HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

POLITICAL SCIENCE 3382F  CHINA’S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
(Prerequisites: POL 2231E, 2245E, 2250E, 2280E, or permission of the Department)

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Alfred L. Chan
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Huron College Rm. A212
E-mail: achan@uwo.ca

TIME & LOCATION: Wednesdays 12:30-2:30, Room HC-W8
OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 12:30-2:30, Wednesdays 10:30-11:30, and by appointment.

Course Description

The rise of China and its uncertain impact on the global system is likely one of the most important stories of the twenty-first century. To gain insight into this global phenomenon, this seminar course will explore the foreign policies of China as well as the involvement of the United States and Russia in the East Asia region. By means of a number of case studies, we will examine issues such as the extent to which the changing global environment shapes the foreign relations of China, the domestic determinants of China’s foreign policies, the sources of interstate conflict, the changing security requirements, and the patterns underlying China’s interactions with other global powers. Special emphasis will be placed on the contemporary (post-Cold War) period.

Course Objectives

As China is increasingly a major player in global politics and closely integrated into the world economy in the twenty-first century, we hope to come to grips with issues such as China’s redefinition of doctrines and strategy, continuities and changes, the tension between ideology and practice, and the role China plays in world politics. The end of the Cold War has altered China’s perceptions of its security, national interests, its relationship with the lone superpower, and international cooperation. We will examine how China is changing to cope with the new policy environment, and explore the ways by which China’s international behaviour can be explained. We are also interested in the nature of the China’s continued growth in power and influence, and its implications on peace and stability within the international system. Finally, we will engage in some speculations about the policy options available to China in the future.
Course Requirements and Grading

Seminar participation (attendance and contribution to discussion) 15%
Seminar Presentation (presenters should distribute to classmates a summary of the key points raised in the readings; evaluation is based on the substance of the presentation, the ability to stimulate discussion and to answer questions). 5%
Term paper (due 5th December, 2018, before 3 p.m.) 40%
Examination (2 hrs., as scheduled by the Registrar) 40%

Since students take turns doing presentations throughout the term and since the term paper is not due until December and the final exam is not scheduled until December it is not possible to comply with the rule that 15% of the final mark must be made known a week before the November 5th course drop date. The Dean has granted an exemption to the above-mentioned rule. However, students may inquire about their mark once they have done a presentation.

The term paper should be approximately 14 to 16 pages in length (4,480 to 5,120 words) and typewritten. Students should write on the same topic as their presentations. They are allowed to change their topics, provided that they obtain my written permission before November 15. The term paper should not simply be a summary of the seminar readings and it should focus on one or more specific issues on the topic during the post-Cold War period (i.e., the last two decades or so). The bulk of the research sources must be academic. While there is no rigid requirement on how many sources must be consulted, a good rule of thumb is that six or seven is a minimum number. It’s the quality and the ability to analyze and to synthesize that really counts. Students are encouraged to bring the discussion up to date by using the latest available material. All conventional rules governing footnotes (use the Turabian or Chicago style) and bibliography must be observed. Papers without page numbers will be docked 5%. Submit a hard copy to the essay drop box and an electronic version to Turnitin.com through OWL. Late penalty (2% per working day) will be imposed unless both the hard copy and electronic version are submitted on time. There is zero tolerance for plagiarism in my courses, and student should familiarize themselves with its meaning and implications.

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The above table is adapted from: http://politicalscience.uwo.ca/undergraduate/docs/plagiarism.pdf. I encourage all students to take a look at it.

Required Texts and Readings


A number of pieces from books or journals to be downloaded by students.

Seminar Topics, Readings and Questions (items marked by an asterisk are required readings; the rest are optional but recommended for the term paper)

Meeting #1: Introductory Lecture (Sept. 12)

Meeting #2: Strategic Environment, Strategy, and Security Objectives: Enter the Dragon? (Sept. 19)

To what extent does China have a firm strategy and what are the uncertainties confronting its decision-makers? What are the determinants of the priorities of the Chinese leadership? Analyse China’s security policies with reference to its security concerns and issues (such as military modernization, weapon capabilities, anti-terrorism and peacekeeping).

*Robert G. Sutter, Chinese Foreign Relations, chaps, 1, 2, & 5.


Avery Goldstein, “China’s Changing Strategic Landscape,” chap. 2 in his Rising to the Challenge (2005).

Rex Li, A Rising China and Security in East Asia (2009).


Russell Ong, China’s Security Interests in the Post-Cold War Era (2002), chap. 1.


Yong Deng and Rei-Ling Wang, eds., In the Eyes of the Dragon (1999).

Meeting #3: Sino-American Relations: Sweet and Sour? Thucydides’s Trap? (Sept. 26)

What are the nature and characteristics of Sino-American relations in the post-Cold War period? Can China and the US escape the Thucydides’s Trap? Discuss critically and in detail the sources of conflict and cooperation in this all-important relationship.


Graham Allison, Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap? (2017)


Russell Ong, China’s Security Interests in the Post-Cold War Era (2002), chaps. 5 & 7.


Meeting #4: China Canada Relations: An Ambivalent Encounter? (Oct. 3)

Why and to what extent is China important to Canada? Consider the challenges and opportunities presented by the rise of China to Canada. Analyse the factors accounting for the Harper government’s shifting policies toward China since 2006. How can Canada fashion a strategy that gets China right?


