

# TOWARD A CHINA-DOMINATED 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY?

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University of Maryland–College Park • Spring 2025 • MWF 10am • Art Sociology  
Building (ASY) 3207, Fridays by Zoom

**Instructor:** Julia Chuang (jchuang1@umd.edu)

**Office hours:** By appointment

## Introduction

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What does the success of China’s rapid economic rise mean for global democracy, for capitalism, and for the current U.S.-dominated world order? This course explores the character, conditions, and consequences of the rapid Chinese economic growth that many have termed “capitalism with Chinese characteristics.” It summarizes three paradigms for explaining this growth: a state-centered, a market-centered, and a society-centered explanation. We examine case studies of U.S.-China interaction over the last three decades, and conclude with a forecast of what international relations will look like in the next century.

### Learning outcomes:

- To understand the history and political economy of contemporary China, to gain an understanding of China’s role in the global economy today.
- To read competing explanations of a common phenomenon (China’s rise) and critique and evaluate them.

### Notes on Course Content

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1. We meet in person on Mondays and Wednesday from 10am to 10:50am. On Friday mornings, you will either have a video to watch at home, or we will have no class.
2. This course is intended as an open and tolerant environment for exploration and development of a wide range of ideas and opinions. Students are welcome to disagree with positions expressed in class discussions or in course materials, and to express their disagreement both verbally and in written course assignments— so long as that disagreement is expressed *respectfully* and *thoughtfully*, and the assignment fulfills all requirements designated on the rubric.

### Grading

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This course moves away from traditional grading, where the instructor assigns grades for students, and toward self-evaluation. This is my attempt to remove the top-down nature of assessment in order to create an environment where you focus your attention on the work itself and engagement with the material.

You will be expected to participate actively in class. I reserve the right to cold-call on students during our Monday and Wednesday class time. You will also be expected to present the material for one week of class. You and a partner will be responsible for presenting a discussion of the week's reading materials to the class. You can prepare a Powerpoint presentation, or use the chalkboard to present your materials.

## Grade

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Despite moving away from grading, I am still required by the university to assign a final grade.

You will give yourself a final grade, based on your performance on three components:

### **1) Presentation (33%)**

a. Each week (beginning week 2), one or two students will lead class discussion. To prepare, you will meet with your partner to create an outline of your discussion plan. Presentations should address the fit between question, data, method, and theory. (10% of final grade)

### **2) In-class Participation (33% of final grade):**

Please attend all classes prepared to discuss the week's readings.

### **3) Midterm paper (33% of final grade):**

The midterm paper should be double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 14 pages. Students will choose from a selection of possible topics provided by the instructor. I will provide feedback on the midterm paper. If your paper is excellent, I will give largely positive feedback and the assignment will be finished. If your paper requires some work, I will also give instructions for a revision of the paper, and you will be expected to revise the paper and turn it in for a second round evaluation.

At the end of the course, you will evaluate your performance in these three categories and write me a letter explaining the grade you gave yourself. Under most circumstances (unless you have >2 unexcused absences or have not completed any portion of the expected work), I will use your self-assigned grade as your final grade.

## Course Policies

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1. **All classes will be held in person on Mondays and Wednesdays. Fridays by Zoom.**
  - a. **PowerPoint Slides are posted on ELMS** one day after each lecture. However, **lectures are not recorded** by the professor.
  - b. I will take attendance during Monday and Wednesday classes. If you are not present, and have not notified me of an absence, then I will consider your absence unexcused. If you

end the semester with more than 2 unexcused absences, I reserve the right to deduct points from your final grade.

## 2. Participation

- a. I believe we all learn best through active dialogue with others, so I encourage and facilitate active participation during in-person lectures. I will also cold call students to facilitate participation.

## 3. Late assignments.

- a. All assignments are turned in on ELMS on the date and by the time specified on the syllabus.
- b. Without *PRIOR* approval from me or your TA, no late work will be accepted.
  - i. Many of the ELMS submission links will close after the time the assignment is due.
  - ii. If you have a documented excuse, e.g. an illness, either your own or of a family member, etc., please contact me AHEAD of the due date/time to request an extension.

4. **CHEATING/PLAGIARISM** will be reported to the disciplinary board. This includes any work that you pass off as your own which you didn't actually do, whether it comes from a printed source or from a classmate.

- a. **Your work is all being submitted on ELMS.**

**ELMS has a plagiarism checker.**

Upshot: Please don't attempt to submit others' work as your own. You are highly likely to get caught, and it is miserable for all involved (primarily for you, but also for us).

5. **Students with disabilities/special needs** should *contact me* as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations.

