

# FOREIGN POLICY IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

TERM: Fall 2019  
WEBSITE: [POLS 1824](#)  
TIME: Mondays, 3-5:30pm  
CLASSROOM: Sayles Hall Room 306

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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays, 2-4pm

## COURSE SUMMARY

This undergraduate seminar examines the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China. It aims both to teach students theoretical perspectives on international relations and to critically evaluate whether these theories explain past and present Chinese foreign policy. What explains China's historical use of military force? Why did the alliance between China and the Soviet Union fall apart despite their institutional and ideological similarities? Has the personality of China's leaders or its domestic institutions affected its international behavior? Why is China modernizing its military and how concerned should we be? To what extent has the world changed China and to what extent does it seek to change the world?

### SHOULD I TAKE THIS COURSE? AND WHY?

While each student's experience is likely to differ, I believe there are two broad reasons to take this course. First, China's foreign relations are an increasingly critical component of global affairs. Various academics, policymakers, and pundits posit that the rise of China presents *the* defining challenge of international politics in the twenty-first century. This course will help you draw your own conclusions about the validity of these claims. While I predict that not everyone will arrive at the same answer, I do expect that everyone will develop historical and theoretical building blocks that will make their answers better informed.

The second reason is that studying international relations (IR) theory and country-specific foreign policies are often mutually reinforcing endeavors. Theoretical frameworks help us structure (nearly infinite) quantities of data and develop more stable expectations about politics. Thinking like a social scientist, we can leverage what scholars have learned in economics, sociology, psychology, or political science in order to better explain what happens in the international arena. However, studying the foreign policy decisions of a particular country, such as China, affords an opportunity to test the limits of these theoretical models. Thinking like a historian or regionalist, we can critically evaluate broad theoretical claims about why states do what they do based upon how well theories match empirical patterns. In short, I hope that students interested in *either* international politics generally or China specifically will gain something meaningful.

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The course is divided into two sections. In the first half, we'll (speedily) trace the history of Chinese foreign policy from 1949 to 1997. We'll ask why China allied with the Soviet Union and entered the Korean War, why it charted an independent course in the mid-1950s and eventually normalized relations with the United States. We'll then ask whether and how Chinese foreign policy changed during the 1980s and 1990s. In the second half, we'll examine Chinese foreign policy in the era after Deng Xiaoping, switching from a chronological to a thematic lens. Specifically, we'll examine five important facets of contemporary Chinese foreign policy: (1) military modernization; (2) state and society relations; (3) elite decision-making; (4) economic interdependence and global governance; and (5) international bargaining behavior.

Each week pairs one or two general readings on international relations theory with several applications to the case of China. The goal is to critically evaluate how well theoretical frameworks illuminate historical and contemporary events. Rather than covering all theoretical material at the onset, the course introduces some each week. The upside is that each discussion focuses on a few theoretical concepts in the context of a China-specific topic. *Please note that there are readings for the first week of class.*

This course is structured to be a *survey class*. There are no prerequisite requirements. Students without background in Chinese politics or international relations theory should not be discouraged from enrollment. Because the course is oriented toward broader historical and theoretical debates, it cannot cover the full range of particular issues involved in Chinese foreign policy (e.g. environmental policy, human rights, bilateral relations with North Korea, etc). The final papers, however, should allow you to explore at least one issue of particular interest to you.

## COURSE GOALS

The overall goal of this course is to help you develop informed opinions regarding the foreign policies China has and is pursuing. You should come away from this class with a better understanding of Chinese political history, theories of international politics, and the general value of social science in explaining world events.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

There are three required texts for the course: (1) *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (\$34); (2) *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (\$36); and (3) *Following the Leader: Ruling China, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping* (\$22) . All are available for purchase at the Brown bookstore. Copies of additional chapters and articles are provided in a course packet. While not required, students that have not taken a course in international relations theory may find it helpful to consult an introductory text, such as *World Politics: Interests, Interactions, Institutions* (4th edition).

