

POLISCI 235A/335A
From Cold War to New Cold War
Politics and Political Theory in Contemporary China (1949-2022)

Instructor: Dr. Simon Sihang Luo

Email: luos@stanford.edu

Office hours: Mondays 2:00pm-3:00pm (In-person, Encina West 403)

Tuesdays 3:00pm-4:00pm ([Zoom](#), passcode: 599753)

Class times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30am-12:50pm

Location: Econ 139

Introduction

“China lacks everything: middle managers, engineers and capital,” so wrote French political thinker Raymond Aron. That was the year 1950, three years after Harry Truman’s 1947 Address to Congress, which was usually considered the beginning of the Cold War, and months after the founding of the People’s Republic of China. More than seventy years later, and after a long, winding journey, China now has much more than middle managers, engineers, and capital. However, global politics seems to move towards another clash of two powerful countries with (at least seemingly) different ideological orientations as many now claim that a new Cold War is on the horizon.

How did China emerge as a global power from what Aron described in 1950? And more importantly, can we, and if so, how do we, understand the rise of China with a theoretical perspective? How do theory and real politics shape each other, as manifested in the history of contemporary China? In this class, we explore answers to these questions by reading political theory against history, sociology, and political science. Every week, we read texts that reflect both the social reality and theoretical concerns of a given period in contemporary Chinese history. By so doing, we seek to make sense of not only contemporary Chinese society but also the power and limits of ideas in political theory.

Course Objectives

By taking this course, students will be able to

- Develop an understanding of the political history of contemporary China (1949-now) with the help of both historical and theoretical texts;
- Develop an understanding of how politics and political theory often mutually shape each other;
- Develop new understandings of critical political concepts, such as democracy, liberty, and equality, by investigating a politico-historical context strikingly different from the U.S., which shed light on the current dilemma in existing liberal democracies.

Course Materials

The following book is recommended for purchase because they are used repeatedly throughout the class:

- Maurice MEISNER, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* [Third Edition], Free Press, 1999

Most reading materials will be uploaded to Canvas. Some are directly available online or through Stanford's library system.

Several websites are very useful in studying political theory in contemporary China. Some of our reading materials come from some of these websites. I recommend these websites for casual browsing as well:

- [Marxists Internet Archive](#): a huge repertoire of Marxist texts, including texts authored by Chinese Marxists. It has a Chinese version as well.
- [Reading the China Dream](#): a project focusing on translating contemporary Chinese political theory into English. Run by Professor David Ownby, an intellectual historian of contemporary China.
- [Made in China Journal](#): an English quarterly journal focusing on labor politics and civil society in China.
- [Lausan](#): a multilingual platform focusing on the anticolonialism and radicalism of the Hong Kong left.

Course Policies and Expectations

Knowledge

No background in political theory, Chinese politics, or Chinese history is required or expected for this class, even though having taken a course in one or more of these fields would be helpful.

Language

All course materials are in English. However, if you can and prefer to read in Chinese, feel free to do so.

Reading and Writing

This is a reading-intensive course. Every week, you are expected to read 100 to 150 of reading material, depending on the difficulty of the material. Reading can be more challenging than you expected. If you find some pieces particularly dense and difficult, remember that this is very common. Mark your questions and bring them to the class. We will analyze the texts together.

For the writing assignments in this class, you are not expected to do outside research. Your assignments will be based on course material. Therefore, keeping up with reading is key for you to succeed in this class.

Attendance and Participation

This is a discussion-based seminar. In every session, there will be discussion questions, and all students are expected to participate in discussions. Discussions will take up a significant portion of your final grade (see below). Therefore, you are expected to show up to class. If you have to miss a session, contact me as soon as you know you will be absent. Usually, you are expected to submit a commentary of course readings if you miss a class. You are also expected to bring a copy of the relevant text to each class meeting.

During class discussions, you should focus on the arguments rather than the person who holds the arguments. Be civil during discussions. Try to understand the arguments you disagree with. This allows you to offer the best critique of an argument.

Extensions

Unexpected things happen in life. If, under any circumstances, you find it difficult to submit an assignment before the deadline, please reach out to me at least 48 hours before the deadline. Requests made within 48 hours will not be granted and will receive a late submission penalty. You may use one extension during the course.

