

CAPS 4502/GOVT 4503

Becoming a China Hand

Professor Jessica Chen Weiss

Wednesday 2:40-5:10 pm, Rockefeller Hall B16, 4 credits

Office hours Thursday afternoon or by appointment:

<https://calendly.com/jessicachenweiss/oh>

What is the point of writing when the world is running out of time? I do not pretend to have the answer. What I do know is that dictators burn books and jail writers, that revolution happens on the page before it reaches the streets. Language is our inheritance. Stories form our genealogy. Words protect what missiles cannot. If we keep using the words we have and create new ones, a tomorrow will emerge from our unencumbered imagination — and I believe there will be a tomorrow — that holds what guns cannot kill and prison walls cannot stop.

– Yangyang Cheng, “[*Watching ‘Hamilton’ at the End of the World*](#),” July 29, 2020.

Introduction

China’s prominence in the news cycle and policy discourse reflects the immense and growing importance of China’s role in the world. Substantively, there is hardly a profession or sector where what happens inside China does not touch upon or impact what happens outside China. This course seeks to give you the training and knowledge to decipher and contribute to these conversations.

There is no single way to become a “China Hand.” Conversations about China are no longer the purview of those who have deep expertise in the language, culture, or political history of China. As China’s impact has grown around the world, so has the set of commentators and decisionmakers whose views matter as much as those who have made China their life’s work. This course seeks to put these perspectives—from generalists and country experts—in conversation with one another, so that students have a better understanding of the strengths and limits of each approach. Both generalization and specialization have tradeoffs. Knowing a piece of the picture in great detail means that one may miss the forest for the trees. But focusing too much on the forest can lead analysts to overlook important distinctions and overgeneralize from a few anecdotes.

One of the most important objectives of this course is to understand the debates that are taking place *within* China, as well as the ongoing debates *about* China. These conversations are unfolding in many different communities and idea marketplaces, across many different modes and styles of analysis and writing. Each of the reading and writing assignments are aimed at developing literacy and proficiency in three different modes of analysis and writing about China: academic, policy, and journalistic. While many courses provide introductions to different aspects of China, and many seminars examine more specialized questions at even deeper levels, there are few that directly invite students to examine and explore the different ways in which scholars and professionals have written about China, from the inside and outside.

We are also living through a pandemic, a racial reckoning, and the beginning of what some are calling a new “Cold War” between the United States and China. The world is in flux. It is a

moment of loss, but it is also a moment of new possibilities and realizations. I invite you to approach the readings, discussions, and assignments for this class in that spirit—with rigor and reason, but also attuned to what is happening in the world around us. Please be extra kind to yourself and others in this process.

Assignments

1. **One personal reflection** (<1000 words) on your individual journey, the role China has played, and your hopes for the future. 15%. *Due February 22*. Personal reflections may consider the following prompts:
 - Think about a particular experience or incident from your life. Write a reflective essay explaining how that experience has impacted your views of China and shaped your hopes and expectations for the future. Did this experience influence your future educational or career plans?
 - What have you learned about China that surprised you, and perhaps shifted your expectations, hopes, or plans?

2. **Two reading responses** (2-3 pages double spaced). 15% each. *Due 24 hours before class*. Circulate your reading response to the class by uploading to the Canvas discussion forum. Response memos should address the following kinds of questions:
 - What are the central arguments of the readings, and are the arguments logically consistent and complete? To what extent are the arguments from different readings complementary or contradictory?
 - What evidence does the author use to test, support, or illustrate the argument? Do you find the evidence compelling? If not, what kind of evidence would be more convincing?
 - How do these readings speak to important debates or current developments in world affairs? Do these readings raise important questions for understanding contemporary foreign policy issues? Students are encouraged to reference one or more outside news reports or policy commentary in discussing the readings.

3. **One blog post** (<1000 words) in the style of the *Washington Post* Monkey Cage, with an opportunity to get peer feedback. 15%. In this format, blog posts should illuminate or explain a news development using what you know from academic research and avoid op-ed or policy prescriptions. *First draft due March 15 at 2:30pm. Upload to Canvas Discussion Forum for peer feedback. Final draft due April 15 to Canvas > Assignments*.

4. **One research paper in the style of a policy brief** (2-3k words) on a topic of the student's choosing, in consultation with the instructor. 15%, *due May 19*.
On format and style, consult the following guidelines and examples:
 - <https://sites.google.com/site/bushschoolwriting/policy-documents/policy-briefs>
 - <http://wilcoxen.maxwell.insightworks.com/pages/275.html>
 - https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/210114_Livingston_New_Challenge.pdf
 - https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200727_Kennedy_USChinaPolicyLost-Brief_v3.pdf

5. **Participation.** 25%.

