

GVPT 289J: Uncertain Partners: The United States and China in a changing world  
Fall 2015  
M/W 2-2:50PM  
CHM 1402  
(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. A persistent bilateral trade imbalance, for instance, has led to vocal demands in the U.S. Congress for a tougher U.S. trade policy toward China, while U.S. arms sales to Taiwan often provoke a strong reaction from the PRC. Meanwhile, 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 three 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 exporting 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 each week taught by one of the assistants, Patrick Tiney and Seungjun Kim. Both the lecture and the discussion section are required. Students are expected to come to discussion sections having done the readings for the week.

Grades will be assigned based on the following:

- Two in-class exams: on Monday, October 5, and Monday, November 2 (each will count 20% of the final grade).
- A final paper (approximately 8 pages long), due on Thursday, December 17 (30% of the final grade). Paper topics will be assigned several weeks before the end of the semester.
- A detailed outline of the final paper due in section on Friday, December 4 (5% of the final grade).
- Active participation in discussion sections (15% of the final grade).
- Five pop quizzes given in discussion sections over the course of the semester. The quizzes will be based on course readings in a given week; they will be given randomly over the course of the semester. The lowest quiz score will be dropped, and the remaining four will together count for 10% of the final grade.

### **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:* Please silence your cellphone and refrain from texting—which is distracting to me and to other students. Laptops should be used only for course-related reasons, such as taking notes. If I can hear you talking, it means you are too loud and are disturbing the class. If you repeatedly disrupt class by talking with friends, texting, surfing the web, etc., it will negatively affect your course participation grade.

*Medically necessitated absences:* The University of Maryland has a policy regarding medically necessitated absences from class. I will not take attendance during lecture, but the TAs will take attendance in discussion section. Under the policy, we will accept a self-signed note from the student attesting to the date of the illness as an excused absence from a single section. A student is allowed only ONE self-signed note per class per semester.

A student who experiences a prolonged absence or an illness preventing attendance at a major scheduled grading event (see course requirements, above) is required to provide written documentation of the illness from the Health Center or an outside health care provider,

verifying the dates of the treatment and the time period during which the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities. Students who need accommodation for medical reasons should notify the course instructor as soon as it is possible to do so.

*Students with disabilities:* I will make every effort to accommodate students with disabilities. If you need accommodation, please let me know as early as possible, and please provide written documentation from the Disability Support Service office.

*Religious observances:* Please provide advance notice if a religious observance will cause you to miss section or a major grading event so that we may make alternative arrangements ahead of time.

### **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
- Robert G. Sutter. *U.S.-Chinese Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present*, second edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield). 1442218061

Additionally, numerous articles are assigned. Students are responsible for downloading these 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 31, September 2): Introduction; The early Cold War

The first class, on August 31, will serve as an introduction. On September 2, 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:

- Sutter, pp. 1-52.

### **September 7: Labor Day, no class**

### **Week 2 (September 9): US-China relations during the early Cold War, continued.**

By 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:

- Sutter, pp. 53-64.
- 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.

### **Week 3 (September 14, 16): 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 turnaround? Why did Nixon go to China?

Week 3 Readings:

- Mann, Chapters 1-5

### **Week 4 (September 21, 23): 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? This week we will watch the beginning of a PBS Frontline video that examines the Tiananmen crackdown.

Week 4 Readings:

- Mann, Chapters 7-11

Week 5 (September 28, 30): A complicated relationship: US-China relations after the Cold War.

Relations between the US and China since the 1990s have fluctuated quite dramatically, a 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 are the key factors influencing US-China relations in the post-Cold War era?

Week 5 Readings:

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

**IN-CLASS EXAM 1: Monday, October 5**

## **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 7): 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 far 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 12, 14): 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

### **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 8 (October 19, 21): Origins of the Taiwan issue and its evolution over time.

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 8 Readings:

- Rigger, Chapters 1, 2, 4
- Shirk, Chapter 7

Week 9 (October 26, 28): Looking forward: Prospects for conflict and peace in the Taiwan Strait.

Since 2008, relations between the PRC and Taiwan have been characterized by an unprecedented *détente*. Is this *détente* likely to persist? What factors facilitate continued stability in relations across the Taiwan Strait? To what extent is military conflict a continued possibility? Why is the United States reluctant to sever ties with Taiwan, despite the problems it causes in relations with China? Is US support for Taiwan likely to persist into the future?

Week 9 Readings:

- Rigger, Chapters 6 and 8

- Bruce Gilley, "Not So Dire Straits." *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 89, Issue 1 (Jan/Feb 2010): 44-60.
- Nancy B. Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?" *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 34, no. 4 (2011), pp. 23-37.

## **IN-CLASS EXAM 2: Monday, November 2**

### **Part IV: Other Key Issues in Contemporary US-China Relations**

In this final section of the class, we will consider several other key issues facing the contemporary US-China relationship.

Week 10 (November 2, 4): Begin US-China economic relations.

There is an in-class exam on November 2, and on November 4 we will watch the conclusion of the PBS Frontline video started in week 4. The second part of the video explores China's economic development after 1989, and serves as useful background to next week's discussion on US-China economic issues.

### **NO READINGS OR DISCUSSION SECTIONS WEEK 10**

Week 11 (November 9, 11): Economic relations: Partnership or strife?

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. This week we will explore some of the sources of these frictions. We will also consider the implications of China's vast holdings of US treasury bonds.

Week 11 Readings:

- Sutter, pp. 203-224.
- 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 12 (November 16, 18): Finish economic relations; cooperation on the global environment.

The US and China are the world's two largest economies and the two largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions. To what extent is cooperation between Washington and Beijing likely on climate change issues?

Week 12 Readings:

- Sutter, pp. 224-228.



- Melanie Hart, editor, "Exploring the Frontiers of U.S.-China Strategic Cooperation: Energy and Climate Change," Center for American Progress, November 2014. Online at: <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ChinaReport-Energy-FINAL.pdf>

Week 13 (November 23, 25): China's military modernization; the US pivot to Asia.

As China's economy has developed, the country has also embarked on an ambitious military modernization program. What are the implications for US-China relations? Will a stronger Chinese military pose a threat to the US, and how might we expect the US to respond? What challenges does China face as it continues to pursue military power?

Week 13 Readings:

- Sutter, Chapter 8
- M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Search for Military Power," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 31, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 125-141.

**NO SECTIONS WEEK 13 (Thanksgiving)**

Week 14 (November 30, December 2): The US Pivot to Asia (continued) and the prospects for a US-China Security Dilemma; the disputes in the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

A number of regional issues pose challenges to future stability in East Asia. For instance, Countries surrounding the South China Sea (including China) are involved in numerous maritime and territorial disputes, and at times these disputes can generate significant tensions. 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 14 Readings:

- Shirk, Chapter 5.
- Robert S. Ross, "The Problem with the Pivot," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 91, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 2012): 70-82.
- Brenden Taylor, "The South China Sea is Not a Flashpoint," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 37, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 99-111.

**Detailed outline of final paper due in section, December 4**

Week 15 (December 7, 9): Nuclear proliferation; course conclusions.

To what degree have the US and China been able to cooperate on the issue of nuclear proliferation? We will pay particular attention to the case of North Korea, which has recently developed nuclear weapons.

Week 15 readings:

- Christopher R. Hill, "The Elusive Vision of a non-Nuclear North Korea," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 7-19.

**FINAL PAPER DUE ON THE SCHEDULED DATE OF THE FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DEC. 17 at 1:30 PM.**