Electronic Devices Policy

Laptops are allowed in the classroom for reading and note-taking purposes. Multitasking with a laptop during class sessions is prohibited because it not only damages your learning experience but also distracts your classmates. The ringer on cell phones, tablets, and any other electronic devices must be turned off during class.

Access and Accommodations

Stanford is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for disabled students. Disabled students are a valued and essential part of the Stanford community. We welcome you to our class.

If you experience disability, please register with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate your needs, support appropriate and reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Academic Accommodation Letter for faculty. To get started, or to re-initiate services, please visit oae.stanford.edu.

If you already have an Academic Accommodation Letter, we invite you to share your letter with us. Academic Accommodation Letters should be shared at the earliest possible opportunity so we may partner with you and OAE to identify any barriers to access and inclusion that might be encountered in your experience of this course

The Honor Code

You are responsible for understanding and following Stanford's [Honor Code](#) policy and must make proper use of citations of sources for all assignments. The Honor Code articulates university expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work. Penalties for violations can be serious. So, please make sure you read the Honor Code and follow its guidelines.

Assignments

Discussion Leading and Participation (20%)

The class is a discussion-based seminar. Starting from week 2, a set of discussion questions will be posted before class. If you are taking the class for 5 units, you should sign up for one session to be the discussion leader. As a discussion leader, you are expected to present for about 8-10 minutes. Your presentation should engage discussion questions by citing textual evidence. It should provide a solid foundation for other students in that class session. A sign-up sheet to be announced soon. No presentation is required for students taking the class for 3 units.

No matter how many units you are taking, your general participation in class discussions will be evaluated. Evaluation of your participation will be based on the quality of your comments, their relevance to course topics, and your ability to engage with arguments that are different from your own.

Midterm Essay (30%)

If you are taking the class for 3 units, a 5-page midterm essay (double-spaced, font size 12, Times New Roman/Garamond) is due in week 6. If you are taking the class for 5 units, you should write an 7-page midterm essay. A prompt containing possible topics for this essay and specific instructions will be provided in week 4. The midterm essay is due on **October 28**.

Final Essay Outline (15%)

You will submit an outline for your final essay on **November 18**. The outline should contain your topic, your core arguments, the literature you plan to engage within the class, and a section structure of your final essay. Comments will be provided and should be incorporated into the final essay.

Final Essay (35%)

If you are taking the class for 3 units, a 8-10 page final essay is due in week 11. If you are taking the class for 5 units, you are required to write a 10-12 page final essay. The essay should focus on a topic substantially related to the themes of the course and engage with literature read and discussed in class. It should have a clear thesis, and a set of arguments to defend your thesis. Students are encouraged to think about possible critiques of their arguments and engage with such critiques as well. The final essay is due on **December 14**.

Notes for graduate students taking the course

If you are taking this course as a graduate student, your midterm essay should be 15-20 pages long.

Schedule

INTRODUCTION (Week 1)

September 26: Introduction: Studying Chinese Political Theory

- Leigh JENCO, “Teaching Chinese political thought is hard – is decolonising the curriculum the solution?”, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/highereducation/2019/05/01/teaching-chinese-political-thought-is-hard-is-decolonizing-the-curriculum-the-solution/>.

September 28: 1949 from the Western Perspective

- Robert P. NEWMAN, *Owen Lattimore and the “Loss” of China*, University of California Press, 1992, 174-184, 207-226.
- Raymond ARON, “The Communist Victory in China,” https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/0c94f8c6-661c-4d29-8e96-de680694e753/publishable_en.pdf
- Reinhold NIEBUHR, *The Irony of American History*, The University of Chicago Press, 2008 [1952], 109-129.

THE MAO ERA (Weeks 2-5)

October 3: The New Socialist State

- Maurice MEISNER, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* [Third Edition], Free Press, 1999, 103-126.
- MAO Zedong, “On the Ten Major Relationships,” in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Volume 5, Foreign Languages Press, 1977, 284-307.
- Roderick MACFARQUAR, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Volume 1: Contradictions Among the People, Columbia University Press, 1974, 57-74.
- MAO Zedong, “Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan” (Excerpts), in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Volume 1, Foreign Languages Press, 1975 [1965], 23-34.

