

GVPT 204: Uncertain Partners: The United States and China in a changing world

Fall 2022

M/W 2-2:50PM

LeFrak 2205

Discussion sections on Fridays

Professor Scott Kastner

skastner@umd.edu

Chincoteague 3117G

Office hours: Tuesdays 1-2PM or by appointment

Teaching assistants:

Ellin Chung (Sections 0102, 0104, 0106)

schung97@terpmail.umd.edu

Tydings 5141

Office hours: By appointment

Kainan Gao (Sections 0101, 0103, 0105)

kgao@umd.edu

Office hours: Thursdays 1-4PM

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. Meanwhile, U.S. arms sales and other interactions with 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. Over the past few years, the bilateral relationship has veered toward outright hostility.

Will the U.S. and China be able to find a way to set aside differences and cooperate in dealing with some of the vexing challenges facing the international community? Or are they more

likely to continue drifting 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 again becoming more adversarial. 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 does not recognize Beijing's claims in this regard. Moreover, Washington 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 living standards still lag 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?
- Why have economic relations between the two countries become so extensive, and what are the implications for political relations between Washington and Beijing? What is at stake in recent economic tension between the two countries?
- Recently, the US-China relationship has become much more tense. Can the two countries avoid a new Cold War?

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, Ellin Chung and Kainan Gao. Students are expected to attend lectures, and to attend discussion sections having done the readings for the week.

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

- Two in-class exams, on **October 3** and **November 7** (20% each)
- A final exam, on **Saturday, December 17** at 1:30 PM (20%)
- An essay, due on **November 22** (25%)
- Class participation (15%): based on participation in discussion sections. Attendance will be taken in discussion sections only. Discussion sections will focus primarily on course readings, but will also be an opportunity to discuss material covered in lectures.

Given the challenges that we continue to face due to the pandemic, we will be very understanding if a student is unable to attend a discussion section due to illness or for other reasons. Please be in touch with your TA if you cannot make a discussion section. We will not penalize the first 3 absences for any reason. If you need to miss more than three discussion sections, please let us know the reason, and we will accommodate in some way, such as by allowing for students to make up missed participation by meeting briefly with the TA via zoom, or by writing a short reaction to the week's readings. Students missing more than three sections, and who don't pursue make-up options, will see their overall class grade penalized by 1 percentage point for each additional section missed.

We will also be understanding if a student needs an extension on the paper assignment due to illness or other extenuating circumstances. Students requesting an extension must do so **PRIOR** to the due date (unless special circumstances make them unable to do so). Unexcused late papers will be penalized.

Likewise, if you need to miss an exam because of illness or some other reason, you should notify Prof. Kastner prior to the exam unless special circumstances make you unable to do so. We will work with you so that you can make up the exam. DO NOT TAKE AN IN-CLASS EXAM IF YOU FEEL SICK.

Please note that if Professor Kastner becomes ill or is required to self-isolate, and assuming he is well enough to continue teaching online, he will move all classes to zoom during the duration of his illness or isolation. The same goes for discussion sections if your TA becomes sick.

Students who feel ill should not come to class. If you need to miss an in-person class because you are ill or required to self-isolate, please be in touch with Professor Kastner or your TA and we will work with you to help you learn any material you miss.

Class policies and other important information

No recording:

Please note that we will be posting powerpoint slides on ELMS, but we will not be recording lectures or discussion sections. Students are not allowed to record or disseminate lectures or discussion sections. If you miss a lecture or discussion section, either your TA or Professor Kastner will be happy to set up a meeting to discuss material that you missed.

Cheating:

We take cheating very seriously, and will not hesitate to forward a case to the Office of Student Conduct if we 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>.

Statement on Diversity and Inclusivity:

The Government and Politics department deeply values the voices and perspectives of all people. We are committed to having a diverse department that recognizes and appreciates the differences in race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, abilities, class, nationality, and other factors. Our department prioritizes diversity and seeks to foster a diverse community reflected in its faculty, staff, and students.

In this class, students are invited to share their thoughts and a diversity of opinions is welcome. Respectful communication is expected, even when expressing differing perspectives. Supporting one's statement with research findings is encouraged. In accordance with free speech statutes, speech that contains threats of violence is prohibited.

Reporting Racism and Other Forms of Hate and Bias:

If you experience racism or other forms of bias in this class or any GVPT course, we encourage you to do at least one of the following:

- Please report the experience to the instructor or teaching assistant.
- Report the experience to David Cunningham, the GVPT Director of Undergraduate Studies at dacunnin@umd.edu

- Report the experience to the GVPT Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, led by Professor Antoine Banks at abanks12@umd.edu. Please also report all incidents of hate and bias to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at <https://diversity.umd.edu/bias/>.

Course readings

Course readings include the following three books:

- 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
- Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: Norton). 978-0-393-35299-3

Several additional articles and book chapters are also assigned; these will be posted on the ELMS course reserves.

