CCS 501: SOCIAL SCIENCES IN HISTORICAL & CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Fall 2016
Class Day & Time: Monday, 1 – 4 PM
Classroom Location: G421B Mason Hall

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 11 am—12 pm or by appointment

Course Overview

CCS 501 is designed to introduce students to the state of the field of social scientific studies of contemporary China. The class consists largely of discussion and exploration of weekly topics from a variety of social science disciplines (e.g. political science, economics, history, sociology, law, anthropology, strategic management). We introduce current social science methods in these disciplines, available data sources and materials, and strategies for doing research in China.

This is not a specialized methods course, which means that students should not expect to learn the tools of statistical analyses, qualitative research, survey design, etc. Nor is this a single-discipline course. Rather, the course aims to provide a broad overview of the study of China by social scientists. We focus more on breadth of coverage than disciplinary depth. Hence, PhD students should have realistic expectations of what the class offers before you enroll.

I structure the course in two parts. (1) Part I discusses the distinct characteristics and methods of social science, how China is studied by social scientists, and the place of China studies in the social sciences. This part of the course is intended to help you gain basic knowledge of research design and methods, so that you will be able to develop a research proposal. (2) Part II consists of meetings with China experts and presentations by these experts on their research during the Tuesday noon lecture series from 12-1:30 pm. In most cases, meetings with the speaker will take place after the lecture. Students who enroll should try to attend all the guest speakers’ lectures. On those days, class will end at 3 pm to accommodate noon lecture attendance.

In addition, as part of the class, students should make sure that they can attend the majority of seminars and conference events organized by the Center for Chinese Studies, which are regularly updated on the website of CCS. Please sign up for the CCS email list. Two class meetings have been cancelled in order to accommodate these external obligations.

Assignments

- Attendance and Participation (20%)

Students are expected to complete readings become coming to class, attend regularly, and participate constructively in class discussions.
Response assignment (40%)

Write responses between Weeks #2-15. Your response should be 800-1,100 words.

I grade responses between 0-3 points. The grade for an average, reasonably good response is 2. If your paper is polished and exceptionally thoughtful, you can score up to 3 points. A total of 8 points = a perfect and maximum grade on your response paper assignment. This means that if you score an average grade of 2 on all your papers, you must write four responses to get a perfect grade.

For regular discussion weeks (#2,3,4,7), write a response on 1-2 of the discussion questions posed in the syllabus. Your response should be focused.

For weeks when we meet with guest speakers, write your response on the following:
- Summarize the main arguments or findings in 1-2 paragraphs. What is the paper about? And why should we care about the arguments?
- Discuss the most important lesson/s that you learned from the reading. The lessons can be heuristic (how the author studies the question), methods, use of data, or substantive (what you learned from the findings & arguments), etc.
- Finally, any critique or questions?

DUE: Monday at 12 pm preceding class on Tuesday. For example, if you signed up for Week#3 (9/20), it is due on 9/19 at 12 pm. Post your response on Canvas (Assignment) with this title: 501_Week[#no]_[lastname].

Research Proposal (30%)

Write and present a mock research proposal, maximum of 3,000 words (including abstract, text and figures, but excluding references). State word length at the end of your proposal. CCS MA students are encouraged to use this opportunity to develop a thesis. You must consult with me during regular office hours or set up an appointment at least once during the semester. Do this sooner than later.

A research proposal addresses these three questions –

1) Your research question or topic
2) Why it is important or worth studying
3) How you plan to answer the question (data sources and methods)

DUE: December 12 (Monday), 5 pm. Post your response on Canvas (Assignment) with this title: 501_RP_[lastname].

Research proposal brief and presentation (10%)

A research proposal brief, maximum of 800 words, is due on Nov. 28, 10 am. Post to entire class on Canvas (Resources).

Introduce your proposed research on Nov. 29. Instead of using power-point, make a clear verbal presentation based on your research brief. You’re welcome to use extra handouts or write on the board. Each presentation will be followed by comments and questions from the class.
General policies

Late policy: I lower your grade by 10% for every day that your assignment is turned in late. Even if you post your paper only a few minutes late, I count that as one day late. Please double-check to make sure that your work has been posted on Canvas. You may email me your work if you encounter technical problems.

