

GVPT 289J: Uncertain Partners: The United States and China in a changing world

Fall 2018
M/W 1-1:50PM
SHM 2102
(Discussion sections on Fridays)

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Introduction

The rapid ascent of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a major political and economic power has meant that its relationship with the United States has become central in contemporary international politics. To an increasing extent, some of the biggest global challenges—ranging from nuclear proliferation, to climate change, to economic growth—require U.S.-China cooperation if they are to be managed effectively.

Yet the U.S.-China relationship is at times turbulent, and its future remains highly uncertain. Economic relations, for instance, have become highly contentious (with escalating tariffs being enacted by both sides this year). Meanwhile, U.S. arms sales to Taiwan often provoke a strong reaction from the PRC. And some in Washington view China's rapid economic and military modernization with alarm—fearing that a stronger China will threaten U.S. allies and interests in the region.

Will the U.S. and China be able to forge a closer partnership that will enable them to cooperate in dealing with some of the vexing challenges facing the international community? Or are they more likely to drift toward a more adversarial relationship, as China's growing power—and the US reaction—generate a vicious cycle of mutual mistrust?

In this class, students will learn about the history of U.S.-China relations, and will be exposed to many of the current issues facing the relationship. Key topics and questions to be addressed include:

- The U.S.-China relationship has changed from highly adversarial during the early Cold War, to a close partnership in the latter Cold War, to an ambiguous post-Cold War relationship that is sometimes characterized by tension and sometimes by cooperation. How can we account for these shifts?
- The issue of Taiwan remains central to the U.S.-China relationship. Beijing claims the island as a part of China, but the United States has provided substantial support to Taiwan's defense capabilities—something China views as interference in the PRC's internal affairs. Why is Taiwan such a major issue in U.S.-China relations? Why is Taiwan so important for China, and why has the U.S. provided support for Taiwan? What are the prospects for conflict and peace in the Taiwan Strait?
- Over the past several decades, China has seen tremendous economic growth. Though still a developing nation with living standards that lag far behind the U.S., China is now the world's second largest economy and largest trading nation. Should we expect this growth to continue? What are the challenges facing China as it continues to develop economically?
- What are the prospects for political change in China, and how might political change affect future U.S.-China relations?
- Why have economic relations between the two countries become so extensive, and what are the implications for political relations between Washington and Beijing?
- As China has developed economically, it has also begun a program of military modernization. What are the implications for regional stability and U.S.-China relations?

Learning outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify major issues and questions pertaining to US-China relations.
- Identify key events in US-China relations and explain their significance.
- Understand and critically evaluate some of the arguments advanced by experts on US-China relations.
- Communicate effectively on US-China relations. Students should be able to make reasoned oral and written arguments relating to important issues in US-China relations.

Course requirements

The class will consist of 2 lectures each week taught by Prof. Kastner and a discussion section led each week by one of the assistants, Kainan Gao and Ethan Kim. Students are expected to attend lectures, and to come to discussion sections having done the readings for the week.

Grades will be assigned using the plus/minus system, based on the following:

- A midterm exam on October 17 (25% of the final grade)
- A final exam on the officially scheduled date (30% of the final grade)
- A group project, due on November 16 (20% of the final grade)
- An individual reaction paper to the group project, due on November 19 (10% of the final grade)
- Active participation in discussion sections (15% of the final grade).

Group Project

The course requires a group paper and presentation. Students will be divided into small groups in October, and will be given an assignment that asks them to write a memo formulating policy recommendations to either the US president or the PRC president. The memo will be due on November 16. Each group will also give a short presentation in discussion section on November 16 (all students in each group are expected to speak during these presentations). The memo and oral presentation will both count toward the grade on the project. Students will also be expected to write a short individual reaction paper to the group project, which will be due on November 19.

Class policies and other important information

Cheating:

I take cheating very seriously, and will not hesitate to forward a case to the Office of Student Conduct if I suspect academic misconduct.

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit: <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html>.

Laptops, cellphones, and other distractions:

Using electronic devices in class not only undercuts your ability to learn, but also distracts others (including me), thus affecting the ability of other students to learn. Laptops should be used only for taking notes. Cellphone use will not be tolerated. Violation of these policies (such as texting, surfing the web, etc. during class) will negatively affect your course participation grade.

Absences, etc.

