SOSC 4280: China in the Global Political Economy

Dong Zhang

Fall Semester, 2023–2024

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Course Website: accessed via canvas
Office Hours: Monday 4:00 pm–5:00 pm  
Office Location: Academic Building 2381
Class Hours: Friday 9:00 am–11:50 am  
Class Room: Rm. 6602
Teaching Assistants: Jinfeng Wu  
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Course Overview

China’s economic integration with the world has profoundly transformed the country’s domestic political economy. Meanwhile, China’s economic ascendancy has reshaped the global geopolitical landscape. This undergraduate seminar is designed to understand China from the global political economy perspective. This course provides a general survey of research in the field of International Political Economy (IPE). IPE involves the study of how domestic and international politics (power, material interests, ideas, norms) influence and are influenced by economic relations between states. We study international trade, international finance, international production, and international development by exploring the cross-border flow of goods, production, capital, and labor from a political perspective. The goal of this seminar is to introduce advanced undergraduates to the major debates of IPE and help students develop an analytical toolkit to study China’s economic engagement with the world.

Enrollment Requirement

To enroll in this course, students must have completed at least ONE of the following courses:

- HUMA 2590: The Making of the Modern World: Renaissance to the Present
- SOSC 1350: Contemporary China: Continuity and Change
- SOSC 2290: Understanding Globalization

Teaching and Learning Activities

This course consists of short lectures, classroom discussions, presentations, research and writing.

Course Materials

There are no required books for this course. All readings will be made available in electronic form through the course website.
Course Objectives

- Understand the major theoretical debates in the field of international political economy and recognize diverse perspectives;
- Develop skills to interpret and critically evaluate empirical evidence on issues concerning China’s role in the global political economy;
- Engage in thoughtful discussions on a range of critical global issues that are currently under debate.

Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the aim is that students will have improved the ability to:

- Use key concepts and theoretical frameworks from economics and political science to deepen understanding of China’s global engagement;
- Apply critical thinking and analytical writing skills to examine the dynamics of the global political economy;
- Assess the validity of existing arguments based on empirical evidence;
- Develop a logical argument or theory that can be evaluated using evidence.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

- **Participation (20%)**: Students are expected to complete all required readings prior to each meeting. To foster engaged discussion, students are required to submit one or two discussion questions concerning the weekly assigned reading via Canvas each week (no later than 8 PM on Thursday of the week in which the reading(s) appear). To secure a good participation grade, students are strongly encouraged to make thoughtful contributions to classroom discussions.

- **Presentation (20%)**: Each student is required to sign up for one presentation focusing on a weekly reading. Working together in a group of two or three, you will collaboratively deliver a presentation and lead the seminar discussion. Your task will involve summarizing the key arguments from the assigned reading, critically evaluating the supporting evidence, and proposing several discussion questions. Please ensure that your PowerPoint slides are submitted via Canvas by Thursday of the respective presentation week, no later than 8 PM.

- **Response Paper (20%)**: Each student is required to write a response paper in reaction to a weekly reading, except for the reading you have already presented or will present during the course. The response paper should be approximately five pages (Times New Roman, 12-point font, double spaced). Students are expected to briefly summarize the main arguments and critically assess the evidence in the reading.

- **Final Paper (40%)**: Students will choose one research topic and write a critical literature review, which will assess influential works representing multiple perspectives.

Please note that both the response paper and final paper assignments are due on Wednesday, December 6, at noon. ANY late submissions will be penalized by one letter grade per day (e.g., an A becomes an A-).
Course Schedule and Reading List

Week 1: Introduction
Friday, September 1

  - Chapter 1

Recommended:

Week 2: Overview of the Contemporary International Economic Order
Friday, September 8


Recommended:

Week 3: International Trade I: Domestic Politics
Friday, September 15

Weekly readings:

**Week 4: International Trade II: State Power and International Institutions**

*Friday, September 22*


**Recommended:**


**Week 5: International Production: Foreign Direct Investment**

*Friday, September 29*

  - Chapter 4
Recommended:


Week 6: Political Economy of Immigration

*Friday, October 6*


Recommended:


Week 7: Financial Crises

*Friday, October 13*

- Watching a documentary in class
Week 8: International Development I: Development Ideas and Models
Friday, October 20


Recommended:


  • Read pages 388–428

  • Chapter 1


Week 9: International Development II: Foreign Aid
Friday, October 27

  • Chapter 5

Recommended:


**Week 10: Economic Interdependence and Political Conflicts**  
*Friday, November 3*


*Recommended:*


**Week 11: Economic Sanctions**  
*Friday, November 10*


*Recommended:*


Week 12: The Backlash against Globalization
Friday, November 17

• Scott Lincicome, “Testing the ‘China Shock’: Was Normalizing Trade with China a Mistake?” CATO Institute, July 2020.

Recommended:


Week 13: Technology and Great Power Competition
Friday, November 24


Recommended:

• Chris Miller, Chip War: The Fight for the World’s Most Critical Technology (Scribner, 2022).