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This seminar is discussion-based. At the beginning of each class, I will provide a brief (15 minutes at most) overview of the material, focusing on adding historical context and reviewing some of the more challenging theoretical concepts. The remainder of each session will provide an opportunity for you to discuss your thoughts and reactions with your classmates. The success

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of a discussion-based class model hinges on three things. First, it requires you to invest time in engaging with the material prior to class. I expect everyone to devote sufficient time to complete all readings in advance. Second, it requires you to engage with the material with a critical eye and come to class prepared to share your thoughts. On the one hand, assigned readings in this course represent the culmination of years of careful academic research by some of the leading scholars in the field. Try to remain open-minded and take what the author is saying seriously. On the other hand, the study of Chinese foreign policy is filled with contestation. Class discussion will aim to bring out multiple sides of the debate and encourage you to start developing ideas about where you stand. Third, in-class discussion and debate requires that we be respectful of each other's opinions. That includes the instructor. If you ever feel that the classroom environment is problematic in any way, please contact me.

#### TIME ALLOTMENT

You should expect to spend approximately: 10 hours per week (on average) reading and reviewing the material (130 hours total); 2.5 hours writing each of the two response papers (5 hours total); 5 hours researching and preparing your final paper proposal; and 25-30 hours researching, writing, and revising your final paper. **Please note that this course involves an intensive reading load (approximately 175 pages per week on average).**

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND COLLABORATION

Plagiarism violates the academic policies of Brown University and the norms of the scholarly community. Consequences for plagiarism are often severe, and can include suspension or expulsion. Brown's [Academic Code](#) provides specific details regarding how to properly cite material. A general rule of thumb is, if you are in doubt, ask for clarification. If you are still in doubt, *include the citation*. Students may find additional support for the writing requirements in this course at the [Brown Writing Center](#). You are encouraged to discuss course material and assignments with classmates. This is critical to academic work. In the end, however, all assignments must be your own work. You should acknowledge assistance given by other students. For example, if a classmate provided comments on an earlier draft, simply include a footnote acknowledging the assistance (you will see this convention in nearly every assigned reading).

#### TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Students are not permitted to use technology of any kind (laptops, tablets, cell phones) during class. This seminar is primarily discussion-based, meaning that we should be actively listening while others are speaking in order to better engage with their argument. In addition, there is a growing body of evidence that students perform better in technology-free learning environments. Students who take handwritten notes show improved ability to understand and remember concepts. Perhaps more important to the community, other studies show that students who multitask on laptops not only tend to score lower on tests but also end up distracting those around them.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me if you have a disability or other condition that might require accommodations or modification of any of these

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course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information contact [Student and Employee Accessibility Services](#) (401-863-9588; SEAS@brown.edu).

Brown University welcomes students from around the country and the world, and the unique perspectives international and multilingual students bring enrich the campus community. To empower multilingual learners, an array of support is available including language and culture workshops and individual appointments. For more information about [English Language Learning](#) support at Brown, contact the ELL Specialists (ellwriting@brown.edu).

## COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSIGNMENTS

### **30% Participation**

### **35% Response Papers**

### **35% Final Paper**

*Participation.* Active participation is the cornerstone of an academic seminar. Creating a healthy learning environment requires both your attendance and your active contribution to the discussion. I will allow one unexcused absence but any additional absences require permission and/or a Dean's excuse. For each class missed, you will need to complete one additional response paper covering that week's material. Please come to class on time. I reserve the right to treat a late arrival greater than 10 minutes as an absence.

Participation will be evaluated based both on the frequency and thoughtfulness of your contributions. Exemplary participation consistently meets the following criteria: (1) complete comprehension of the week's readings; (2) ability to draw connections across readings; (3) engagement with your classmates' ideas; and (4) novel insight. Above average participation consistently meets some of these criteria. Acceptable participation consistently makes a good faith effort but is inconsistent in execution or engagement. Unacceptable participation is consistently uninvolved or otherwise disrespectful. I will contact you if your participation is unacceptable.

