Political Science 244c
State-Society Relations in China: Approaches and Debates
Kevin J. O’Brien

Wednesday, 12pm-2pm
Office Hours: W, 10am-11:50am (#505
Fall 2006
2223 Fulton Street)
Phone: 510-642-4689 (0) 925-935-2118 (H)
kobrien@berkeley.edu

Course Description:

This seminar has three objectives: first, to expose students to major debates in the study of reform-era Chinese politics; second, to consider how research on contemporary China both draws from and informs political science; third, to explore characterizations of the Chinese state and state-society relations. Throughout the course we will be focusing on questions such as: what can we learn by examining Chinese political culture and institutions? Do concepts such as state "reach," civil society, "rightful resistance", weapons of the weak, inclusion, and corporatism produce insights into the structure and dynamics of Chinese politics? What can we learn from new research in the survey tradition?

For those students lacking previous knowledge of Chinese history or politics, three textbooks are highly recommended: Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-49 (Lucian Bianco), Mao’s China and After (Maurice Meisner), Governing China (Kenneth Lieberthal). Together, these books provide an overview of China from the end of the Qing Dynasty up to recent days. For those lacking any background in dynastic Chinese history I would recommend, as a pleasant read, Jonathan Spence’s The Search for Modern China. In the past, this course has included a section on Mao Zedong thought. If you are unfamiliar with Mao’s writings, and you are interested, contact the instructor at an early date for a list of supplementary readings. All this said, there is no expectation that students have any prior background in Chinese politics or history, and it is the intention of the instructor to make the class accessible to any motivated graduate student.

Materials to be purchased:

B) Larry Diamond and Ramon Myers, eds. Elections and Democracy in Greater China (Oxford, 2001), paperback (note: the articles in this book are also available for free (!) at jstor.org as the June 2000 issue of China Quarterly)
D) Maria Heimer and Stig Thogersen, Doing Fieldwork in China (Hawaii, 2006)
E) Kevin J. O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, Rightful Resistance in Rural China (Cambridge, 2006), paperback
F) Vivienne Shue, The Reach of the State (Stanford, 1988), paperback
G) A large coursepack of articles (arrangements TBA)

Materials available from the instructor:

A) Kevin J. O’Brien, Reform Without Liberalization: China’s National People’s Congress and the Politics of Institutional Change (Cambridge, 1990) (see instructor for copies), hardcover

Course Requirements:
3 seminar papers (1/3 of course grade) -- Due on Monday evening (5 pm) of the three weeks for which a student is responsible. (Copies should be sent to the e-mail addresses of all students and, of course, to the instructor). Each paper (approx. 3-4 double-spaced pages) should critically engage the readings assigned for that week. Students may focus on gaps or conflicts in one (or more) readings and may bring in relevant material from other courses. The purpose of these papers is to stimulate class discussion. Papers should not be a summary but rather an effort to highlight an important point, a methodological issue, and/or an assumption that underlies or permeates the reading(s). Efforts should be made to explore ways in which the reading relate to each other and how they help us improve our understanding of politics. During class, each author will be responsible for leading at least a brief discussion around the points raised. Hint: When preparing your papers, pretend you are an overburdened student racing to figure out "why this reading is so important" the night before your qualifying exams. You might also consider how the readings speak to other areas of political science (or other regions of the world) with which you are familiar.

1 Take-Home Exam (2 questions about 8 pages each) (1/2 of course grade) -- Two essays evaluated on the basis of: demonstrated mastery of the assigned readings, skill in exposing nuances in various defensible positions; cogency, clarity, precision and organization of your presentation; and relevance of evidence marshaled to "prove" your main point. Students, with the instructor's approval, may substitute a research paper of approximately twenty double-spaced pages for the exam.

Class participation (1/6 of course grade) -- All students will be expected to participate in class discussions and to come to class prepared to consider the seminar papers for that week.

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

Week 1 (8/30)

Introduction


Lowell Dittmer and William Hurst, “Analysis in Limbo: Contemporary Chinese Politics Amid the Maturation of Reform,” Issues and Studies (December 2002/March 2003): 11-48 (the latest and best “state of the field” article)

Week 2 (9/6)

How We Know What We Know

Maria Heimer and Stig Thogersen (eds.), Doing Fieldwork in China (Hawaii, 2006) (entire)

Discussants:
1) 2) 3)

Week 3 (9/13)

Do Guanxi Matter?


