

Political Science 244d
Contentious Politics in Contemporary China
Kevin J. O'Brien

Fall 2017
202 Barrows

Wednesday 12-2pm,
Office Hours: By appt. either in
Barrows 712 or 1995 University Ave.

Course Description:

Much political behavior, particularly in countries such as China, does not take place within institutionalized channels. This is mainly because the Party/State aggregates preferences poorly and the popular classes often become frustrated with existing opportunities for participation. Moreover, honest elections occur only at the lowest levels -- if at all -- and many forms of political activity are forbidden. In these circumstances, how do ordinary Chinese press for attention to their grievances and for a modicum of responsiveness? And how do the authorities respond to popular activism, whether it appears on the streets or online? In this seminar, we will read recently-published books and journal articles that bring to light ongoing debates and emerging topics in the literature on protest and repression. We will pay particular attention to forms of contention that are somewhat noisier and more overt than "everyday resistance" yet still fall short of open rebellion.

Course materials:

- 1) Yongshun Cai, Collective Resistance in China: Why Popular Protests Succeed or Fail (Stanford, 2010) – paperback
- 2) Xi Chen, Social Protest and Contentious Authoritarianism in China (Cambridge, 2012) – paperback
- 3) Diana Fu, Mobilizing Without the Masses: Control and Contention in China (Cambridge, 2017) – available 10/31/17, paperback
- 4) Christopher Heurlin, Responsive Authoritarianism: Land, Protests and Policymaking (Cambridge, 2016) – hardcover only, but e-copy available in the UCB library
- 5) Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, Rightful Resistance in Rural China (Cambridge, 2006) – paperback
- 6) Guobin Yang (ed.), China's Contested Internet (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2015) – paperback

Course Requirements:

3 seminar papers (30% of final grade) -- Due Monday at 5pm of the three weeks for which a student is responsible. (Copies should be e-mailed to each seminar member and to the instructor). Each paper (no more than 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 of the 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 substantive or theoretical point (or points), a methodological issue, and/or an assumption that underlies or permeates the reading(s). Efforts should be made to explore ways in which the readings relate to each other and how they help us improve our understanding of popular contention and/or Chinese politics. You might also consider how the readings speak to other areas of political science or other areas of the world with which you are familiar. During class, each author will need to be ready to explain (and expand upon) the points he or she raised. Hint: When preparing your papers, pretend you are an overburdened student racing to figure out "why this article or book is so important" the night before your qualifying exams.

1 15-20 page research paper or a take-home essay exam (50% of final grade). Students may also opt to do a take-home exam made up of two essay questions.

Class participation (20% 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.

Aug. 23) Introduction and Ground Rules

Aug. 30) The State of the Field: Review Essays, Typologies and Looking Forward

Peter Lorentzen, "Designing Contentious Politics in Post-1989 China," Modern China, 35 pp., forthcoming (at the "online first" tab of the journal)

Marie-Eve Reny and William Hurst, "Social Unrest," in Chris Ogden ed., Handbook of China's Governance and Domestic Politics (London: Routledge, 2013): 210-224 (available from instructor by e-mail)

Kevin J. O'Brien and Rachel E. Stern, "Studying Contention in Contemporary China," in Popular Protest in China, (Harvard University Press, 2008) pp. 11-25 (available at ssrn.com or my webpage) (with special attention to the future research suggestions)

Two Typologies:

Lily Tsai, "Constructive Noncompliance," Comparative Politics 47:3 (April 2015): 253-79

Susan K. McCarthy, "Serving Society, Repurposing the State: Religious Charity and Resistance in China," China Journal 70 (July 2013): 48-72

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Part I: Debates and Emerging Topics

Sept. 6) Rightful Resistance (and Our Critics)

Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, Rightful Resistance in Rural China (Cambridge, 2006) (entire)

Julia Chuang, "China's Rural Land Politics: Bureaucratic Absorption and the Muting of Rightful Resistance," China Quarterly 219 (September 2014): 649-69

Wing-chung Ho and Fen-Ling Chen, "Compromising Citizenry: The Perceived Irrelevance of Rightful Resistance among Peasant Coal-Miners Suffering from Pneumoconiosis," China Review 16:2 (June 2016): 85-103

Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance Revisited," Journal of Peasant Studies 40:6 (November 2013): 1051-62

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Sept. 13) Rights Consciousness vs. Rules Consciousness and Legal Consciousness

Elizabeth J. Perry, "Chinese Conceptions of 'Rights': From Mencius to Mao—and Now," Perspectives on Politics, 6:1 (March 2008): 37-50

Lianjiang Li, "Rights Consciousness and Rules Consciousness in Contemporary China," China Journal 64 (July 2010): 47-68

Peter Lorentzen and Suzanne Scoggins, "Understanding China's Rising Rights Consciousness," China Quarterly 223 (September 2015): 638-57

Maria Bondes and Thomas Johnson, "Beyond Localized Environmental Contention: Horizontal and Vertical Diffusion in a Chinese Anti-Incinerator Campaign," Journal of Contemporary China 26:106 (July 2017): 504-20

Yao Lu and Ran Tao, "Organizational Structure and Collective Action: Lineage Networks, Semiautonomous Associations, and Collective Resistance in Rural China," American Journal of Sociology 122:6 (May 2017): 1726-74