*Response Papers.* You will write two brief (500 words single-spaced) response papers over the course of the semester based on the assigned readings for a given week. An exemplary response paper makes an argument that demonstrates mastery of the assigned material, critically engages with the authors' arguments, and advances a original or novel insight into the week's topic. An above average response paper meets at least one of these criteria. An acceptable paper makes a good faith effort. While there is no one-size-fits-all model for a response paper, try to think about how these readings speak to one another. Do the authors disagree about the facts, the explanation, or both? Who do you find more compelling? What historical events or theoretical concepts covered in other weeks of the course might complement or contest the author's argument? Please send response papers to me over email by **Sunday at 6pm** on your assigned week.

On the first day of class, we will have a sign-up sheet for the specific weeks to complete your response papers. To ensure an even distribution across the semester, only three or four students will write response papers in a given week. However, if you have a pressing interest in a topic and are not able to secure a slot, please let me know! I'll do my best to accommodate.

*Final Paper.* The final paper is designed for you to make a focused, scholarly argument pertaining

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to some aspect of Chinese foreign policy. The paper should make a *narrow* argument that speaks to the existing literature. A general rule of thumb is that more focused questions are almost always better. There are three general format options. The first is to advance a historical argument about what is or has happened. For example, you might argue that the signals that Mao sent the United States in 1969 were not clear. The second is to advance a theoretical argument about why something happened or is happening. For example, you might argue that the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1995 resulted from leader emotions, rather than declining territorial claim strength. The third is to apply a theoretical concept discussed in the course to a specific policy issue. For example, you could argue that participation in international institutions in the 2000s has or has not affected China's attitudes regarding foreign intervention.

Whichever model you choose, you should structure your paper with a brief (generally 5-6 pages double spaced) review of the historiography or theory surrounding your research question, followed by substantive discussion of empirical evidence (generally 14-15 pages double spaced). The introduction of your paper should clearly state your argument in a few paragraphs. The conclusion should *briefly* summarize the paper's findings and discuss the implications. Please write the final paper in the language of hypothesis testing. Whether or not you choose to adopt the more technical, academic style of some of the political science articles we will read is up to you. While students are free to use Chinese-language materials, there are ample topics that can be addressed without such skills.

Please submit a short, 200-word abstract of your research topic to me by **Thursday October 17**. In addition, students are required to schedule at least one 15 minute office hour session with me. The thirteenth class session will be used as an optional workshop for your final papers. A draft of your final paper is due prior to class that week. The final paper is due on **Wednesday December 18 at 9am**.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Part I: History of Chinese Foreign Policy

#### 1. INTRODUCTION - SEPTEMBER 9

- Schelling, Thomas C. *Arms and Influence*. Revised Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. pp. 1-34.
- Wendt, Alexander. "Constructing International Politics." *International Security* 20.1 (1995): 71-81.
- Christensen, Thomas J. "Parsimony is No Simple Matter: International Relations Theory, Area Studies, and the Rise of China." Unpublished Paper. 1998.
- Rosenau, James N., and Mary Durfee. "Thinking Theory Thoroughly." *Coherent Approaches to an Incoherent World*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2000. Chapter 9.
- Campbell, Kurt M., and Ely Ratner. "The China Reckoning: How Beijing Defied American Expectations." *Foreign Affairs* 97 (2018): 60.
- Wang Jisi, et al. "Did America Get China Wrong: The Engagement Debate." *Foreign Affairs* 97 (2018): 183.

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## 2. 1949-1956: FOREIGN POLICY AT THE NATIONAL FOUNDING - SEPTEMBER 16

*Theoretical concepts: individuals and the strategic environment*

- Horowitz, Michael C., Allan C. Stam, and Cali M. Ellis. *Why Leaders Fight*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. pp. 1-24.
- Garver, John W. *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. pp. 29-112.
- Chen Jian. *Mao's China and the Cold War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. pp. 49-84.
- Whiting, Allen. *China Crosses the Yalu*. New York: Macmillan, 1960. pp. 47-115.
- Slantchev, Branislav L. "Feigning Weakness." *International Organization* 64.3 (2010): pp. 357-362 **only**.