- a. Active and thoughtful class participation
- b. Comments on peer reading responses and blog post drafts.
- c. If you must miss more than one session, please let me know so we can discuss how you can make up for the absence.

Policies

- Participation in this class commits students and the instructor to abide by Cornell's expectations and policies regarding academic integrity and equal opportunity. Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity.
- Inclusivity: Students in the course represent various backgrounds and perspectives. It is expected that everyone will be respectful of each other's opinions, especially when facing views they do not agree with. Diverse backgrounds imply a variety of approaches to the production and reception of knowledge, and civil debate about these differences is encouraged. While working together to build this community, I ask all members to:
 - share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
 - be open to the views of others
 - honor the uniqueness of their classmates
 - value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
 - keep discussions confidential within the community
 - reflect on how we can create an inclusive environment across Cornell
- I observe all university policies addressing racial, ethnic, gender, sexual preference, or religious discrimination and all forms of harassment. For instance, publicizing or reporting what another student says in class constitutes harassment and would be considered a violation of academic integrity.
- Students with special circumstances: Cornell University is committed to full inclusion in education for all persons. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to students with temporary and permanent disabilities, to students with DACA or undocumented status, to students facing mental health issues, other personal situations, and to students with other kinds of learning needs. Please feel free to let me know if there are circumstances affecting your ability to participate in class. Some resources that might be of use include:
 - Office of Student Disability Services, <https://sds.cornell.edu/>
 - Cornell Health CAPS (Counseling & Psychological Services), <https://health.cornell.edu/services/counseling-psychiatry>
 - Undocumented/DACA Student Support, Kevin Graham (Kevin.Graham@Cornell.edu), list of campus resources can be found here: <https://dos.cornell.edu/undocumented-daca-support/undergraduate-admissions-financial-aid>
 - Learning Strategies Center, <http://lsc.cornell.edu/>
- Plagiarism: Cornell has helpfully provided the following Essential Guide to Academic Integrity, available on the web at <https://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/academic-integrity/>. A Cornell tutorial called "Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism" can be found at: <http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm>. Please make yourself familiar with the contents of these documents.

- All written work must be your own. Use of ChatGPT or other AI-enhanced text generators will be considered violations of the University Code of Academic Integrity and dealt with strictly in this class.
- All external sources must be appropriately credited with footnotes or hyperlinks, and all verbatim language used from other sources noted with quotation marks.
- Participation in this class implies permission from students to submit their written work to Turnitin, a service that checks for plagiarism.
- It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with university policies regarding plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity. In particular, please make yourself familiar with the definition of plagiarism, and be aware that you may not turn in the same piece of work (or part thereof) for credit in multiple classes, either in the same semester or while at Cornell in general.

Office Hours

- Office Hours are by appointment, or at another time that is mutually convenient. Sign up here or email me if you cannot make it during office hours:
<https://calendly.com/jessicachenweiss/oh>

Schedule

The readings for each week indicate the material that will be discussed during that session. Therefore, it is essential that students come to class having already read the material for that session. All of the course readings will be made available via hyperlinks in this syllabus or as course reserves via Canvas.

I. Introduction

1. Overview

January 25

1. Cheng, Yangyang. “‘China-Watching’ Is a Lucrative Business. But Whose Language Do the Experts Speak?” *The Guardian*, January 13, 2021.
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/13/understand-china-speak-chinese-english-language>.
2. Green, Amelia Hoover. “How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps.” Available on Canvas.

2. Contrasting Perspectives

February 1

1. Friedberg, Aaron L. “The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?” *International Security* 30, no. 2 (October 1, 2005): 7–45.
<https://doi.org/10.1162/016228805775124589>.
2. Tan, Yeling. “How the WTO Changed China.” *Foreign Affairs*, 2021.
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-02-16/how-wto-changed-china>.
3. Cooper, Zack, and Emily Young Carr. “US Perspectives on the Power Shift in the Indo-Pacific.” *The Pacific Review* 0, no. 0 (December 26, 2022): 1–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2022.2160793>.
4. Kuo, Kaiser and Michael Mazarr. “Déjà vu to 2002? The U.S., China, and Parallels to the Iraq War Run-Up.” The China Project, December 1, 2022.

<https://thechinaproject.com/2022/12/01/deja-vu-to-2002-the-u-s-china-and-parallels-to-the-iraq-war-run-up/>.

