisites

NONE. No prior knowledge of Chinese language or culture is required to enroll in this class. All required readings and discussions will be held in English.

Learning Objectives

As an upper-level seminar that meets the requirements for the majors and minors in Asian Studies, as well as the area distribution requirement for Interdisciplinary learning, this course aims to meet the following objectives for students:

- Learn about key contested social issues in contemporary China, in a way that emphasizes intersections between economics, politics, culture, and society;
- Think critically about Chinese social issues and learn to see problems from multiple perspectives, especially those that challenge accepted ideologies and media views;
- Develop a regular practice of reading, synthesizing, and critically responding to complex academic research texts dealing with issues in contemporary China;
- Present complex ideas orally and prepare slides to accompany these presentations;
- Work collaboratively in a team setting to conduct research, present findings, and co-author an academic paper exploring a topic of relevance to the course themes.

Required Texts:

All required course readings are available at no cost to students through Canvas.

Note: There will be no laptops or electronic readers allowed in class. Students are advised to print out hard copies of the readings that they can bring and reference during class discussions.

Grading

Students will be evaluated on the following work (see explanations below):

Attendance and Participation	20%
Response Papers	25%
Reading Presentation	10%
Class Minutes	5%
Final Paper Presentation	15%
Final Paper (includes peer reviews)	25%

Attendance and Participation: This class is taught in a seminar format in which group discussion is central. All students are expected to be active participants in class discussions, regardless of prior background knowledge. Posing questions and asking for clarification is as important as offering answers. Students will be given a grade after each meeting that assesses their in-class participation. The average of these grades will constitute the overall participation grade, and the lowest grade will be dropped. Participation grades will be given on a scale of 0-7, based on the instructor's observations and the minutes. Participation grades take into account the following factors: timeliness (2pts), attentiveness (1pt), preparedness (bringing assigned readings to class) (1pt), and contribution in class discussions (3pts). Students who are absent or arrive more than 30 minutes late will receive a zero for that day's participation grade. Five or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course.

Response Papers: Response papers are due at 11:59 PM the night before each class meeting when there is a required reading assignment due. Because the purpose of response papers is to prepare for in-class discussions, **absolutely no late response papers will be accepted.** In the calculation of the final course grade, the lowest response paper grade will be dropped. Response papers should be approximately 500 words in length and should do the following: 1) summarize the main arguments of the reading assignment; 2) raise at least two questions for further discussion. For meetings when multiple readings are assigned with an “-OR-” between them, students have a choice of which reading to cover. In this case, the response paper only needs to deal with the

selected reading. If students elect voluntarily to read both readings (this is not required), they may include both in the response. Response papers will be graded on a scale of 0-6 using the following rubric:

Captures the main points of the assigned reading	3pts
Includes cogent discussion questions	2pts
Is polished and complete (includes clarity, proofreading, depth)	1pt

Reading Presentation: Each student will sign up to present on the assigned readings for one day of class. Presentations should be no longer than 10 minutes in length and should deal with ALL of the readings listed for the given date. So, when there is an -OR- in the syllabus, the presenters only are required to read both readings. Presentations should address each of the following:

- 1) What were the authors' goals and motivating questions in these essays?
- 2) How did the authors go about answering these questions?
- 3) What answers or conclusions did the authors provide?
- 4) What may be the significance of these essays for the larger questions of this week's theme?
- 5) What are some questions left unanswered by the readings?

Presentations will be graded on the basis of the live, in-class presentation and the presentation slides. Slides must be submitted on Canvas before the start of class on the day of the presentation. Students do not need to submit a response paper on the day they present. Reading Presentations will be graded on a scale of 1-10 using the following rubric:

Thorough (answers all five questions above)	5pts
Accurate (covers the important points of the readings)	2pts
Prepared (quality slides, correct length, and smooth delivery)	2pts
Engaging (clear, enthusiastic, generates and sustains interest)	1pt

Class Minutes: Each student will prepare class minutes for one day of class. These minutes should document the names and main points of each person who speaks during class. Please write the date and your name at the top of the minutes. Please edit the minutes before submitting them, since these will be posted on Canvas. Minutes should be emailed to me no later than 11:59 PM on the day of the class you were charged with recording.

Final Paper Presentation and Draft: During the last quarter of the class, students will present drafts of their group papers in progress and will receive detailed suggestions and feedback from their classmates and from the instructor. Presentations should be no more than 20 minutes total. These presentations should include slides and a 10-page draft, both of which must be submitted on Canvas prior to class on the day of the scheduled presentation. All members of the group must speak during the presentation. The total grade for this assignment will be based on a combination of the in-class presentation and the written draft. It will include an individual and a group component. Detailed instructions and a grading rubric will be posted on Canvas.

Final Paper: The final assignment for this class is a co-authored paper (in groups of 4) of 15-20 pages dealing with one of the themes addressed in this course. Final papers are due during the exam period and will be submitted electronically via Canvas, along with individual peer reviews. Your grade will be determined on the basis of the quality of the finished product and your peers' assessment of your work/effort. Instructions and a grading rubric will be posted on Canvas.

