Course Description

US-China relations are arguably the most important state-to-state relationship of the 21st century. Yet they are plagued by mutual suspicion and mistrust. How then can our bilateral relations be managed to prevent yet another conflict between the two largest powers in the world today?

This course will introduce students to the history and current state of US-China relations. Its primary goal, however, is not to convey knowledge. To manage US-China relations, scholars and practitioners alike need to move beyond mere knowledge acquisition to seek understanding. That is, they must seek to see the world and themselves through the prism of the Other’s identities and ideologies.

Our focus, therefore, will be on understanding the Chinese perspective on US-China relations. We will engage Chinese constructions of their civilizational and national identities—and the role that America plays in those discourses. Do Chinese Occidentalist constructions of China as “harmonious” (和) require a “hegemonic” (霸) America? Does China’s anti-imperialist nationalism require that Chinese view America as the “Beautiful imperialist” (美帝)? To address such questions, we will explore contemporary Chinese narratives about the imperial Chinese tributary system and the early modern “Century of Humiliation,” before turning to US-China relations under Mao, Deng, and today.

Studying the Chinese perspective on US-China relations will nonetheless reveal a great deal about who we are as Americans. Can we move beyond the Liberalism that powerfully shapes American worldviews to better understand China’s America policy in its own terms? If so, must we abandon our Liberal values?

While the subject matter of the class is US-China relations, with a focus on understanding the Chinese view of America and the world, my primary goal is to promote critical thinking, cultivating your ability to think rigorously and independently.

The majority of our class contact hours will be in Beijing over spring break, but we will also meet about ten times in Norman before and after the trip to both prepare and debrief.
Grading

Your final grade will be based upon class participation, a trip diary, a paper, and a policy memo:

- 25% Participation
- 25% Trip diary
- 25% Paper
- 25% Policy memo & presentation

Participation

The class participation grade will be based upon the quality, not quantity, of your contributions to group discussions, as well as homework assignments, and pass/fail pop quizzes on the readings given at the beginning of class on random days throughout the semester.

Trip Diary & Analysis

The trip diary will be your notes during every day you spend in China. Be analytic and thoughtful. What surprised you? What did you learn that you didn’t know previously? You will submit your raw notes from each day (in doc or blog form) AND a deeper five page analysis written after your return.

Paper

A five page analytic paper will be due in class the second week after return from China. Late papers will be penalized. It will be based on an interview with a BFSU student on the Taiwan issue. What is their perspective on the issue? Why do they think and feel about Taiwan in the ways that they do? Does a better understanding of the Chinese perspective have any implications for the US policy of dual deterrence (and reassurance) in the Taiwan Strait?

Policy memo & presentation

In week 2, you will choose one of the following ten security issues in US-China relations:

1. The Korean peninsula
2. Sino-Japanese relations
3. The South China Seas
4. Global economic governance
5. Energy & resource security
6. Cybersecurity
7. Intellectual property rights (IPR)
8. Nuclear proliferation
9. Global terrorism
10. Environmental security & climate change

You will write and present a two page foreign policy memo, due and presented to the class in weeks 14 & 15. You will play the part of a policy analyst at the US Department of State, and direct your two page, single spaced policy memo to me, Secretary of State John Kerry, and my top advisors, the rest of
you. Your brief should include:

1) *Statement of the issue.* Introduce your topic, make a case for its importance, how it affects the US and the world at large, and why new policies can help.

2) *Policy options:* discuss the advantages and disadvantages of three or four different policy options to address the challenge.

3) *Policy Recommendation:* explain what your policy option is, why it should be implemented, and why it is better than the current policy and other policy options. What are its intended outcomes? Why is it good for the USA and the international community?

4) *Sources:* List the sources you used in your research.

A sample policy brief, which you can use as a rough template, is attached to the end of this syllabus. Helpful tips on writing policy briefs can be found online here.

**Readings**

You are expected to attend class having completed the readings assigned for that day. Random pop quizzes will test whether you have read them. Lectures will not cover the same ground as the readings, and are no substitute for them. Two books are available for purchase at the OU bookstore and online, but will also be held on reserve at Bizzell Library:


Additional readings will be available on the course and OU library websites.

The readings usually make arguments, and you are expected to read critically: What are the author’s arguments? Are they persuasive? Why do you think that the authors take the positions that they do? Do you agree or not?

**Classroom Policies**

*Respect is required.* While the discreet consumption of coffee and other beverages is permitted, eating, which might disrupt your classmates, is not. Please turn off all cell phones, laptops, and other devices that might disrupt class. Disparaging comments or behaviors towards your classmates will not be permitted. Anyone disrupting the educational atmosphere of the classroom will be asked to leave.

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. Anyone experiencing harassment in the classroom should contact me immediately. Harassment anywhere on the OU campus should be reported to the OU Office of Equal Opportunity, (405) 325-3546.
Academic honesty is presumed and required. Use of the work of others is positively encouraged and is central to scholarship, but it must always be properly credited. When it is not credited, and when the thoughts/words/ideas of others are passed off as your own, that is PLAGIARISM. Plagiarism is serious academic misconduct and will be reported to the appropriate university office; penalties are severe. Visit www.ou.edu/provost/integrity-rights/ for details of the university’s academic honesty code. If you are in doubt about how to handle quotations or citations, please ask me.

Disabilities

Any student who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me personally within the first two weeks of class so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation in class.

Class and Reading Schedule

(debates in italics; readings [in brackets] are optional)

WEEK 1  COURSE INTRODUCTION; CHINA THROUGH AMERICAN EYES
  •  South Park 2008; Daily Show 2008; [Gries 2014]

WEEK 2  IR THEORY & US-CHINA RELATIONS TODAY
  •  Brzezinski vs. Mearsheimer 2005; Shambaugh 2014; Ikenberry 2008; [Wu, Xinbo 2014]

WEEK 3  IMPERIAL LEGACIES: THE TRIBUTARY SYSTEM & ‘HARMONIOUS WORLD’
  •  Acharya 2003-4; Callahan 2012; [Gries 2007]

WEEK 4  ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEGACIES: THE ‘CENTURY OF HUMILIATION’
  •  Gries 2004: Introduction, Chs. 1-5

WEEK 5  MAOIST LEGACIES: THE EARLY COLD WAR
  •  Chen, Jian 2001: Intro; Mann 1999: Prologue, Chs. 1-5

WEEK 6  DENG’S CHINA & TIANANMEN
  •  Mann 1999: Chs. 6-11; Kissinger vs. Solarz and Lord 1989

WEEK 7  POWER TRANSITIONS & US-CHINA RELATIONS TODAY
  •  Medeiros & Fravel 2003 vs. Gries 2005; Gries 2004: Chs. 6-8

WEEK 8  US DUAL DETERRENCE IN THE TAIWAN STRAITS
  •  Mann 1999: Ch. 17; Christensen 2002; Rigger 2014: Ch. 9
WEEK 9  Spring break in BEIJING

WEEK 10 no class (finalize diaries and work on Taiwan paper)

WEEK 11 TRIP DEBRIEF (diaries and papers due)

WEEK 12 no class (work on policy memos)

WEEK 13 no class (work on policy memos)

WEEK 14 POLICY MEMO PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 15 POLICY MEMO PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 16 no class
BIBLIOGRAPHY