Yanhua Deng and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Societies of Senior Citizens and Popular Protest in Rural Zhejiang," China Journal 71 (January 2014): 172-88

William Hurst, Mingxing Liu, Yongdong Liu and Ran Tao, "Reassessing Collective Petitioning in Rural China: Civic Engagement, Extra-State Violence, and Regional Variation," Comparative Politics 46:4 (2014): 459-82

Qiangqiang Luo and Joel Andreas, "Using Religion to Resist Rural Dispossession: A Case Study of a Hui Muslim Community in Northwest China," China Quarterly 226 (June 2016): 477-98

Yao Lu, Wenjuan Zheng and Wei Wang, "Migration and Popular Resistance in Rural China: Wukan and Beyond," China Quarterly 229 (March 2017): 1-22

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Oct. 4) Signaling and Information

Rachel E. Stern and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Politics at the Boundary: Mixed Signals and the Chinese State," Modern China (March 2012): 174-98

Jessica Weiss, "Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences and Nationalist Protest in China," International Organization 67:1 (Winter 2013): 1-35

Peter L. Lorentzen, "Regularized Rioting: Permitting Public Protest in an Authoritarian Regime," Quarterly Journal of Political Science 8:2 (2013): 127-58

H. Christoph Steinhardt, "Discursive Accommodation: Popular Protest and Strategic Elite Communication in China," European Political Science Review 9:4, (2017), forthcoming (available at journal's "first view")

Martin K. Dimitrov, "Internal Government Assessments of the Quality of Governance in China," Studies in Comparative International Development 50:1 (March 2015): 50-72

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Oct. 11) Repression, Hard and Soft

Zhou Kai and Yan Xiaojun, "The Question for Stability: Policing Popular Protest in the People's Republic of China," Problems of Post-Communism 61:3 (May/June 2014): 3-17

Yuhua Wang and Carl F. Minzner, "The Rise of the Chinese Security State," China Quarterly 222 (June 2015): 339-359.

Kevin J. O'Brien and Yanhua Deng, "Preventing Protest One Person at a Time: Psychological Coercion and Relational Repression in China," China Review 17:2 (June 2017): 179-201

Xi Chen, "Origins of Informal Coercion in China," Politics & Society 45:1 (2017): 67-89.

Feng Chen and Xin Xu, "'Active Judiciary': Judicial Dismantling of Workers' Collective Action in China," China Journal 67 (January 2012): 87-108

Juan Wang, "Managing Social Stability: The Perspective of a Local Government in China," Journal of East Asian Studies 15 (2015): 1-25

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Part 2: Recent Books

October 18) History, Opportunity and Tactics

Xi Chen, Social Protest and Contentious Authoritarianism in China (entire)

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Oct. 25) Instructor Abroad – No Class (Rescheduled during RRR week or another time convenient for everyone)

Nov. 1) Why Protests Succeed or Fail

Yongshun Cai, Collective Resistance in China (entire)

Kevin J. O’Brien and Yanhua Deng, “Repression Backfires: Tactical Radicalization and Protest Spectacle in Rural China,” Journal of Contemporary China, 24:93 (May 2015): 457-70

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Nov. 8) The Policy Consequences of Protest

Christopher Heurlin, Responsive Authoritarianism: Land, Protests and Policymaking (entire) (only hardcover available to purchase; but UCB library has an e-copy)

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Nov. 15) New Forms of Protest: Cyberprotest, Discourse Competition and Censorship

Guobin Yang, China’s Contested Internet (chapters to be determined)

Rongbin Han, “Defending the Authoritarian Regime Online: China’s ‘Voluntary Fifty-Cent Army,’” China Quarterly 224 (December 2015): 1006-25

Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret E. Roberts, “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression,” American Political Science Review 107:2 (May 2013): 326-43

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Nov. 22) No Class -- Thanksgiving

Nov. 29) Rethinking What's Collective About Collective Action

Diana Fu, Mobilizing Without the Masses: Control and Contention in China (Cambridge, 2017) (entire) (available in paperback, 10/31/17)

Class Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Dec. 6) Are We Making Too Much of Protest? Quiescence, Hegemony and Living with Grievances

Anna Lora-Wainwright, Yiyun Zhang, Yunmei Wu and Benjamin Van Rooij, "Learning to Live with Pollution: The Making of Environmental Subjects in a Chinese Industrialized Village," China Journal 68 (July 2012): 106-124

Wooyeal Paik and Kihyun Lee, "I Want to be Expropriated!: The Politics of *Xiaochanquanfang* Land Development in Suburban China," Journal of Contemporary China 21:74 (March 2012): 261-80

Rachel E. Stern and Jonathan Hassid, "Amplifying Silence: Uncertainty and Control Parables in Contemporary China," Comparative Political Studies 45:10 (October 2012): 1230-54

Martin King Whyte, "China's Dormant and Active Social Volcanoes," China Journal 75 (July 2016): 9-37

Marc J. Blecher, "Hegemony and Workers' Politics in China," China Quarterly 170 (June 2002): 283-303

Discussants:

- 1)
- 2)

Final Papers or Exam Due: December 15