Additional Course Policies

Disabilities and Special Accommodations: This course is intended to be accessible to students with all abilities and special circumstances. Students needing special accommodations for

documented disabilities or other reasons should present requests in email within the first two weeks of classes in order to ensure plans can be made to comply with these needs.

Extensions/Absence Policy: There will be no extensions for assignments in this class. Since the lowest participation grade will be dropped, students can consider this a one “free” (excused) absence. The same is true for the one dropped response paper (students may use this if they are unable to complete one of the response papers). If students require additional excused absences, they must request this view email, and some form of documentation will be expected. Students will also be expected to submit an extra response paper to make up for their missed participation. Requests for excused absences will be considered for special circumstances only, such as illness, religious holidays, family emergencies, or required campus activities.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: Plagiarism will result in an automatic failing of this course and possible disciplinary action by the University. It is your responsibility to understand the rules of plagiarism and to cite your sources appropriately in assignments for this course. For your own benefit, please read the following explanation of plagiarism as defined by the UM:
<http://www.lib.umich.edu/academic-integrity/understanding-plagiarism-and-academic-integrity>

Classroom Community: All students are of equal importance and value in this classroom. If you ever feel that your ability to participate and learn in this class is limited by the behavior of the professor or of other students, please let the professor know immediately so that change can be made. The professor welcomes student input at all times and on all aspects of the class. The content of this course is by nature controversial. The class will be most rewarding if we can express a variety of different perspectives and debate our ideas openly.

Facebook Group: In the past, a Facebook group has been set up for this class to facilitate collaborative work and sharing of interesting resources related to the class. Membership is open only to students in this course. Once I have set up the group, I will send an announcement via Canvas with information about how to add yourself.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Course Introduction

Wednesday, Jan 6

Course Introduction, no assigned readings

UNIT I. ECONOMY, INEQUALITY & ENVIRONMENT

Week 2: Market Reforms and Economic Inequality

Monday, Jan 11

- David Harvey, “Neoliberalism ‘with Chinese Characteristics.’” In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press (2005), pp. 120-151.

Wednesday, Jan 13

- Shi Li and Terry Sicular, "The Distribution of Household Income in China: Inequality, Poverty, and Policies," *China Quarterly* 217 (2014): 1-41.
- OR-

- Yu Xie, Arland Thornton, Guangzhou Wang, and Qing Lai, "Societal Projection: Beliefs Concerning the Relationship Between Development and Inequality in China," *Social Science Research* 41 (2012): 1069-1084.

Week 3: Household Registration and Migrant Workers

Monday, Jan 18 -- NO CLASS

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday

Wednesday, Jan 20

- Shaohua Zhan, "What Determines Migrant Workers' Life Chances in Contemporary China? Hukou, Social Exclusion, and the Market?" *Modern China* 37 (2011): 243-85.
-OR-
- Arianne Gaetano, "Chapter 1: Rural Women and Migration Under Market Socialism" in *Out to Work: Migration, Gender, and the Changing Lives of Rural Women in Contemporary China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015), pp. 14-27.

Week 4: Corporate-State Relations and Labor Rights

Monday, Jan 25

- Ngai Pun and Huilin Lu, "Unfinished Proletarianization: Self, Anger and Class Action of the Second Generation of Peasant-Workers in Reform China," *Modern China* 36 (2010): 493-519.
-OR-
- Eli Friedman, "Economic Development and Sectoral Unions in China" *ILR Review: The Journal of Work and Policy* 67 (2014): 481-500.

Wednesday, Jan 27

- Philip Huang, "Profit-Making State Firms and China's Development Experience: 'State Capitalism' or 'Socialist Market Economy'?" *Modern China* 38.6 (2012): 591-629.
-OR-
- Michael Santoro, "Solving the Sweatshop Problem: Prospects for Achieving Responsible Global Labor Conditions" in *Profits and Principles: Global Capitalism and Human Rights in China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) pp. 159-178.

Week 5: Environmental Degradation

Monday, Feb 1

- Ying Wang, "Environmental Degradation and Environmental Threats in China." *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* 90 (2004): 161-68.
- Elizabeth C. Economy, "Chapter 4: The Economic Explosion and its Environmental Cost," in *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 59-94.

Wednesday, Feb 3

- Rachel E. Stern, "From Dispute to Decision: Suing Polluters in China," *The China Quarterly* 206 (2011): 294-312.
-OR-
- Sarah Eaton and Genia Kostka, "Authoritarian Environmentalism Undermined? Local Leaders' Time Horizons and Environmental Policy Implementation in China," *China Quarterly* 218 (2014): 359-80.

UNIT II. EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND FAMILY

Week 6: Education

Monday, Feb 8

- Heidi Ross and Yimin Wang, "Reforming the College Entrance Examination: Epicenter of Tension, Change, and Resistance" in Tiedan Huang and Alexander W. Wiseman, eds. *The Impact and Transformation of Education Policy in China* (Emerald Publishing, 2011), pp. 209-230.
- OR-
- Wei Hu, Feng Li, and Gan Li, "Does China's National College Entrance Exam Effectively Evaluate Applicants?" *Frontiers of Economics in China* 9.2 (2014): 174-182.