3. Debating and Narrating “Engagement”

February 8

1. Steinberg, James. “What Went Wrong? U.S.-China Relations from Tiananmen to Trump.” *Texas National Security Review*, January 7, 2020. <https://tnsr.org/2020/01/what-went-wrong-u-s-china-relations-from-tiananmen-to-trump/>.
2. Campbell, Kurt M., and Ely Ratner. “The China Reckoning.” *Foreign Affairs*, February 13, 2018. *Available on Canvas*; Replies to Campbell/Ratner: Jisi, Wang, J. Stapleton Roy, Aaron L. Friedberg, Thomas Christensen, Patricia Kim, Joseph S. Nye Jr, Eric X. Li, Kurt M. Campbell, and Ely Ratner. “Did America Get China Wrong?” *Foreign Affairs*, June 14, 2018. *Available on Canvas*.
3. Mann, James. “America’s China Fantasy.” *The American Prospect*, February 19, 2007. <https://prospect.org/api/content/c99cd810-8129-5e84-bae5-ae5ac2d2bf1c/>.
4. Lampton, David M. “‘The China Fantasy,’ Fantasy.” *The China Quarterly*, no. 191 (2007): 745–49. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20192819>.

4. Mirrored and Refracted Images of the Other

February 15

1. Ang, Yuen Yuen. “The Clash Of Two Gilded Ages,” August 31, 2022. <https://www.noemamag.com/the-clash-of-two-gilded-ages>.
2. “Transcript: Ezra Klein Interviews Yuen Yuen Ang,” *New York Times*, January 24, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/24/podcasts/ezra-klein-show-transcript-yuen-yuen-ang.html>. (or listen to the podcast)
3. Lin, Yao. “Beaconism and the Trumpian Metamorphosis of Chinese Liberal Intellectuals.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 30, no. 127 (January 2, 2021): 85–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2020.1766911>.
4. Han, Enze, and Daniel Marwecki. “Racialized International Order? Traces of ‘Yellow Peril’ Trope in Germany’s Public Discourse toward China.” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (December 27, 2020): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2020.1864296>.

II. Understanding China

5. What Does “China” Want? Reader Beware

February 22

1. Pillsbury, Michael. *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, Chapters 1 and 2, “China Dream” and “Warring States.” *Available on Canvas*.
2. Blanchette, Jude. “The Devil is in the Footnotes: On Reading Michael Pillsbury’s *The Hundred-Year Marathon*,” <https://china.ucsd.edu/files/The-Hundred-Year-Marathon.pdf>
3. Johnston, Alastair Iain. (2019) “Shaky Foundations: The ‘Intellectual Architecture’ of Trump’s China Policy,” *Survival*, 61:2, 189-202, DOI: [10.1080/00396338.2019.1589096](https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2019.1589096)

Bring 1-2 articles to class for discussion as potential blog post topics

6. The Chinese Communist Party: Ideological adaptation and contestation

March 1

1. “The U.S. Is Using Harsh Language about the Chinese Communist Party. Who Joins the CCP — and Why?” Q&A with Bruce Dickson, *Washington Post* Monkey Cage, December 30, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/07/24/us-is-using-harsh-language-about-chinese-communist-party-who-joins-ccp-why/>.
2. Cai Xia, “The Party That Failed,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 4, 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-12-04/chinese-communist-party-failed>.
3. Callahan, William A. “History, Tradition and the China Dream: Socialist Modernization in the World of Great Harmony.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 24, no. 96 (November 2, 2015): 983–1001. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1030915>.
4. Veg, Sebastian. “The Rise of China’s Statist Intellectuals: Law, Sovereignty, and ‘Repoliticization.’” *The China Journal* 82 (July 2019): 23–45. <https://doi.org/10.1086/702687>.

7. Ideology and foreign policy

March 8

1. Weiss, Jessica Chen. “A World Safe for Autocracy?” *Foreign Affairs* July/August 2019. Available on Canvas. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-06-11/world-safe-autocracy>.
2. Jie Dalei, “Ideology and Sino-American Strategic Competition.” Reading the China Dream. <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/jie-dalei-ldquoideology-and-sino-american-strategic-competitionrdquo.html>
3. Legro, Jeffrey W. “What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power.” *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 3 (2007): 515–34.
4. Leffler, Melvyn P. “China Isn’t the Soviet Union. Confusing the Two Is Dangerous.” *The Atlantic*, December 2, 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/12/cold-war-china-purely-optional/601969/>

Recommended:

- Heer, Paul. “Why the ‘Longer Telegram’ Won’t Solve the China Challenge.” *The National Interest*, February 1, 2021. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-%E2%80%98longer-telegram%E2%80%99-won%E2%80%99t-solve-china-challenge-177404>.