October 5: The Great Leaping Forward

- Roderick MACFARQUAR, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Volume 2: The Great Leap Forward, Columbia University Press, 1993, 51-76, 119-59.
- MAO Zedong, “Be Activist in Promoting the Revolution,” https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_67.htm
- Maurice MEISNER, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* [Third Edition], Free Press, 1999, 191-203.

October 10: The Cultural Revolution

- Roderick MACFARQUAR and Michael SCHOENHALS, *Mao's Last Revolution*, Belknap Press, 2008, 102-131.
- Arif DIRLIK, *Marxism in the Chinese Revolution*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2005, 105-124, 151-164
- Maurice MEISNER, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* [Third Edition], Free Press, 1999, 291-311.

October 12: Radical Democracy during the Cultural Revolution

- LI Yizhe, “The Li Yizhe Manifesto,” in *On Socialist Democracy and the Chinese Legal System: The Li Yizhe Debates*, eds. Anita CHAN, Stanley ROSEN, and Jonathan UNGER, Routledge, 2018, ch. 1.
- SHENGWULIAN, “Whither China?,” <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isj/1969/no037/shengwulien.htm>.
- Yiching WU, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis*, Harvard University Press, 2014, 142-189.

October 17: Gender and Politics during the Mao Era

- Gail HERSHATTER, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China’s Collective Past*, University of California Press, 2011, ch. 10.
- WANG Zheng, “‘State Feminism’? Gender and Socialist State Formation in Maoist China,” *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Fall 2005), 519-551.
- Jacob EYFERTH, “State Socialism and the Rural Household: How Women’s Handloom Weaving (and Pig-Raising, Firewood-Gathering, Food-Scavenging) Subsidized Chinese Accumulation,” *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 67, Issue 2, August 2022 , 231-249.

October 19: Re-establishing Order

- Maurice MEISNER, *Mao’s China and After: A History of the People’s Republic* [Third Edition], Free Press, 1999, 372-410.
- ZHOU Enlai, “Report to the Tenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China,” https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/10th_congress_report.htm
- ZHANG Chunqiao, “On Exercising All-Round Dictatorship Over the Bourgeoisie,” <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/zhang/1975/x01/x01.htm>

October 24: The Official Resolution of Mao Era

- Richard BAUM, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping*, Princeton University Press, 121-142.
- “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China,” in *Chinese Politics: Documents and Analysis*, Volume 4, eds. James T. MYERS, Jürgen DOMES, and Milton D. YEH, University of South Carolina Press, 1995, 43-108.

October 26: No Class

THE POST-MAO ERA (Weeks 6-10)

October 31: Economic Reform and Thought Emancipation

- Maurice MEISNER, *Mao’s China and After: A History of the People’s Republic* [Third Edition], Free Press, 1999, 449-482.
- DENG Xiaoping, “Uphold the Four Cardinal Principles,” <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1979/115.htm>.

- LI Zehou, *A Study on Marxism in China*, Joint Publishing, 1993, 76-87.

November 2: The Tiananmen Protests

- Dingxin ZHAO, *The Power of Tiananmen: State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement*, The University of Chicago Press, 2001, 145-208.
- Francis FUKUYAMA, “The End of History?”, *The National Interest*, No. 16 (Summer 1989), 3-18.
- WUER’KAIXI, “Tiananmen and Beyond: After the Massacre,” *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 1, Number 1, Winter 1990. 6-8.

November 7: Continuing the Reform and the Rise of Chinese Liberalism

- Ezra VOGEL, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, Belknap Press, 2013, 664-690.
- Baogang HE, *The Democratisation of China*, Routledge, 1996, ch. 10.
- GAO Quanxi, “The Political Maturity of Chinese Liberalism,” *Reading the China Dream*, <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/gao-quanxi-political-maturity.html>.
- LI Sipan, “Why Don’t Mainland Chinese Liberals Support Women’s Rights?”, *Reading the China Dream*, <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/li-sipan-chinese-liberals-on-womens-rights.html>.