Though I will not take attendance in lecture, you are expected to attend and the material presented in lectures will be covered in course exams. If you have a legitimate reason for missing a major grading event (such as a medical issue, etc.), please contact me as soon as possible, preferably by email. If you miss a discussion section for a legitimate reason, please contact the TA as soon as possible and, if necessary, provide documentation.

For information on University policies regarding excused absences for medical or other reasons, and information on other course related policies, please refer to the Office of Undergraduate Studies webpage on course related policies:

<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>.

Course readings

I have assigned 4 books for the course, which will be available from the University bookstore.

- James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (USA: Vintage). 0679768610
- Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield). 1442204812
- Susan L. Shirk, *China, Fragile Superpower: How China's Internal Politics Could Derail its Peaceful Rise* (New York: Oxford University Press). 0195373197
- Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: Norton). 978-0-393-35299-3

Additionally, a few journal articles are also assigned. Students are responsible for downloading journal articles themselves via the library webpage.

Topics and reading assignments

Part I: History

In this first part of the course, we will explore the history of US-China relations since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. In particular, we will consider why relations between the two countries have changed dramatically over time.

Week 1 (August 27, 29): Introduction and Early Cold War

The first class, on August 27, will serve as an introduction. On August 29, we will begin a discussion of the early Cold War. Though the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the US did not establish formal diplomatic relations with the PRC government until the late 1970s. Why didn't the US recognize the PRC in 1949?

Week 1 Readings:

- Christensen, prologue and introduction

Week 2 (September 5): US-China relations during the early Cold War, continued.

This week we will continue our focus on the early Cold War. In late 1950, the United States and China found themselves fighting each other in a very costly war on the Korean Peninsula. Why did the two countries fight each other in Korea? Why did relations remain tense even after the conclusion of the war in 1953?

Week 2 Readings:

- Thomas J. Christensen, "Threats, Assurances, and the Last Chance for Peace: The Lessons of Mao's Korean War Telegrams." *International Security* Vol 17, no. 1 (Summer 1992), 122-154.
- Mann, Prologue and chapter 1.

Week 3 (September 10, 12): Rapprochement and normalization: Why did Nixon go to China?

After two decades of adversarial relations, relations between the US and China began to warm in the early 1970s, culminating in a 1972 visit to China by US President Richard Nixon. In late 1978, the US and the PRC established full diplomatic relations. What caused this turnabout? Why did Nixon go to China?

Week 3 Readings:

- Mann, chapters 2-5

Week 4 (September 17, 19): US-China relations during the later Cold War; Tiananmen and its effect on US-China relations.

US-China relations were quite stable during the 1980s, but after 1989, relations between the two countries entered a more ambiguous phase. The end of the Cold War meant that a key reason for cooperation between the two countries was no longer salient. Meanwhile, the PRC crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989 shocked the US public and led many in the US to hold a much more negative view of China. Why did the Tiananmen Square crackdown have such a lasting impact on the relationship?

Week 4 Readings:

- Mann, Chapters 7-11

Week 5 (September 24, 26): A complicated relationship: US-China relations after the Cold War.

Relations between the US and China during the 1990s and 2000s fluctuated quite dramatically, at times becoming quite tense, such as following the US bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia in 1999, and at other times exhibiting considerable cooperation. What were the key factors influencing US-China relations in two decades after the end of the Cold War?

Week 5 Readings:

- Mann, Chapters 12, 15, 16
- Shirk, Chapter 8

Part II: China's Transformation and its Implications

Since 1978, China has undergone a dramatic economic transformation. The economy has grown rapidly, and the country has become deeply integrated into global markets. But political institutions remain authoritarian. In this part of the course, we will consider China's economy and political system, the challenges to continued reform, and implications for US-China relations.

Week 6 (October 1, 3): Reform and Opening: China's Economic Miracle.

Beginning in 1978, China embarked on an economic reform program that resulted in a gradual transformation into a market economy. The economy has averaged nearly 10 percent annual

growth, and average living standards—though still lagging behind those seen in developed countries—have improved dramatically. This week we will explore China’s dramatic economic transformation.

Week 6 Readings:

- Shirk, Chapters 1-2

Week 7 (October 8, 10): China’s Political System; Economic and Political Challenges.

China’s economic transformation has not been accompanied by a political transformation. How does the political system work? What are the political and economic challenges facing China? What are the prospects for continued rapid economic development? What are the implications for US-China relations?

Week 7 Readings:

- Shirk, Chapters 3-4

Week 8 (October 15, 17)

Monday will be a review session, and the midterm will be held on Wednesday.

