Course Content and Format

This course will examine China’s efforts to reconstitute its political institutions following the collapse of the imperial system in 1911. Particular attention will be paid to the clash between competing conceptions of political development and the rival political movements and forces that espoused them. The search for an effective and stable political order in the face of external pressures and internal fragmentation will receive extended discussion. The failed effort to create legitimate and popularly grounded political institutions will be a major focus of the course. A secondary focus will explore the impact of rapid economic, social and cultural change on the political system. The course will be organized in a lecture format, though class discussion will be encouraged.

Grades will be based on two term-tests @ 25% each and two papers @25% each.

All readings will be posted on Quercus as modules by date and topic.

Topics and Readings:

May 6  The Rise of China: Historical Perspectives and Course Overview

1. Martin Jacques, When China Rules the World, Chapter 3 (“China’s Ignominy

May 7 China’s Traditional Order and the Problem of Change

1. Lieberthal, Governing China, Chapter 1, pp.3-19.
2. Henrietta Harrison, Inventing China, Chapter 1

May 8 Revolution and Reform

2. Maurice Meisner, Mao’s China and After, 3-51.
2. Lieberthal, Governing China, pp.19-26
May 9  Alternative Visions: The Republic and the May 4th Movement

3. Chen Duxiu, “Call to Youth.”*
4. Video (“China in Revolution”) 

May 13  The CCP and the KMT (GMD): 1921-1937


May 14  The CCP: From Yanan to ‘Liberation’: A Peasant Revolution?

2. Video (“China in Revolution: II”) 

May 15  The CCP in Power: The Early Years

4. Video (“The Mao Years: I”) 

May 16  The First Five Year Plan and the ‘Great Leap’

1. Maurice Meisner, *Mao’s China and After*, Chapter 9, 12,13..

May 20  No Class: Victoria Day

May 21  Term Test # 1

May 22  The Cultural Revolution and the End of the Mao Era


May 23  The Deng Era Takes Shape: Economic Reform and Market Socialism

2. Video (“Born Under the Red Flag’-1)
May 27  Political Reform and Democratization in the Deng Era
   1. Maurice Meisner, Mao's China and After, Chapter 25.

May 28  The Limits of Political Reform: Tiananmen in Retrospect
   1. Video “Born Under the Red Flag: Part II"

May 29  Party and State Institutions in Flux

May 30  Political Leadership in Flux
   2. Evan Osnos, “Born Red” The New Yorker, (Xi Jinping bio)
   3. Daniel Bell and Eric Li “Meritocracy”

June 3   Ideology and Value Change in Contemporary China
   2. Anne Marie Brady, Marketing Dictatorship, Chapter 1.

June 4   State and Society in Flux
   2. Gilboy and Read, “Political and Social Reform in China,” 2008
   3. Andrew Nathan, “The Puzzle of the Chinese Middle Class.”
   4. Video (China from the Inside)

June 5   Towards a ‘Rule of Law?’
   1. Randall Peerenboom, China’s Long March to the Rule of Law, Ch. 1-2.
   2. Fu and Cullen, “China’s Rights Defender Lawyers”.
   3. Video (“The Story of Qiu Ju”)
June 6  Intellectuals, Artists and Dissent in China

1. Evan Osnos, “The Han Dynasty”
2. Evan Osnos, “Ai Weiwei in Profile”
4. Video (“Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry”)

June 10  China Challenges the World

1. Ian Johnson, “Will China Become Supreme?”
2. Charles Mearsheimer, “The Coming Storm”
3. Video (China from the Outside)

June 11  Chinese Nationalism and the Problem of the Periphery

1. Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell, China’s Search for Security, Chapter 8.

June 12  China’s Prospects


June 13  Term Test