8. A China “Model”?

March 15

1. Halper, Stefan. *Beijing Consensus: Legitimizing Authoritarianism in Our Time*. New York: Basic Books, 2012. “Chapter 1: China and the Global Shift,” available at <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cornell/detail.action?docID=488068>.
2. Kennedy, Scott. “The Myth of the Beijing Consensus.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 65 (June 1, 2010): 461–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670561003666087>.
3. Naughton, Barry. “China’s Distinctive System: Can It Be a Model for Others?” *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 65 (June 1, 2010): 437–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670561003666079>.

4. Ang, Yuen Yuen. "The Real China Model," July 10, 2018. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2018-06-29/real-china-model>.

Draft blog post due to Canvas discussion forum

9. Trade Tensions and the International Economic Order

March 22

1. Hopewell, Kristen. *Clash of Powers: US-China Rivalry in Global Trade Governance*. Cambridge University Press, 2020. *Chapters TBD*.
2. Zhang, Jiakun. "US-China Trade War: Interest Group Politics," in *Research Handbook on Trade Wars*, Elgar Publishing, 2020.

10. China's External Economic Engagement

March 29

1. Brautigam, Deborah. "Misdiagnosing the Chinese Infrastructure Push." *The American Interest* (blog), April 4, 2019. <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2019/04/04/misdiagnosing-the-chinese-infrastructure-push/>.
2. Ang, Yuen Yuen. "Demystifying Belt and Road," May 22, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-05-22/demystifying-belt-and-road>.
3. Wuthnow, Joel. "Chinese Perspectives on the Belt and Road Initiative: Strategic Rationales, Risks, and Implications," *China Strategic Perspectives*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2017. *Available on Canvas*.
4. Eric Olander and Cobus van Staden, *The China in Africa Podcast, The 2021 Africa-China Year in Review*, 2021. <https://soundcloud.com/chinatalkingpoints/the-2021-africa-china-year-in-review>.

Spring Break: no class April 5

11. Nationalism and Territorial Disputes

April 12:

1. Weiss, Jessica Chen. "How Hawkish Is the Chinese Public? Another Look at 'Rising Nationalism' and Chinese Foreign Policy." *Journal of Contemporary China* 28, no. 119 (September 3, 2019): 679–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1580427>.
2. Quek, Kai, and Alastair Iain Johnston. "Can China Back Down? Crisis De-Escalation in the Shadow of Popular Opposition." *International Security* 42, no. 3 (January 1, 2018): 7–36. https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00303.
3. Zhang, Ketian. "Cautious Bully: Reputation, Resolve, and Beijing's Use of Coercion in the South China Sea." *International Security* 44, no. 1 (July 1, 2019): 117–59. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00354.
4. Fravel, M. Taylor, and Charles L. Glaser. "How Much Risk Should the United States Run in the South China Sea?" *International Security* 47, no. 2 (October 1, 2022): 88–134. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00443.

Bring 1-2 topics for final policy brief to class for discussion

Final blog post due to Canvas > Assignments by April 15

III. Linked Fates

12. Climate Change and Decarbonization

April 19

1. Nahm, Jonas. "[China's Specialization in Innovative Manufacturing](#)," Chapter 5 in *Collaborative Advantage: Forging Green Industries in the New Global Economy*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
2. Davidson, Michael R., Valerie J. Karplus, Joanna I. Lewis, Jonas Nahm, and Alex Wang. "Risks of Decoupling from China on Low-Carbon Technologies." *Science*, September 16, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abq5446>.
3. Colgan, Jeff D. "The Climate Case Against Decoupling," September 18, 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-09-14/climate-case-against-decoupling>.
4. Lewis, Joanna. "[China Announced New Climate Goals. But It Can't Quit Coal Just Yet.](#)" *Washington Post*. September 29, 2020.

Identify 5-6 articles for inclusion and citation in final policy brief; bring to class for discussion

13. Chinese Espionage, Influence, and the U.S. Department of Justice's "China Initiative"

April 26

1. Hvistendahl, Mara. 2020. *The Scientist and the Spy: A True Story of China, the FBI, and Industrial Espionage*. Available on Reserve and for purchase at <https://www.amazon.com/Scientist-Spy-Story-Industrial-Espionage/dp/073521428X>
2. Xie, Yu, Xihong Lin, Ju Li, Qian He, and Junming Huang. "Caught in the Crossfire: Fears of Chinese-American Scientists." *arXiv preprint* (2022), <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/2209/2209.10642.pdf>
3. Green-Riley, Naima. "The State Department Labeled China's Confucius Programs a Bad Influence on U.S. Students. What's the Story?" *Washington Post* Monkey Cage, August 24, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/08/24/state-department-labeled-chinas-confucius-programs-bad-influence-us-students-whats-story/>.

Bring outline of final policy brief to class for peer discussion and feedback

14. Concluding discussion and policy presentations

May 3

1. Readings TBD.

Final policy brief due May 19 to Canvas > Assignments