November 9: The Chongqing Model and the Chinese New Left

- Ching Kwan LEE, “What was Socialism to Chinese Workers? Collective Memories and Labor Politics in an Age of Reform,” in *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memory in Reform China*, eds. Ching Kwan LEE and Guobin YANG, Stanford University Press, 141-165.
- Willy LAM, “The Maoist Revival and the Conservative Turn in Chinese Politics,” in *The Use of Mao and Chongqing Model*, ed. Joseph Y. S. Cheng, City University of Hong Kong Press, 2015, 65–104.
- WANG Hui, “Depoliticized Politics, Multiple Components of Hegemony, and the Eclipse of the Sixties,” trans. Christopher CONNERY, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 7:4, 683-700.
- WANG Hui, “The Rumour Machine,” *London Review of Books*, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v34/n09/wang-hui/the-rumour-machine>.

November 14: The Confucian Revival

- Sébastien BILLIoud and Joel THORAVAL, *The Sage and the People: The Confucian Revival in China*, Oxford University Press, 2015, page numbers TBD.
- CHEN Ming, “On Confucianism as a Civil Religion and Its Significance for Contemporary China,” *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, 44:2, 76-83.
- JIANG Qing, *A Confucian Constitutional Order: How China’s Ancient Past Can Shape Its Political Future*, ed. Ruiping Fan, trans. Edmund Ryden, Princeton University Press, 2013, ch. 1.

November 16: The Xi Jinping Era

- XI Jinping, *The Governance of China*, page numbers TBD.

- XU Zhangrun, “Xi’s China, the Handiwork of an Autocratic Roué,” trans, Geremie R. Barmé, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2021/08/09/xis-china-the-handiwork-of-an-autocratic-roue/>
- JIANG Shigong, “Philosophy and History: Interpreting the ‘Xi Jinping Era’ through Xi’s Report to the Nineteenth National Congress of the CCP,” *Reading the China Dream*, <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/jiang-shigong-philosophy-and-history.html>

November 21: No Class, Thanksgiving Break

November 23: No Class, Thanksgiving Break

November 28: The Belt and Road Project

- Ching Kwan LEE, *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa*, The University of Chicago Press, 2017, chs. 1, 3.
- JIANG Shigong, “The ‘Critical Decade’ in the Sino-American Relationship: the ‘New Roman Empire’ and the ‘New Great Struggle,’” <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/jiang-shigong-ten-crucial-years.html>

November 30: Labor Politics in the Xi Era

- Jenny CHAN, “A Precarious Worker-Student Alliance in Xi’s China,” *China Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (February 2020), 165-190.
- Ngai PUN, “The New Chinese Working Class in Struggle,” *Dialectical Anthropology* (2020) 44: 319-329.
- AU Loong-Yu, “The Jasic Mobilisation: A High Tide for the Chinese Labour Movement?” *Made in China Journal*, <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2019/01/12/the-jasic-mobilisation-a-high-tide-for-the-chinese-labour-movement/>
- Yueran ZHANG, “Leninists in a Chinese Factory,” *Made in China Journal*, <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2020/06/25/leninists-in-a-chinese-factory/>

December 5: The Anti-Extradition Law Protests in Hong Kong

- Jiwei CI, *Democracy in China: The Coming Crisis*, Harvard University Press, 2019, ch. 8.
- Shuk-Ying CHAN, “Decolonization as Egalitarian Transformation: Hong Kong’s Unfinished Struggle,” in *Reorienting Hong Kong’s Resistance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 73-89.
- JN CHIEN, “The ‘Hong Kong Card’: Against the New Cold War,” in *Reorienting Hong Kong’s Resistance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 193-209.

December 7: Conclusion: A New Cold War?

- Stephen WERTHEIM, “Is It Too Late to Stop a New Cold War with China?,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/08/opinion/sunday/trump-china-cold-war.html>.
- Qiao Collective, “Can the Chinese Diaspora Speak?” *Monthly Review*, Volume 73, Number 3 (July-August 2021), <https://monthlyreview.org/2021/07/01/can-the-chinese-diaspora-speak/>

- Brian HIOE, “The Monthly Review’s China Issue Reveals the Narcissistic Inward Gaze, Self-Flagellating Politics of the Western Left,” *New Bloom*,
<https://newbloommag.net/2021/09/09/monthly-review-china-takedown/>