## 3. 1956-1959: THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT - SEPTEMBER 23

*Theoretical concepts: international status and ideology*

- Renshon, Jonathan. *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. pp. 1-31.
- Lüthi, Lorenz M. *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. pp. 46-156.
- Shen Zhihua, and Xia Yafeng. "The Great Leap Forward, The People's Commune and the Sino-Soviet Split." *Journal of Contemporary China* 20.72 (2011): 861-880.
- Christensen, Thomas J. *Worse than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011. pp. 1-27 (skim), 146-180.

## 4. 1959-1969: MAO'S FOREIGN POLICY - SEPTEMBER 30

*Theoretical concepts: domestic institutions in authoritarian states*

- Weeks, Jessica LP. *Dictators at War and Peace*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014. pp. 1-13.
- Walder, Andrew G. *China Under Mao*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. pp. 15-39, 152-179.
- Chen Jian. *Mao's China and the Cold War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. pp. 205-237
- Garver, John W. *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. pp. 163-231.
- Christensen, Thomas J. *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958*. Princeton University Press, 1996. pp. 11-31 and 194-241.

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5. 1969-1978: NORMALIZATION OF FOREIGN RELATIONS - OCTOBER 7

*Theoretical concepts: power and threat*

- Walt, Stephen M. *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987. pp. 17-49.
- Garver, John W. *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. pp. 286-348.
- Xia Yafeng. "China's Elite Politics and Sino-American Rapprochement, January 1969–February 1972." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8.4 (2006): 3-28.
- Yang Kuisong and Xia Yafeng. "Vacillating between Revolution and Détente: Mao's Changing Psyche and Policy toward the United States, 1969–1976." *Diplomatic History* 34.2 (2010): 395-423.
- Lüthi, Lorenz M. "Restoring Chaos to History: Sino-Soviet-American Relations, 1969." *The China Quarterly* 210 (2012): 378-397.

6. 1978-1989: THE DIPLOMACY OF OPENING AND REFORM - OCTOBER 21

*Theoretical concepts: economic interests and socialization*

- Shirk, Susan L. *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. pp. 3-22.
- Johnston, Alastair Iain. *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. pp. 1-40.
- Garver, John W. *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. pp. 428-462.
- Zweig, David. *Internationalizing China: Domestic Interests and Global Linkages*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002. pp. 23-48.

7. 1989-1997: TIANANMEN AND THE TAIWAN CRISIS - OCTOBER 28

*Theoretical concepts: international order*

- Goddard, Stacie E. *When Right Makes Might: Rising Powers and World Order*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018. Chapter 1.
- Garver, John W. *China's Quest: The History of the Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. pp. 463-504, and 607-633.
- Sarotte, Mary Elise. "China's Fear of Contagion: Tiananmen Square and the Power of the European Example." *International Security* 37.2 (2012): 156-182.
- Johnston, Alastair Iain. "Is China a Status Quo Power?" *International Security* 27.4 (2003): 5-56.
- The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, 1996. (skim references to China)
- Ministry of National Defense, *China's National Defense White Paper* (国防白皮书), 2000. (skim)

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## Part II: Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy

### 8. ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MILITARY MODERNIZATION - NOVEMBER 4

*Theoretical concepts: intentions and commitment problems*

- Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: WW Norton & Company, 2001. pp. 1-28.
- Liff, Adam P., and G. John Ikenberry. "Racing Toward Tragedy?: China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma." *International Security* 39.2 (2014): 52-91.
- Cunningham, Fiona S., and M. Taylor Fravel. "Assuring Assured Retaliation: China's Nuclear Posture and US-China Strategic Stability." *International Security* 40.2 (2015): 7-50.
- Fravel, M. Taylor. "Shifts in Warfare and Party Unity: Explaining China's Changes in Military Strategy." *International Security* 42.3 (2018): 37-83.
- Wang Jisi, "China's Search for a Grand Strategy: A Rising Great Power Finds Its Way," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2011.