MIDTERM EXAM: Wednesday, October 17

NO READINGS FOR WEEK 8

Part III: The Question of Taiwan

Taiwan has been a persistent issue in US-China relations. When the Chinese Communists established the PRC in 1949, the US continued to recognize instead the Nationalist government which by then had been forced to retreat to Taiwan. Since switching recognition in 1979, the US has continued to provide support for Taiwan, including arms sales; the PRC, meanwhile, views Taiwan as a province that must ultimately be reunified with the rest of China. Why has this been such an intractable issue, and what are the prospects for resolution?

Week 9 (October 22, 24): Origins of the Taiwan issue; Taiwan’s democratization

After considering the origins of the Taiwan issue, we will examine political developments in Taiwan since 1949. In the 1980s, Taiwan underwent a process of democratization which

culminated in direct presidential elections in 1996. What are the implications of Taiwan's democratization for the US relationship with Taiwan? How has democratization affected relations between Taiwan and the PRC?

Week 9 Readings:

- Rigger, Chapters 1, 2, 4

Week 10 (October 29, 31): Developments in cross-Taiwan Strait relations since the 1980s

Relations across the Taiwan Strait have been in flux since the 1980s. After relations stabilized in to some degree into the early 1990s, a prolonged crisis erupted in 1995-1996, and relations remained quite tense until 2008. Relations improved dramatically after 2008 as the two sides signed a range of economic agreements; this détente culminated in a 2015 meeting of the presidents of the two sides in Singapore. However, since 2016 relations have again deteriorated. This week we will discuss the evolution of relations across the Taiwan Strait and the factors that have driven these changes.

Week 10 Readings:

- Rigger, Chapters 6 and 8

Week 11 (November 5, 7): Looking forward: Prospects for conflict and peace in the Taiwan Strait

How stable is the Taiwan Strait likely to be in the years ahead? Is military conflict a real possibility? Why does China care so much about the Taiwan issue? Is US support for Taiwan likely to persist into the future?

Week 11 Readings:

- Nancy B. Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 34, no. 4 (2011), pp. 23-37.

Part IV: Regional Security Issues and the U.S.-China Relationship

As China's economy has developed, the country has also embarked on an ambitious military modernization program. Meanwhile, a number of regional issues (such as the North Korean nuclear weapons program, maritime disputes in the East and South China seas, etc.) pose challenges to future stability in East Asia. How have China and the US tried to manage these challenges, and what are the prospects for future conflict and cooperation on these issues?

Week 12 (November 12, 14): China's military modernization; Begin discussion of regional security issues

After examining trends in China's military modernization, and discussing that modernization's implications for US-China relations, we will turn to several regional security issues, including maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas and the North Korean nuclear issue. To what degree do the US and China have overlapping or competing interests with regard to these issues? To what degree can these issues lead to conflict between the US and China?

Week 12 Readings:

- Christensen, Chapters 1-3.

Group presentations and papers due November 16 in section

Week 13 (November 19): Continue discussion of regional security issues

This week we will continue with our discussion of regional security issues. There will be no class on Wednesday or sections on Friday (Thanksgiving).

Week 13 Readings:

- Christensen, chapters 4-6.

Individual reaction paper due November 19

Part V: The Evolving US-China Economic Relationship

China-US trade flows have burgeoned in recent years. While closer economic ties have brought benefits to both countries, they have also given rise to new frictions. In this final part of the course, we will examine the nature of US-China economic relations, how those relations have evolved, and we will discuss some of the key areas of disagreement on economic issues.

Week 14 (November 26, 28): The emergence of a burgeoning US-China economic relationship

Today the United States is China's largest trading partner, and China has also become the largest trading partner of the United States. This week we will explore the nature of the bilateral economic relationship, and how it has evolved over time.

Week 14 Readings:

- Christensen, chapters 7-8 and epilogue.

Week 15 (December 3, 5): Areas of contention in recent US-China economic relations

In 2018, the United States and China became enmeshed in a “trade war,” where the United States accused China of unfair trade practices and raised tariffs on Chinese goods; China retaliated by raising tariffs on US goods. This week we will discuss some of the issues at the heart of US-China economic tensions.

Week 15 Readings:

- Daniel W. Drezner, “Bad Debts: Assessing China’s Financial Influence in Great Power Politics.” *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Fall 2009): 7-45.

Week 16 (December 10): Review for Final

SCHEDULED DATE OF THE FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 13, 1:30-3:30PM