

Contemporary China: Continuity and Change (SOSC1350; 3 credits)

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Class venue: LTA

Office hour: By appointment

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Course Description

The purpose of this introductory course is two-fold: to provide an overview of the development in China from 1949 to the present; and to provide an analytic basis for understanding the on-going social and economic change in the country. Factual account of major events in the People's Republic of China's history will be integrated with discussions of the following thematic issues: (1) the historical and ideological origins of the post-1949 system in China, (2) the relationship between the structural design of the political economy and the leadership's search for solutions to economic growth and equity, (3) the methods by which the party-state has sought to penetrate and control the economy and society and to homogenize social life and culture, (4) the internal contradictions and crises of the Maoist system, (5) the driving forces of reform and adjustment, and (6) the ramifications of the decline of communism.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

After taking this course, students should be able to

- (1) Command comprehensive knowledge about the basic facets of the PRC's politics, economic life, society and culture since 1949 (ILO 1);
- (2) Appreciate the importance of a critical and independent examination of the major events in China's development (ILO 2); and
- (3) Improve analytical skills to engage in fruitful discussions and debates about current affairs in the country (ILO3).

Avenues to Achieving ILOs

The achievement of these outcomes will be facilitated through

- (1) Reading pertinent book chapters written by established scholars on China;
- (2) Attending lectures on thematic issues;
- (3) Taking part in in-class discussions and tutorials; and

- (4) Making preparations for examinations that will test both the mastery of knowledge and the ability to discern and comprehend the causal linkages among relevant facts.

Requirements & Expectations

- Letter grades based on grade point total and relative standing in class will be used in the assessment of student performance.
- Students are required to attend classes and tutorials on time. Attendance will be recorded via Mentimeter. Students are required to respond using their devices at the designated time during each session. Attendance of classes and tutorials after the end of the add-drop period will account for 10% of the final grade points. Each failure to attend class or tutorial without the instructor's approval will result in the loss of 1 point in the final grade point total. The maximum penalty for skipping classes and tutorials is 10 points for the entire duration of the course. More extensive absence from classes without legitimate reasons will have further negative impact on the assignment of letter grade.
- A short Q&A period is included in each lecture. Further discussions are held during the bi-weekly tutorial sessions, where relevant video clips will be shown to supplement lectures and readings and to provide additional food for thought. Participation in lecture and tutorial discussions is strongly encouraged and accounts for 5% of the final grade points. Each student is required to raise questions or make comments at least 3 times (each of which earns 1.5 point in the final grade point total, plus a 0.5 bonus point for the third time) during the semester. In order to get the credit for class participation, after speaking out in a lecture or tutorial students should tick "yes" under a question posed on Canvas. It will be recorded by the system.
- There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam. The mid-term exam accounts for 35% of the final grade points, whereas the final exam contributes 50%. Both exams will take the form of *open-book*, *multiple-choice* questions. The final exam is not cumulative – i.e., the mid-term exam covers materials discussed in the first half of the semester and the final exam only covers materials discussed in the second half of the semester.
- Both the midterm and the final will be conducted online, using the "Quizzes" function of Canvas. Both the question order and the choice order for each question will be scrambled, and, once selected, the answer to a question cannot be changed. Only computers (PC or Mac) can be used to take the exams, with cookies enabled on the browser and keyboard use disallowed.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST -Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Summary of Assessment Components

Class attendance (10%)	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	This component records efforts by students to gain knowledge and understanding about contemporary China, which pertains to all three ILOs.
Participation in Q&A and tutorials (5%)	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	This component records efforts by students to further their knowledge and understanding about contemporary China by seeking clarifications from instructor, viewing additional materials and taking part in small group discussions. It pertains to all three ILOs.
Mid-term exam (35%)	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	This component directly assesses students' command of knowledge and understanding about contemporary China, gained during the first half of the semester. It pertains to all three ILOs.
Final exam (50%)	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	This component directly assesses students' command of knowledge and understanding about contemporary China, gained during the second half of the semester. It pertains to all three ILOs. It also carries greater weight because of the coverage of substantive issues about the economy, society and culture of China, whereas nearly half of the classes in the first half of the semester covers the historical background of development in post-1949 China, which is important but does not constitute the focus of this course.

Final Grade Description

Grade	Short description	Elaboration on grading description
A	Excellent performance	Demonstrates firm knowledge about China's path of development since 1949 and a clear understanding of the underlying forces at work.
B	Good performance	Demonstrates broad knowledge about China's path of development since 1949 and a solid understanding of the underlying forces at work.
C	Satisfactory performance	Demonstrates core knowledge about the essential facts of contemporary China and a basic understanding of the driving forces of development since 1949.
D	Marginal pass	Demonstrates basic knowledge about the essential facts of contemporary China and a rudimentary understanding of the driving forces of development since 1949.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient knowledge and understanding about contemporary China and the forces behind the development since 1949.

Communication and Feedback

Students are encouraged to seek clarifications and ask questions after class or during appointed meeting time. Mid-term and final exam results will be posted via Canvas within two weeks of exam time. Tabulation of attendance record and participation credit will be posted via Canvas within two weeks following the last class. Students who have questions about the feedback posted via Canvas should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is posted.

Course AI Policy

The use of AI tools is permitted for course-related work, except during the midterm and final exams.

Optional Reading Materials (e-versions are available via the Library)

- William A. Joseph (ed.), *Politics in China: An Introduction* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2019, 3rd edition).
- Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Adaptation and Growth* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018, 2nd edition).
- Tony Saich, *Governance and Politics of China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 4th edition).
- World Bank (with Development Research Center of the State Council, PR China). 2013. *China 2030: Building A Modern, Harmonious and Creative Society*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- World Bank (with Development Research Center of the State Council, PR China). 2019. *Innovative China: New Drivers of Growth*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Xiaowei Zang (ed.), *Understanding Chinese Society* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011/1st edition & 2016/2nd edition).

Sequence of Topics & Reading Assignments

Topic 1	Introduction Naughton (Chapter 2); Joseph (Chapter 2)
Topic 2	Post-1949 Transformations Saich (Chapters 3-4); Joseph (Chapters 3-4)

Topic 3 Government and Politics

Saich (Chapters 5-6)

Midterm exam (October 16, in-class)

Topic 4 Central Planning & Beginnings of Marketization: Rural Reforms

Naughton (Chapters 4, 11, 13)

World Bank (Part 1)

Topic 5 Internationalization, Broadening and Deepening of Marketization, and Privatization

Naughton (Chapters 5, 14, 16, 17, 19)

World Bank (Part 1)

Topic 6 Social Change

Zang (Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11)

Topic 7 Cultural Change

Zang (Chapters 2, 3, 9, 10, 12)

Final exam (TBA)