Word limit policy: Please follow the word limit indicated for each assignment. It is intended to help you learn to write within a restricted space. I deduct points if you exceed the word limit.
COURSE SCHEDULE & READINGS

WEEK 1
Introduction

Introduction to course; objectives; assignments; guest speakers; history of CCS and China studies at UM

Readings
Steve Goldstein, “Michel Oksenberg and Zouping: An Appreciation” (2016)
Jean Oi & Steve Goldstein, “Change within Continuity: Zouping County Government” (2016)

Assignment for next week
• If you were asked to recommend a single most important book on contemporary or historical China by a social scientist, what would it be? Explain your choice in class next week.

WEEK 2
What is social science?

Discussion questions
• Introduce and explain your choice of a classic study on China.
• 501 is a sweeping introduction to the study of China in social science. What defines the social sciences? What distinguishes it from humanities? And from natural sciences like physics?
• How are social science studies different from journalism?
• What is the value of area (China) studies if any? Why are area studies generally diminishing over the years? What are the consequences of this trend?
• According to the readings, China studies has borrowed heavily from non-China theories in social science but has not contributed significantly to it. For example, few publications in top political science journals are based on China. Why has that been the case?

Required
Charles King, “The Decline of International Studies,” Foreign Affairs, July/August 2015

Supplemental
Peter Lorentzen, “Political Science Articles on Chinese Politics,” July 2016, SSRN.

WEEK 3
Chinese Exceptionalism

Discussion questions
• China has typically been characterized as an “exceptional case” (a “black swan,” to use Heilmann & Perry’s term), the theories and experiences of which cannot therefore extend to other countries. Is China exceptional? In what way is it exceptional? In what way is it not?
• What can we learn about China by studying it in comparison to other countries? What can other countries learn from China’s experience?
• How should we go about studying China in comparative perspective?

Required
Kennedy, Scott. (2011). Overcoming our middle kingdom complex: finding China’s place in comparative politics In S. Kennedy (Ed.), Beyond the Middle Kingdom

Supplemental

WEEK 4
Research methods and sources

Discussion questions
• How have the methods used and sources available to study China changed over time? In what ways have these new methods and sources changed the study of China?
• On Oi and Tsai: What is the motivating puzzle/question? Is it a good question--why or why not? What is the argument? What are the competing explanations? What is the data and evidence for the argument? Does the evidence convince you--why or why not? How “generalizable” are the arguments/findings?
**WEEK 5**

**FALL BREAK**

**WEEK 6**

**Guest speaker – Meeting with Andy Walder**

Assigned readings TBA

**WEEK 7**

**Writing research proposals**

**Discussion questions**

- What is the purpose of a research proposal? How is developing and writing a research proposal different from a research paper? What are the qualities of a successful proposal?
- What is a theory? What are the steps of implementing a research project, starting from the first step? What is the difference between generating and testing hypotheses? What different roles should and can qualitative and quantitative methods serve in your research?
- What are the unique challenges of doing research in China? How do scholars cope with these challenges?

**Required**

Social Science Research Council, “On the art of writing proposals”
Kevin O’Brien. “Discovery, Research Redesign, and Theory Building,” In *Doing Fieldwork in China*
Lily Tsai, “Quantitative research and issues of political sensitivity in China,” In *Contemporary Chinese Politics*.
YY Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*, Appendix B (Interviews)

**Supplemental**

Benjamin Read, “More than an Interview,” In *Contemporary Chinese Politics*.
Maria Heimer, “Field sites, research design, and types of findings,” In *Doing Fieldwork in China*

**WEEK 8**

**Guest speaker – Meeting with Wing Thye Woo**

Assigned readings TBA
WEEK 9
NO CLASS

WEEK 10
Guest speaker – Meeting with Barry Naughton
Assigned readings TBA

WEEK 11
Guest speaker – Meeting with Bin Wong
Assigned readings TBA

WEEK 12
NO CLASS

WEEK 13
Present research proposals
Reminder: Research brief is due on Nov. 28, 10 am, on Canvas
In-class presentation of research briefs, followed by Q&A

WEEK 14
Guest speaker – Meeting with Avery Goldstein

WEEK 15
Guest speaker – Meeting with Yiqing Xu