For students with a documented (through ADS) disability who are permitted deadline extensions or extended quiz time: extension requests must be made *in writing* and *in advance of the quiz date or assignment due date*. Extensions on written assignments may not exceed three calendar days past the original due date.

## Assignments and Grading

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Course-end grades will be assigned as per university standards:

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| A | excellent mastery of the subject and outstanding scholarship (90-100 points)                     |
| B | good mastery of the subject and good scholarship (80-89 points)                                  |
| C | acceptable mastery of the subject and basic performance (70-79 points)                           |
| D | borderline understanding of the subject and marginal performance (60-69 points)                  |
| F | failure to demonstrate understanding of the subject and unsatisfactory performance (0-59 points) |

Grades are awarded a "minus" if the final whole digit is <3. Grades are awarded a "plus" if the final whole digit is ≥7. Grades are NOT ROUNDED (e.g., a 92.7 is an A-, not an A).

## Syllabus

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I reserve the right to update/amend this syllabus over the course of the semester by posting a new draft on ELMS and notifying the class.

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>DATES</b>	<b>MONDAY (on campus)</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY (on campus)</b>	<b>FRIDAY (via Zoom)</b>
1	1/27-1/31	<b>China's Rise - Intro</b>	<b>China's Rise</b>	<b>By zoom</b>
2	2/3-2/7	<b>Everyday life in China</b> Lecture	<b>Everyday life in China</b> Discussion	<b>Watch video</b>
3	2/10-2/14	<b>How China got rich</b> Student presentation	<b>How China got rich</b> Lecture	<b>Watch video</b>
4	2/17-2/21	<b>The Rich are very rich, the poor very poor</b> Lecture	<b>The Rich are very rich, the poor very poor</b> Lecture	<b>By zoom</b>
5	2/24-2/28	<b>Why China succeeded where Russia failed</b> Student presentation	<b>Why China succeeded where Russia failed</b> Discussion	<b>By zoom</b>
6	2/31-3/4	<b>Risks of Chinese growth</b> What is the role of the media?	<b>Risks of Chinese growth</b> What is rhetoric?	<b>By zoom</b>
7	3/7-3/11	<b>China and globalization</b> Student presentations	<b>China and globalization</b> Discussion	<b>By zoom</b>
8	3/24-3/28	<b>Rural/urban divide</b> Student presentation <b>Draft of midterm paper due</b>	<b>Rural/urban divide</b> Lecture	<b>Watch video</b>
9	3/31-4/4	<b>Contradictions of Chinese growth</b> Student presentation <b>Feedback on paper drafts due</b>	<b>Contradictions of Chinese growth</b> Discussion	<b>Watch video</b>
10	4/7-4/11	<b>China's mega-cities</b> Student presentation	<b>China's mega-cities</b> Student presentation	<b>Watch video</b>
11	4/14-4/18	<b>U.S.-China Conflict</b> Student presentation  <b>Midterm paper due</b>	<b>U.S.-China Conflict</b> Discussion	<b>Watch video</b>
12	4/21-4/25	<b>Who will rule the 21<sup>st</sup> century?</b> Student presentation	<b>Who will rule the 21<sup>st</sup> century?</b> Discussion	<b>By zoom</b>
13	4/28-5/2	<b>Xi Jinping's China</b> How repressive is the Chinese state today? <b>Instructor feedback on midterm papers given</b>	<b>Xi Jinping's China</b> How has this affected foreign policy?	<b>By zoom</b>
14	5/5-5/9	<b>Course Wrap-up</b>	<b>Course Wrap-up</b>	<b>No class</b>

		Lecture	Lecture	
15	5/12	<b>Course wrap-up</b>	<b>No class</b>	
16	5/18	<b>Midterm paper revisions due</b>		

### **Week 1: China's Rise**

Monday:

Opening lecture

Wednesday:

Read:

Yu Hua. 2011. China in Ten Words. New York: Random House.  
 "People", "Disparity."

Friday:

Watch:

[the remainder of Zhang Yimou's To Live](#)

### **Week 2: Everyday life in Chia**

Monday:

Watch:

[the remainder of Zhang Yimou's To Live](#)

Wednesday:

Watch:

[China's New AI Model Just Won the Tech Race](#)

Friday:

Watch:

[What it's like living in China](#)

### **Week 3: How China Got Rich**

Monday:

Read:

Huang, Yasheng. Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics. Chapter 1: Just how capitalist is China?

Wednesday:

Watch:

[Are the U.S. and China Doomed to Conflict?](#)

Friday:

Watch:

How China Got Rich, 2019 documentary produced by TVF International

### **Week 4: The rich are very rich, the poor very poor**

Monday:

Read:

Hanser, Amy. 2014. "Made in the PRC: Consumers in China." Contexts magazine, Vol 3(1): 13-19.