Meeting #5: China and Taiwan: War or Peace? (Oct. 17)

Identify and discuss the key issues in China-Taiwan relations. What are the current trends that have an impact on cross-strait relations? Why is Taiwan so important to the US, and why is Washington’s involvement such a critical factor?


Edward Friedman, China's rise, Taiwan's Dilemmas and International Peace (2006).


Meeting #6: Sino-Russian Relations: A “Strategic Partnership”? (Oct. 24)

What are the nature and characteristics of Sino-Russian relations in the post-Cold War period? Discuss the changing ways the two states perceive one another. How and to what extent do China and Russia cooperate with one another?


Richard Weitz, China-Russia Security Relations: Strategic Parallelism without Partnership or Passion? (2008)


Natasha Kuhtr, Russian Policy towards China and Japan (2007)


Russell Ong, China’s Security Interests in the Post-Cold War Era (2002), chap. 2.


Meeting #7: China and Europe: The Elusive Axis? (Oct. 31)

Analyse the post-Cold War economic, political and strategic relationships between China and Europe. Identify the “mutual interests” shared by both sides. To what extent is there a “strategic partnership” between Beijing and Brussels?


Meeting #8: China and Japan Relations: The Ice that Won’t Melt? (Nov. 7)

Discuss the nature and characteristics of Sino-Japanese relations in the post-Cold War period. Why hasn’t growing economic interdependence between the two countries prevented rivalry between the two states? What are the potential sources of friction and conflict, and how effectively have the two countries handled them?


Meeting #9: China and the Two Koreas: Balancing? Bandwagoning? (Nov. 14)

Discuss the salient aspects of China’s relationships with the two Koreas. To what extent does North Korea pose a dilemma for China? What are the observable continuities and changes in China’s relations with North Korea?


Bates Gill, China’s North Korea Policy: Assessing Interests and Influences (2011)

Tim Beal, Crisis in Korea: America, China, and the Risk of War (2011)


Scott Snyder, China’s Rise and the Two Koreas (2009).


Christoph Bluth, Crisis on the Korean Peninsula (2011)

Yongho Kim, North Korean Foreign Policy (2011).

Suk Hi Kim, Terence Roehrig, and Bernhard Seliger, The Survival of North
Korea (2011), ch. 7.


Meeting #10: China and the ASEAN States: Cooperation or Conflict? (Nov. 21)

Assess the strategic objectives and policies of both sides in China-ASEAN relationships. How influential is China in Southeast Asia? How do the ASEAN states perceive the rise of China and its challenges and why? What are the opportunities for cooperation between the two sides?


Meeting #11: China’s One Belt One Road and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: Crossing the River by Feeling the Gold? (Nov. 28)

The colossal One Belt One Road project, together with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, are the centrepiece of a new grand strategy adopted by Beijing under Xi Jinping’s leadership. Examine the major ingredients and the motivations for these two ambitious initiatives. What economic, geopolitical and strategic goals do the Chinese
leadership intend to achieve? Examine the internal and external challenges of these initiatives as well as their likely impact on Asia and the world.


Christopher Johnson, “President Xi Jinping’s ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2016.

“‘One Belt, One Road’: China’s Great Leap Outward,” European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2015.
1. Late Penalties: It is the policy of the Department of Political Science to exact a penalty of 2 marks (i.e. 2 per cent of the grade on the assignment) per working day for late papers. Papers will not be accepted by instructors if they are more than two weeks late.

2. Plagiarism is an academic offense and will be treated as such. Students who are in doubt as to the nature of this offence should consult their instructor, Department Chair, or Dean’s Office, as well as the Huron University College Statement on Plagiarism, available at the Reference Desk in the Huron University College Library and at www.huronuc.on.ca~. In addition, students may seek guidance from a variety of current style manuals available at the Reference Desk in the Huron University College Library. Information about these resources can be found at www.huronuc.on.ca/library&computing~styleguides. Plagiarism detection software may be used in this course. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form.

3. Internet Documentation: All information obtained through the Internet must be cited in footnotes and bibliographies. Internet citations must include all of the same information that is provided when citing a book or article. This includes the name of the author, name of the organization that has posted the website, the title, the date that the website was consulted, and the website address. For more details on proper electronic citation, consult the information desk at the Huron University College library.

4. Assignment drop-off: Essays and other written assignments must be handed to the instructor directly or placed in the essay drop-off box.

5. What Your Grades mean: The University of Western Ontario Senate has adopted a set of grade descriptors which explain the meaning of grades assigned in all university courses:

- A+ 90-100% One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
- A 80-89% Superior work which is clearly above average
- B 70-79% Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
- C 60-69% Competent work, meeting requirements
- D 50-59% Fair work, minimally acceptable
- F below 50% Fail

6. Class attendance: You are strongly advised not to miss any class meetings. Important material, detailed instructions, information and insights on course themes, examinations, written work, course objectives and other essential matters will be presented in these hours.

7. Course expectations and aspirations:

b. An expectation of routine attendance in scheduled meeting.
c. An expectation that assigned readings will be read thoroughly and annotated prior to scheduled meetings.
d. An expectation that each student will participate in an active and relevant manner, contributing ideas and insights derived from the assigned reading.
e. An aspiration toward precision, accuracy and clarity in oral communication, including active listening skills.
f. An aspiration toward enhanced depth and breadth of learning as the course proceeds.
g. An aspiration toward more critical and analytical thinking as the course proceeds and assignments are completed.
h. An aspiration toward a continued curiosity toward new ideas and an openness toward others and their ideas.

The Appendix to Course Outlines is posted on the OWL course site.