CIEE Beijing, China

Course title: Government and Politics of China
Course code: POLI 3002 CBEJ
Programs offering course: Intensive Chinese Language
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3
Contact hours: 45
Term: Fall 2020

Course Description

This course is a comprehensive introduction to the contemporary politics of China, addressing current policy making issues in the Chinese government. However, my philosophy is that you would never be able to understand the "zhengzhi" (politics) in China unless you gain a better understanding of Chinese philosophy, that is, how the Chinese see the "yuzhou" (the Universe), how they engage themselves in thinking, and what they regard as important. Therefore, we will review the traditional structure of Chinese politics and its cultural correlativity in the beginning class sessions and start focusing on China's ongoing quest for modernity, a quest that has its roots in the 19th century and continues to shape Chinese politics today. The goal of the course is to let students familiarize themselves with the basic issues of government and politics of China and understand the changing scenarios. The topics, for example, are: the rise and effects of "nationalism," the idea of "blue-water navy," China's "peaceful rise," "mega-farms" in Africa, food-security, "collective actions" in current China, the present transformation to new leadership, the impact of public perceptions of corruption on decision making, the party structure and the "Bo Xilai phenomena," the state-society relations of China, environmental and social consequences of economic reform, etc. Of course, the basic issues of government and politics of China include: How do Chinese political institutions operate? How are Chinese political leaders chosen? How are policies made? What is the relationship between citizen and state in the Chinese context? What is the concept of governmental legitimacy in Chinese tradition? We will adopt a comparative Chinese and American political thought and theory perspective and gain the knowledge of China’s politics on its own historical and cultural terms.

Learning Objectives
By completing this course, students will:

- Identify and analyze major issues of government policy and structure
- Produce pithy and insightful analytical materials on conditions and cultural constructs that lie at the root of Chinese policy issues
- Use published primary and secondary data on policies now being followed to synthesize policy recommendations
- Communicate political practices in China in culturally appropriate and factually accurate manners to domestic and international audiences

Course Prerequisites

None.

Methods of Instruction

Lectures, discussions, observations, and good use of the Chinese environment, e.g., interviewing of or interaction with Chinese persons, and appropriate field trips to relevant institutions.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. 12-Page Interview Paper 35%
2. 8 Quizzes 30%
3. Class Presentation and Discussion 20%
4. Class Participation 15%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

12-Page Interview Paper

The interview paper will be based on a deeper understanding of how the Chinese tradition and historical experiences are relevant to political decision-makings and practice in responding to internal and external political issues. Students may conduct interviews on an issue area, an event, a text, a story, etc., related to a particular dimension of contemporary Chinese government and politics. Please submit a topic proposal at the fifth class meeting (Monday October 8). You are expected to include your interview topic and outline your interview plan. The paper will be due in the final
class session (December 3). In this article, you must cite books or articles on the subjects that have been assigned in class, and also other sources.

8 Quizzes

Quizzes contain questions regarding key political terms, figures, and conceptual issues, which are covered in previous classes. Questions will be given before the quiz is taken.

Class Presentation and Discussion

Regarding the mandatory readings from the texts and other materials, students are responsible for completing the assigned readings before each class and should read them critically since they are not neutral textbooks. You may consider if you really agree with the author’s arguments, if they are persuasive, and why the authors take the positions that they do.

Students are to assume discussions on selected articles or chapters based on their research of particular topics, and summarize and analyze them for the rest of the class. Each student is expected to lead at least one discussion and he/she is welcomed to volunteer to lead the rest of the topic discussions. For each class meeting we will usually have a 15-minute discussion on particular topics.

Class Participation

Students are required to pay attention to current political issues in the news. It is recommended that students follow China news of at least a major China-based source. Suggested sources may include CCTV9 news program (http://www.china.org.cn/English); People’s Daily online English-language version (http://english.peopledaily.com.cn); China Daily, which is a China’s national English-language paper (http://www.chinadaily.net), etc.

Attendance

It is expected that students will not be absent unless there is a pressing reason which should be communicated to the instructor. Being punctual, including returning from breaks on time shows respect to your classmates and instructor. As per CIEE
academic policy I must deduct points: you will lose 2% for every unexcused absence and 1% every time you are late. This course requires a careful level of preparation, regular attendance, timely completion of reading assignments, and active participation in discussion by each student.

N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, and local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1
Class: Orientation Week
No class

Week 2
Class: Introduction to Government and Politics of China
General introduction to the educational goals and requirements of the course.

Week 3
Class: Chinese and Western Worldviews
What is the relevance of worldview and politics?

Reading:

Session I - Key Research and Discussion Topic: Chinese “Nationalism”

Week 4
Class: Modalities and Concepts: Chinese and Americans
What does politics mean in China? Ideal or realistic approach?

Reading:

Quiz 1
Session II – Comparative East-West Political Thought and Theory

Week 5
Class: National Holiday
No Class

Week 6
Class: Chinese Political Values (Culture)
What are the American Political values? How different are they in China?

Reading:

Quiz 2
Session III – Key Research and Discussion Topic: Food Security and Policy; Collective action

Week 7
Class: Chinese Democracy
What is the ideal (or good) society of the Chinese assumption?
Readings:


Quiz 3

Session IV – Key Research and Discussion Topic:

Official Environmental Discourse and Government Policy

Week 8
Class: Economic Reform

What is the socialist market system?

Readings:


Ramo, Joshua Copper. The Beijing Consensus, pp. 1-47. Foreign Policy Center.

Washington Consensus, pp.1-11.

Quiz 4

Session VI – Key Research and Discussion Topic:
Peaceful Rise; Environmental Consequences of the Reform Era; Mega-farms in Africa

Week 9
Class: The Communist Party

How different is the political party from that in the U.S.?

Readings:


The 18th Party Congress, China Leadership Monitor (this reading will be given one week before this class)

Quiz 5

Session VII – Key Research and Discussion Topic:

The Transformation to New Leadership; Do people dare talk about Bo Xilai and the Trial of his Wife, Gu Kailai?

Week 10
Class: The People's Congress

What is the People’s Congress in Chinese terms?

Readings:


Week 11
Class: The Judicial System

Human rights in Chinese terms

Readings:


Quiz 6

Session VIII – Key Research and Discussion Topic:

Social Consequences of Economic Reform

Week 12
Class: Media and Politics

Media’s role in Chinese terms

Readings:


Quiz 7
Session IX – Key Research and Discussion Topic:
Public Perception of Corruption and its Impact on Decision-making

Week 13
Class: The Military

Why is the “People's” Army under the Control of the Party?

Readings:


Quiz 8
Session X – Key Research and Discussion Topic:

“Blue-Water Navy” Impact on Decision-making

Week 14
Class: Reading Week

No class
Week 15
Class: State and Society

Why are the state and society not dualistic in Chinese terms?

Readings:


Session XI –Key Research and Discussion Topic:

Chinese Democracy and State-Society Relations

Interview Project Due

Course Materials

Readings


Optional Readings

• Wakeman, Frederic E. 1977. The Fall of Imperial China. Free Press