PLEASE NOTE: Materials covered in lecture will often be different from materials covered in readings, and some readings assigned in a particular week will not overlap closely with the topics covered in lecture. Thus, the lectures should not be seen as substituting for doing the reading, or vice-versa.

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 29, 31): Introduction and Early Cold War

The first class, on August 29, will serve as an introduction. On August 31, 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 7): US-China relations during the early Cold War, continued.

Note, September 5 is Labor Day, no class

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 12, 14): 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 19, 21): 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 26, 28): 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 the decades after the end of the Cold War?

Week 5 Readings:

- Mann, Chapters 12, 15, 16

IN-CLASS EXAM 1: Monday, October 3

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 3, 5): Reform and Opening: China's Economic Miracle.

The first in-class exam, covering Part 1 of the class, will take place on Monday. On Wednesday, we will shift into a discussion of China's economic transformation.

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:

- Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (Oxford University Press, 2007). Chapter 2 (“China’s Economic Miracle”).

Week 7 (October 9, 11): 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?

Week 7 Readings:

- Elizabeth Economy, “China’s New Revolution: The Reign of Xi Jinping,” *Foreign Affairs* vol. 97, no. 3 (May/June 2018), pp. 60-74.
- Jude Blanchette and Evan S. Medeiros, “Is the Chinese Communist Party Ready for the Future?” *Washington Quarterly* vol. 44, no. 2 (Summer 2021), pp. 21-43.

Part III: KEY ISSUES IN US-CHINA RELATIONS

Week 8 (October 17, 19): The Taiwan issue I: background

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 8 Readings:

- Rigger, Chapters 1 & 2

Week 9 (October 24, 26): The Taiwan issue II: recent developments

This week we will discuss the evolution of relations across the Taiwan Strait in recent years and the factors that have driven these changes.

Week 9 Readings:

- Rigger, Chapters 4, 6, and 8

Week 10 (October 31, November 2): The Taiwan issue III: future prospects

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 10 Readings:

- Tsai Ing-wen, "Taiwan and the Fight for Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* vol. 100, no. 6 (November/December 2021), pp. 74-84.
- "The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era," The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and the State Council Information Office, The People's Republic of China, August 2022, Parts III-V.
- Ryan Hass, "The Upside of Pelosi's Unwise Taiwan Visit: What Washington Can Learn From Beijing's Overreaction," *Foreign Affairs online*, August 16, 2022.

In-Class Exam 2: Monday, November 7

Week 11 (November 7, 9): The North Korean nuclear issue

Students will take the second in-class exam on Monday, Nov. 7. On Wednesday, we will discuss North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and its implications for US-China relations.

Week 11 Readings:

- Christensen, Chapters 1-3.

Week 12 (November 14, 16): Maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas

This week we will continue with our discussion of regional security issues, focusing on maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas.

Week 12 Readings:

- Christensen, chapters 4-6.

Week 13 (November 21): Human Rights.

Note: there will be no class on Wednesday, November 23, due to the Thanksgiving holiday. There are also no sections this week.

Human rights issues have long been salient in the US-China relationship, but the recent PRC crackdown in Hong Kong and ongoing repression in Xinjiang have led to a renewed focus in Washington on human rights issues in China. This week we will discuss human rights as an issue in US-China relations.

Week 13 readings:

- Christensen, chapters 7-8 and epilogue.

Essay Assignment Due: Tuesday, November 22, 11:59PM.

Week 14 (November 28, 30): US-China economic relations I

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 and next week we will discuss some of the issues at the heart of US-China economic tensions.

Week 14 Readings:

- Yeling Tan, “How the WTO Changed China: The Mixed Legacy of Economic Engagement.” *Foreign Affairs* vol. 100, no. 2 (March/April 2021), pp. 90-102.
- Elsa B. Kania and Adam Segal, “Globalized Innovation and Great Power Competition: the U.S.-China Tech Clash,” in Jacques deLisle and Avery Goldstein, eds., *After Engagement: Dilemmas in U.S.-China Security Relations* (Brookings, 2021), pp. 298-329.

Week 15 (December 5, 7): US-China economic relations II; can a new Cold War be avoided?

Week 15 Readings:

- John J. Mearsheimer, “The Inevitable Rivalry,” *Foreign Affairs* vol. 100, no. 6 (November/December 2021), pp. 48-58.
- Jessica Chen Weiss, “The China Trap: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Perilous Logic of Zero-Sum Competition,” *Foreign Affairs* vol. 101, no. 5 (September/October 2022).

- Maria Repnikova, "The Balance of Soft Power: The American and Chinese Quests to Win Hearts and Minds," *Foreign Affairs* vol. 101, no. 4 (July/August 2022), pp. 44-51.

Week 16 (December 12): Review and Conclusion

Week 16 Readings: NONE

FINAL EXAM: Saturday, December 17, 1:30-3:30PM