Course Description

Over the last thirty years, China’s political reforms have not kept pace with its economic transformation. But some change has occurred, and pressures for additional reform are apparent. This small seminar will focus on three areas where limited, but meaningful reforms, have occurred: legislative politics, village elections, and socio-legal reform. Several weeks will be devoted to each topic, and students will complete a research project on an under-explored aspect of Chinese legislatures, grassroots elections, or legal change (or another issue related to political reform, pending approval by the instructor).

The course is designed, and will be conducted, like a graduate seminar. Students who enroll must be ready to do all the reading in advance of seminar meetings and to participate actively in class discussions.

Prerequisites: Political Science Majors of Junior or Senior status, with a minimum overall GPA of 3.4. Some prior study of Chinese politics, economics, or society is highly recommended.

Course Materials


2) Bruce Gilley, *China’s Democratic Future: How It Will Happen and Where It Will Lead* (Columbia, 2004), paperback


4) Minxin Pei, *China’s Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy* (Harvard, 2006), paperback

5) Articles on the web, available at the UC library website. Look under “E-Journal Titles A-Z.” Also, for articles where specific URLs are listed, be enterprising and check with your classmates should websites disappear or titles be slightly off.

All the assigned books are on two-hour reserve at the Main Library.

Course Requirements

15-25 page research paper (50% of final grade). Due December 13, 2pm via e-mail (kobrien@berkeley.edu)
1-2 page research proposal (10% of final grade) -- Due November 17. Unsatisfactory research proposals must be re-written.

2-3 pages of comments on another student's draft research paper (no grade, but required). Due December 1 to the student and instructor (kobrien@berkeley.edu) via e-mail. Draft research papers must be available to be distributed by November 24. The drafts themselves will not be graded.

5-7 minute class presentation (10% of course grade) -- December 1

Class participation (30% of course grade) -- All students will be expected to participate in class discussions and to come to class prepared every week.

**Academic Honesty**

All the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the university and handled according to university policy.

“**The Dog ate it**”

Please keep a copy of your research paper until the instructor has returned it. Also, to sidestep easily avoidable problems related to computer failures, keep a copy of all your drafts on a flash drive or CD and be ready to make alternative arrangements for last-minute printing.

**Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor, and seeking available assistance, in a timely manner. All efforts will be made to facilitate the learning of students with any sort of disability.

**Week 1 (9/1)**

**Introduction**

**Week 2 (9/8)**

**An Undemocratic Future or Gradual Reform?**

Minxin Pei, *China’s Trapped Transition*, pp. 1-95, 132-215

**Week 3 (9/15)**

**A Democratic Future?**

Bruce Gilley, *China’s Democratic Future*, Introduction, pp. 3-147, 243-51

The National People’s Congress

Kevin J. O’Brien, *Reform Without Liberalization*, chapters 1, 4, 5, 7, 8

Local Legislatures and Political Change

**Institutional Development: Embeddedness or Institutionalization?** (Week 5, 9/29)


**Lawmaking and Oversight** (Week 6, 10/6)

Young Nam Cho, "From 'Rubber Stamp' to 'Iron Stamps': The Emergence of Chinese Local People's Congresses as Supervisory Powerhouses." *China Quarterly* 171 (September 2002): 724-40 (on the web)

Young Nam Cho, “Symbiotic Neighbour or Extra-Court Judge? The Supervision over Courts by Chinese Local People’s Congresses,” *China Quarterly* 176 (December 2003): 1068-83 (on the web)


or Young Nam Cho, *Local People’s Congresses in China* (Cambridge, 2008), chapters 2, 3, and 4 (sadly, only available in hardcover)

**Representation or Remonstrating?** (Week 7, 10/13)


**Class Canceled (Instructor Abroad)** (Week 8, 10/20)
Weeks 9, 10, 11 (10/27, 11/3, 11/10)

Village Elections -- Democratic Breakthrough, Sham, or State-Building?

Implementation of Elections (Week 9, 10/27)


Economic Development and Elections (Week 10, 11/3)


Effects of Elections: Significant or Limited Change? (Week 11, 11/10)

Significant Change:


Limited Change:

Kevin J. O’Brien and Rongbin Han, “Path to Democracy? Assessing Elections in Rural China,” Journal of Contemporary China (June 2009): 359-78 (on the web)

**Law, Society and Political Reform** (Weeks 12 and 13, 11/17 and 11/24)

**Legal Mobilization** (Week 12, 11/17)


Rachel E. Stern, “From Dispute to Decision: Suing Polluters in China,” China Quarterly (forthcoming) (available from the instructor by e-mail)

1-2 page research proposal due

**Legal Institutions: Courts, Bureaucracies and Lawyers** (Week 13, 11/24)


**Presentations** (Week 14, 12/1)

Five to seven minute presentations of each student’s research

Comments on other student’s papers due to student and instructor

12/13 2pm, Final Paper Due! (e-mail to kobrien@berkeley.edu)