Wednesday, Feb 10

- Lin Pan, "Chapter 1: Language Education in China: The Cult of English" in *English as a Global Language in China* (Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 1-15
- OR-
- Daniel Sneider, "Textbooks and Patriotic Education: Wartime Memory Formation in China and Japan" *Asia-Pacific Review* 20.1 (2013): 35-54.

Week 7: Ethnicity and Religion

Monday, Feb 15

- William Jankowiak, "Ethnicity and Chinese Identity: Ethnographic Insight and Political Positioning," in Kam Louie, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 91-114
- OR-
- Linda Tsung, "Chapter 6: Language, Education, and Communities in Xinjiang" in *Minority Languages, Education and Communities in China* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), pp. 130-156

Wednesday, Feb 17

- Dru Gladney, "Islam in China: State Policing and Identity Politics," in *Making Religion, Making the State: the Politics of Religion in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 151-78
- OR-
- Rachel Harris and Aziz Isa, "'Invitation to a Mourning Ceremony': Perspectives on the Uyghur Internet" *Inner Asia* 13.1 (2011): 27-49

Week 7: Gender and Family

Monday, Feb 22

- Xizhe Peng, "China's Demographic History and Future Challenges," *Science* 333 (29 July 2011): 581-87.
- Vanessa Fong, "China's One-Child Policy and the Empowerment of Urban Daughters." *American Anthropologist* 104.4 (2002): 1098-1109.
- Shiliang Zhao and Yang Gao, "Can Adjustments to China's Family Planning Policy Truly Relieve Pressures Arising from Population Aging?" *International Journal of China Studies* 5.3 (2014): 657-680.

Wednesday, Feb 24

- Sally Sargeson, "Chapter 11: Gender as a Categorical Source of Property Inequality in Urbanizing China" in Wanning Sun and Yingjie Guo, eds. *Unequal China: The Political Economy and Cultural Politics of Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 168-183
- Lisa Rofel, "Grassroots Activism: non-Normative Sexual Politics in Post-Socialist China" in Wanning Sun and Yingjie Guo, eds. *Unequal China: The Political Economy and Cultural Politics of Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 154-166.

Week 9: WINTER BREAK

Monday, Feb 29 – NO CLASS

Wednesday, Mar 2 – NO CLASS

UNIT III. MEDIA AND POLITICS

Week 10: Journalism and the Internet

Monday, Mar 7

- Min Jiang, "Authoritarian Informationalism: China's Approach to Internet Sovereignty" *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 30.2 (2010): 71-89
-OR-
- Yangyue Liu, "The Rise of China and Global Internet Governance" *China Media Research* 8.2 (2012): 46-55.
- Harsh Taneja and Angela Xiao Wu, "Does the Great Firewall Really Isolate the Chinese? Integrating Access Blockage With Cultural Factors to Explain Web User Behavior" *The Information Society* 30.5 (2014): 297-309.

Wednesday, Mar 9

- Zhi-an Zhang, "Self-censorship in News Production: Findings from Reports on the Toxic Milk Powder Scandal" in Marina Svensson, Elin Saether and Zhi'an Zhang, eds. *Chinese Investigative Journalists' Dreams: Autonomy, Agency, and Voice* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. 133-56.
-OR-
- Bei Guo and Ying Jiang, "Analyzing the Coexistence of Emerging Transparency and Tight Political Control on Weibo" *The Journal of International Communication* 21.1 (2015): 78-108

Week 11: Human Rights and Political Accountability

Monday, Mar 14

- Marina Svensson, "Chapter 1: Debating Human Rights in China: Introductory Perspectives" in *Debating Human Rights in China: A Conceptual and Political History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), pp. 1-20.
-OR-
- Sarah Biddulph, "Rights in a Time of Anxiety About Stability" in *The Stability Imperative: Human Rights and Law in China* (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2015), pp. 3-31

Wednesday, Mar 16

- Rachel E. Stern and Jonathan Hassid, "Amplifying Silence: Uncertainty and Control Parables in Contemporary China," *Comparative Political Studies* 20 (2012): 1-25.
-OR-

- Lily Tsai, "Solidary Groups, Informal Accountability, and Local Public Goods Provision in Rural China," *American Political Science Review* 101.2 (2007): 355-372.

UNIT IV: Final Projects

Week 12: Research and Preparation for Final Projects

Monday, Mar 21 -- Break Out Meetings (No Class)

Wednesday, Mar 23 -- Break Out Meetings (No Class)

Week 13: Continue Work on Final Projects

Monday, Mar 28 -- Break Out Meetings (No Class)

Wednesday, Mar 30 -- Break Out Meetings (No Class)

Week 14: Final Project Presentations and Drafts

Monday, Apr 4 – Groups 1 and 2 present

Wednesday, Apr 6 – Groups 3 and 4 present

Week 15: Feedback and Consultations

Monday, Apr 11 -- Meet with professor in office hours

Wednesday, Apr 13 – Meet with professor in office hours

Week 16: Research, Revision, and Rewriting

Monday, Apr 18 -- Meet in groups to finalize revisions

**Final Papers and Peer Assessments are due on Monday, April 25th at 12:30pm.