Chinese Political and Economic Reform

Course: PLSC 300C/HONR 209*
Term: Spring 2016
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is an examination of the political, economic, and social forces that led to and sustain China’s contemporary drive towards modernization. The purpose of this course is to begin to comprehend and to start to speak about the composition, course and conduct of Chinese reform in a more sophisticated way. The course is also meant to compel you to rethink the ways in which China is organized, managed, and reformed.

The general time frame is from 1978 to the present day. We will examine the political causes of and ideological changes in economic reform; relations between government and enterprises; and the interactions between the central government and local authority. Our efforts will also look at the debates raging here about the direction and destination of China.

This course then is an examination of what Chinese reform is and why it is. As China’s power has grown, so have the expectations of leaders and the public here about the sort of system—the type of state and the character of the society---that China should strive for. There are fascinating debates taking place in government and intellectual circles about what sort of country China should be and how to get there. Along with these deliberations is a shift in the balance of thinking within the Chinese government, such that the ways in which policy is made here are also being transformed.

We will proceed through a mix of discussions and lectures, focusing on the assigned reading. Please note that all of the readings listed are to be read by the class meeting for which they are assigned. For those interested in exploring particular issues in more detail, I will be happy to provide suggestions and recommendations for further materials.

Kindly be aware that the readings are extensive: they are also not meant to be inclusive. Use the assigned materials as leverage to open more doors and
wedges to hold them open for further inspection. I will also augment the readings as time goes on, and you should expect to receive emails containing additional material I have culled from my readings of Chinese and other sources.

You should also keep abreast of news of China: some of that will be in your hands; you will also receive regular news items through email, for which you are responsible for reading and will be quizzed on.

COURSE OUTCOMES
The purpose of this course is to begin to comprehend and to start to speak about the Chinese political and economic systems--as well as reform in China--in a more sophisticated way. As the course progresses, students will become more familiar with the structure and process of Chinese attitudes and policies of reform, as well as be more deeply acquainted with the complexities and obstacles in creating and sustaining reform. Because there will be Chinese vocabulary terms distributed weekly, students will also expand their understanding of the Chinese language and be able to see the meanings and connections between language, the government, the society, policies, and reform.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT
Grading rests on two pillars: active, engaged, and informed class participation (20% of your final grade); and a midterm and final examination (80% as a whole, though the assessment of each will vary depending upon your performance, with the likely distribution being weighted more heavily towards the final—giving you ample opportunity to improve as the semester proceeds).

A substantial portion of your grade then is informed, insightful, and provocative contributions to the dialogue with each other and with the readings in class. I expect you to be prepared to speak in class: to answer questions that I and your colleagues pose; to offer comments on the readings and musings of others inside and outside class; and to begin to comprehend the complexities of reform in China.

Depending upon the level and quality of the sorts of participation outlined above, there may be other measures used to evaluate this portion of your grade, possibly of a written nature or a presentation that might expand the points made in class. A continuing controversy or an unresolved debate might spur me to ask you to expand upon your notions in a written format. Contributions in that regard would be assessed under the category of class participation.

Quizzes are likely to be given, to evaluate how well you are reading the various materials that I send on to you electronically or distribute to you in class.
Please note that the examinations will largely be take-home essay exercises, but there may be an in-class component involved that would be required. You will have advance notice of all examination work and its requirements.

For those students anxious about what may seem to be an open-ended character in some of the assignments and responsibilities, kindly be aware that we are studying a fast-moving set of objects called “China”. Events here tend to subvert and sometimes upend the best-laid plans of observation and analysis. Be flexible, read slowly, and move fast.

ATTENDANCE POLICY
Being in class also means participating in the lectures and discussions throughout the course. Attendance in my courses is mandatory and a timely appearance is required, unless exceptional circumstances intervene. Only valid medical or family emergencies qualify as an absence, and documentation of the same must be presented to the professor no later than the next class meeting. I trust that the material and the discussions that it inspires will serve as more than adequate justification for you attending the class for every session.