### 9. STATE AND SOCIETY - NOVEMBER 11

*Theoretical concepts: identity and domestic audiences*

- Miller, Manjari Chatterjee. *Wronged by Empire: Post-Imperial Ideology and Foreign Policy in India and China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. pp. 7-34.
- Weiss, Jessica Chen. *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. pp. 219-248.
- Johnston, Alastair Iain. "Is Chinese Nationalism Rising? Evidence from Beijing." *International Security* 41.3 (2017): 7-43.
- Roberts, Margaret E. *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall*. Princeton University Press, 2018. pp. 1-20.
- Gries, Peter Hays. "Social Psychology and the Identity-Conflict Debate: Is a 'China Threat' Inevitable?" *European Journal of International Relations* 11.2 (2005): 235-265.

### 10. ELITE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES - NOVEMBER 18

*Theoretical concepts: advisers and information*

- Saunders, Elizabeth N. "No Substitute for Experience: Presidents, Advisers, and Information in Group Decision Making." *International Organization* 71.S1 (2017): S219-S247.
- Lu Ning. *The Dynamics of Foreign-Policy Decisionmaking in China*. Second Edition. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997. pp. 150-170.
- Lampton, David M. *Following the Leader: Ruling China, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. pp. 1-109, 165-191.

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- MacFarquhar, Roderick. "China: The Superpower of Mr. Xi." *The New York Review of Books*. 62.13 (2015).
  - Miller, Alice. "The PLA in the Party Leadership Decisionmaking System." in *PLA Influence on China's National Security Policymaking* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015. pp. 58-83.
  - Zhang Qingmin. "Bureaucratic Politics and Chinese Foreign Policy-Making." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9.4 (2016): 435-458.

#### 11. INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS - NOVEMBER 25

*Theoretical concepts: international organizations, economic interdependence*

- Keohane, Robert O., and Lisa L. Martin. "The Promise of Institutional Theory." *International Security* 20.1 (1995): 39-51.
- Guo Ji, "The Profound Institutional Crisis of the West." *Qiushi* 3(4), 2011.
- Kastner, Scott L., Margaret M. Pearson, and Chad Rector. "Invest, Hold Up, or Accept? China in Multilateral Governance." *Security Studies* 25(1). (skip North Korea section)
- Levy, Philip. "Was Letting China into the WTO a Mistake." *Foreign Affairs* 2018.
- Sceats, Sonya, and Shaun Breslin. *China and the International Human Rights System*. (London: Chatham House, 2012), p. 1-54.
- Kastner, Scott L., Margaret M. Pearson, and Chad Rector. *China's Strategic Multilateralism: Investing in Global Governance*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. pp. 173-216.
- Congressional Research Service, *China-U.S. Trade Issues*, July 2018. pp. 1-56.

#### 12. INTERNATIONAL BARGAINING BEHAVIOR - DECEMBER 2

*Theoretical concepts: negotiation and signaling*

- Fravel, M. Taylor. *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. pp. 10-69, 220-299.
- Christensen, Thomas J. *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power*. (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2015), p. 204-287.
- Zhang, Ketian. "Cautious Bully: Reputation, Resolve, and Beijing's Use of Coercion in the South China Sea." *International Security* (2019).
- Mastro, Oriana Skylar. *The Costs of Conversation: Obstacles to Peace Talks in Wartime*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. pp. 126-142.
- Fisher, Max. "The South China Sea: Explaining the Dispute," *The New York Times*, July 14, 2016. (skim)

#### 13. PAPER WORKSHOP - (T) DECEMBER 5