Whyte, Martin. 2012. "China's Post-socialist Inequality." *Current History*, September volume. 229-235.

Wednesday:

Watch:

[Day in the life of a Chinese young lady in Shanghai](#)

Friday:

Watch:

American Factory, a 2020 documentary.

### **Week 5: Why China Succeeded where Russia Failed**

Monday:

Read:

Burawoy, Michael. 1996. "The State and Economic Involution: Russia through a China Lens." *World Development* 24(6): 1105-1117.

Wednesday:

Read:

Hessler, Peter. 2022. "China's Reform Generation Adapts to Life in the Middle Class." *New Yorker*, Jan 3 and 10 issue.

Friday:

Watch:

Touch of Sin, 2013, a film by Jia Zhangke

### **Week 6: The Risks of China-style Growth**

Monday:

Read:

Liu, Yitong and Julia Chuang. N.d. "On China's Overbuilding Craze." Unpublished manuscript.

Wednesday:

Read:

Pei, Minxin. 2006. *China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapter 3: "Rent Protection and Dissipation: The Dark Side of Gradualism."

Friday:

Watch:

[Why people live in unfinished buildings](#)

### **Week 7: China and Globalization**

Monday:

Read:

Gallagher, Mary. 2003. *Contagious Capitalism: Globalization and the Politics of Labor*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.

Wednesday:

Read:

Gallagher, Mary. 2003. *Contagious Capitalism: Globalization and the Politics of Labor*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 3.

Friday:  
Draft of midterm paper due.

### **Week 8: Exploiting the Hinterland**

Monday:

Read:

Chuang, Julia. 2020. Beneath the China Boom: Labor, Citizenship, and the Making of a Rural Land Market. Chapter 1.

Wednesday:

Feedback on paper drafts

Friday:

Watch:

Last Train Home, a documentary

### **Week 9: Contradictions of Chinese Growth**

Monday:

Read:

Andreas, Joel. 2008. Changing Colours in China. New Left Review 54: 123-143.

Wednesday:

Watch:

[China's New Silk Road](#), a documentary

Friday:

Midterm paper due

### **Week 10: China's Mega-Cities**

Monday:

Read:

Davis, Mike. 2006. Planet of Slums. London: Verso Books. Chapter 1: The Urban Climacteric.

Wednesday:

Read:

Hsing, You-tien. 2010. The great urban transformation: the Politics of Property in China. Chapter 1.

Friday:

Watch:

[China in Latin America](#)

### **Week 11: China's Overseas Empire**

Monday:

Read:

Chiodi, Lucas and Thu Nguyen Hoang Anh. 2022. "The Belt and Road Initiative in Latin America: how China makes friends and what this means for the region." European University Institute Latin American Focus Group.

View:

[How China Overtook the US. as the World's Major Trading Partner](#)

Wednesday:

Read:

Gilpin, Shaquille Ifedayo. 2021. "China, Africa and the International Aid System: A challenge to (the norms underpinning) the neoliberal world order?" *Journal of Asian and African Studies*.

Friday:

Watch:

[Trump's Trade War](#), 2019. A PBS Frontline documentary.

### **Week 12: Who will Rule the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?**

Monday:

Read:

French, Howard W. 2010. *The Next Empire*. *Atlantic Magazine*, May issue.

Wednesday:

Read:

Hung, Ho-fung. 2009. "America's Head-Servant? The PRC's Dilemma in the Global Crisis." *New Left Review* 60: 5-26.

Friday:

Watch

*China's Ballooning Cities*, a 2015 documentary.

### **Week 13: Xi Jinping's China**

Monday:

Listen:

[How COVID Strengthened Authoritarianism in China](#), a New Yorker podcast

Wednesday:

Fallows, James. 2016. "China's Great Leap Backward." *The Atlantic* December issue.

Friday:

No class

### **Week 14: Course Overview**

Monday:

Read:

Chotiner, Isaac and Jude Blanchett. 2021. "The Fraying of U.S.-China Relations, a Q&A". *New Yorker* November issue.

Wednesday:

No readings, course review

Friday:

No readings, course review

### **Additional Resources**

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1. Strong written communication is critical in the classroom and on the job market. As noted above, the Writing Center is a great place to work on your writing skills.

<https://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter>

2. Terps need nutritious food to do well in class. If at any point during your time at UMD you are struggling to afford enough (safe, nutritious) food, the Campus Pantry is there to help.

<http://campuspantry.umd.edu/>

3. Internships are an increasingly important part of the path from education to employment. The Career Center is here to help you figure out what jobs you might be interested in pursuing, and to help you find internships that fit with those goals.

<https://careers.umd.edu/>