ACADEMIC HONESTY STATEMENT
Please see the following link, and read the text carefully:
http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS
Rowan Callick, *The Party Forever* 
Guangyuan Yu, *Deng Xiaoping Shakes the World*
Victor C. Shih, *Factions and Finance in China* 
David Wank, *Commodifying Communism*
John Pomfret, *Chinese Lessons* 
*China: A Century of Revolution* (DVD)

CLASS SCHEDULE
January 15th
This week, we will look at the structure and direction of the course. We will also begin to talk about the different ways in which to conceive and pursue the study of Chinese reform, as seen through the political and administrative structure of China. Our focus this week will be on the organization and
operation of the Chinese political system.

You should begin to view the series, *China: A Century of Revolution*. This documentary is an essential part of our efforts, and you should try to get through as much of the series at the beginning of the course as possible, especially as we will be jumping into the written material quickly.

**January 22nd**

Begin reading Rowan Callick, *The Party Forever: Inside China's Modern Communist Elite*. The range of page numbers to be completed for the start of this class session will be announced. As with all the readings, pay careful attention to the footnotes and endnotes.

John Pomfret’s *Chinese Lessons: Five Classmates and the Story of the New China* is very revealing of the ways in which China has evolved in recent decades. You will find this book a straightforward and engaging read, and you will probably wish to skip ahead. As the course proceeds, please read at your own pace, though for the purposes of this week, you will need to read chapter 1, and chapters 17-19.

The remainder of the Pomfret book must be completed by the time of the midterm examination.

**January 26-February 8: STUDENTS ON YUNNAN EXCURSION**

**February 12th**

We will continue our reading of Rowan Callick, *The Party Forever: Inside China's Modern Communist Elite*. The range of page numbers to be completed for the start of this class session will be announced.

**February 19th**

We will finish reading Rowan Callick, *The Party Forever: Inside China's Modern Communist Elite*. The range of page numbers to be completed for the start of this class session will be announced.

**February 26th**


**March 5th**

Guangyuan Yu, *Deng Xiaoping Shakes the World: An Eyewitness Account of China's Party Work Conference and the Third Plenum*, chapters 4-7. Also, there is M.
Francis Johnston, “Elites and Agencies: Forging Labor Policy at China’s Central Level,” MODERN CHINA, Vol. 28 No. 2, April 2002 147-176. (I will provide a copy of this article to you.)

**March 19th**
Guangyuan Yu, Deng Xiaoping Shakes the World: An Eyewitness Account of China’s Party Work Conference and the Third Plenum, chapters 8-13, and “Concluding Remarks”.

The midterm examination will take place this week.

**March 26th**
No class held, given the TBC trip to Shandong.

**April 2nd**
Victor C. Shih, Factions and Finance in China, chapters 1-3. This volume may seem thin, but it’s replete with different conceptions of what reform means, especially where economics is concerned.

Please note that this date is simply a placeholder: the class may have to be rescheduled, as this will be close to Qingming (清明)--Tomb Sweeping) Festival (清明).

**April 9th**
Victor C. Shih, Factions and Finance in China, chapters 4-6.

**April 16th**

**April 23rd**
We begin our reading of David L. Wank, Commodifying Communism: Business, Trust, and Politics in a Chinese City, by covering pages 3-67. This book is dense, theoretical, and focused on a case study of a single city. We will look to draw conclusions from his work, as well as evaluate the means by which he conducted his research.

**April 30th**
The second section from Wank’s book—pages 67-149—might be seen as an effort to capture the details of commercial development as they affect (and are directed by) political considerations. Or would that be the other way around?

NB Because of the May Day holiday, the precise time of this session is to be determined.
May 7th
You will need to finish the remainder of the Wank book. Other ways to frame the matters he confronts and concludes from will also be tossed about in our discussion, so kindly be prepared accordingly. And there is also the final examination for this course, due this week.

May 14th
The final examination will be due this week. Additional readings and a class meeting may well occur.