Student Discussants:
1)                                      2)                                    3)

Week 4 (9/20) The Reach of the Maoist State -- Predation or Protection?


Vivienne Shue, The Reach of the State (Stanford, 1988), 152 pp. (entire)


Student Discussants:
1)                                      2)                                    3)

Week 5 (9/27) Peasant Power? -- Decollectivization and Weapons of the Weak

Daniel Kelliher, Peasant Power in China, (Yale, 1992), Chapters 2 and 9 (the case for peasant power)


Joseph Fewsmith, "The Emergence of Rural Reform," in Dilemmas of Reform in China, (M.E. Sharpe, 1994), pp. 19-55 (the elite view)

Jonathan Unger, "Disbanding Collective Agriculture," in The Transformation of Rural China (M.E. Sharpe, 2002), pp. 95-118 (a critique of Kelliher and Zhou)

David Zweig, "Rural People, the Politicians, and Power," *China Journal*, No. 38 (July 1997):153-68 (a synthesis)

Student Discussants: 1) 2) 3)

Week 6 (10/4) **Disaggregating the Post-Mao State**


Student Discussants: 1) 2) 3)

Week 7 (10/11) **Rural Resistance in the Reform Era**


Ethan Michelson, “Justice from Above or Justice from Below? Popular Strategies for Resolving Grievances in Rural China,” *China Quarterly* (forthcoming)


Student Discussants: 1) 2) 3)

Week 8 (10/18) **Workers after Socialism -- Reticence, Resistance, and Moral Economy**


Student Discussants:
1) 2) 3)

Week 9 (10/25) Village Elections -- Democratic Breakthrough, Sham, or State-Building?

Implementation of Elections:

Gunter Schubert, "Village Elections in the PRC: A Trojan Horse of Democracy?" Project Discussion Paper No. 19/2002 (a comprehensive review article -- read first)


Effects of Elections:


Student Discussants:
Week 10 (11/1) **Surveys and Sinology -- What Does Voting Mean in China?**

The Meaning of Boycotting Elections:


More on Election Outcomes:


Using Imperfect Surveys:

Melanie Manion, "Survey Research in the Study of Contemporary China: Learning from Local Samples," *China Quarterly* 139 (September 1994):741-65 (on how to use non-representative samples)

**Student Discussants:**

1)                                            2)                                                   3)

Class 11 (11/8) **Civil Society?**

Theory/Concept Pieces:


**Empirical Studies:**

Tony Saich, "Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China," *China Quarterly* (March 2000): 124-41


Student Discussants:
1)                                   2)                                     3)

Week 12 (11/15) **Class Cancelled** (Instructor Out-of-Town)

Week 13 (11/22) **Corporatism?**

Theory/Concept Pieces:


Empirical Studies of Business Associations:


Student Discussants:
1)                                   2)                                     3)
Week 14 (11/29) **Legislatures and Political Change -- Inclusion or Liberalization? Institutionalization or Embeddedness? Representation or Remonstrating?**

Kevin J. O'Brien, *Reform Without Liberalization*, (Cambridge, 1990), Chapters 1, 5, 7, 8


Organizational Development:

Kevin J. O'Brien, "Chinese People's Congresses and Legislative Embeddedness: Understanding Early Organizational Development," *Comparative Political Studies* (April 1994):80-107 (a different take on institutionalization)


Deputy's Roles:


Growing Involvement in Institutional Supervision:

Young Nam Cho, "From 'Rubber Stamp' to 'Iron Stamps': The Emergence of Chinese Local People's Congresses as Supervisory Powerhouses," *China Quarterly* no. 171 (September 2002): 724-40 (new attention to supervision, and a title that's a bit over-the-top)

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

Student Discussants:
1) 
2) 
3)

Week 15 (12/6) **Law and Society in the Reform Era**


Student Discussants:
1) 
2) 
3)

12/15  4pm in the Instructor's Mailbox (Barrows 210) -- Take-Home Exam Due