

**EASTD 196**  
**Political Geography of China**  
**Spring 2022**

Tuesday and Thursday 10:30-11:30  
Section to be arranged  
Room 101 at 9 Kirkland Place

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Koss  
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Office Hours: Friday 2:00 – 3:30pm  
and by appointment  
2 Divinity Avenue, Room 227

**Course Description:**

Putting Chinese politics on the map, this course asks how the government deals with the enormous challenges of ruling over a vast terrain with a diverse population, encompassing super-rich urban metropolises as well as poor rural peripheries. We begin with statecraft traditions from the late imperial era; and end with China's place on the future global maps of the 21st century. Topics include: macro-regions; priority zones of governance; Special Economic Zones; the Chinese equivalent of “blue states and red states;” rising inequality; ethnic minorities and borderlands; economic development models; urbanization and city planning; collective action in digital space; domestic and international migration; environmental politics; and the geo-politics of the “One Belt One Road” initiative. We will set aside class time for a hands-on introduction to producing and interpreting maps of China.

**Grades:**

To be fair to all students in the class, deadlines will be firm. Late papers turned in without an extension will be penalized 1/3 of a grade to 1 full grade, depending on the circumstances. The oral and written assignments will contribute the final grade in the following proportions:

- Contributions to classroom discussion 14%
- Eight responses to the readings (due to the Canvas website noon on Monday before class, 200-250 words) 16%
- Map with annotations (1000-1500 words, due March 26) 20%
- Quiz (30 minutes, April 12) 10%
- Final paper (6.000 +/-100 words, negotiably due May 2) 40%

**Collaboration & Academic Honesty:**

Collaboration is vital to academic research and will be encouraged throughout the class. Like professional academics, you will be asked to credit others for any ideas or evidence that they contribute to your project in your citations. Any instances of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Council.

**Center for Geographic Analysis:**

Harvard's Center for Geographic Analysis (CGA) supports research with geospatial technologies. Visit their website to find out how they might inspire you, help you with resources, or support you through their workshops: [gis.harvard.edu](http://gis.harvard.edu).

**Readings:** All readings are available online, except for Leslie T. Chang's *Factory Girls* (week 9).

## Weekly readings:

1/24 Week 1: Introduction & overview: “your” place in China

1/31 Week 2: The macro-regions paradigm and other hydrological perspectives

- G. William Skinner, *City in Late Imperial China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1977, pp. 211-220, 248-249, 275-298.
- Ruth Mostern, *The Yellow River: A Natural and Unnatural History*, New Haven: Yale University Press 2021, pp.1-21.
- Max Magni and Yuval Atsmon, “A Better Approach to China’s markets,” *Harvard Business Review*, March 2010, pp.30-31.

Optional reading/reference:

- Barbara Sands and Ramon H. Myers, “The Spatial Approach to Chinese History: A Test,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 45:4 (1986), pp. 721-743.
- Carolyn Cartier, “Origins and Evolution of a Geographic Idea: the Macroregion in China,” *Modern China*, vol. 28:1 (2002), pp. 79-142.

2/7 Week 3: Imperial China’s strategies to govern across space

- R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010, chapter 7, “Negotiated Orders: The Lower Yangzi Valley and the Southeastern Coast,” pp. 231-286.
- Daniel Koss, “Political Geography of Empire: Chinese Varieties of Local Government,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.76:1 (February 2017), pp. 159-184

2/14 Week 4: Central-local relations in contemporary China

- Vivienne Shue, “Maps, Dreams, and Trails to Heaven: Envisioning a Future Chinese Nation-Space,” in Vivienne Shue and Patricia M. Thornton (ed.) *To Govern China: Evolving Practices of Power*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp.83-120.
- Gang Guo, “China’s Local Political Budget Cycles,” *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53:3 (July 2009), pp. 621-632.
- Sebastian Heilmann, *Red Swan: How Unorthodox Policy-Making Facilitated China’s Rise*, Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2018, “Epilogue: Changes in China’s Policy Process under General Secretary Xi Jinping,” pp.197-220.

2/21 Week 5: Map making. All meetings this week will take place in room K018, attached to the computer lab on the concourse level of CGIS Knafel, 1737 Cambridge Street. You could install QGIS on your laptop prior to the meeting.

2/28 Week 6: Regional economic disparities and inequality

- C. Cindy Fan, “Of Belts and Ladders: State Policy and Uneven Regional Development in Post-Mao China,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 85:3 (September 1995), pp. 421-449.
- Thomas Talhelm et al., “Large-Scale Psychological Differences Within China Explained by Rice Versus Wheat Agriculture,” *Science*, vol. 344:6184 (May 2014), pp.603-608.

3/7 Week 7: Border areas and autonomous regions

- Taylor Fravel. *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. Read pp.37-69.
- Human Rights Watch. *China's Algorithms of Repression: Reverse Engineering a Xinjiang Police Mass Surveillance App*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2019. Skim.
- Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Myunghee Lee and Emir Yazici, "Counterterrorism and Preventive Repression: China's Changing Strategy in Xinjiang," *International Security*, vol. 44:3 (Winter 2019/20), pp. 9-47.

Optional reading/reference:

- Nicolas Becquelin, "Staged Development in Xinjiang," *The China Quarterly*, no. 178 (June 2004), pp.358-378.

[3/14 no class, spring recess]

3/21 Week 8: Mapping the reach of the state

- Vivienne Shue, *The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, chapter 4, "Honeycomb and Web: the Process of Change in Rural China," pp.123-152.
- Daniel Koss, *Where the Party Rules: The Rank and File of China's Communist State*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018, chapter 1, "Introduction: Party-Based Authoritarianism in China," pp. 3-34.
- Richard McGregor, *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers*, New York: Harper, 2010, chapter 6, "The Emperor is Far Away: The Party and the Regions," pp. 170-193.

3/28 Week 9: Migration and urbanization

- Alexsia T. Chan and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Phantom Services: Deflecting Migrant Workers in China," *The China Journal*, no. 81 (January 2019): pp. 103-122
- Leslie T. Chang, *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2008, pick two chapters to read.

4/4 Week 10: Urban planning

- Kyle A. Jaros, "Forging Greater Xi'an: The Political Logic of Metropolitanization," *Modern China*, vol. 42:6 (2016): pp. 638-673.
- Elena Meyer-Clement, "Rural Urbanization Under Xi Jinping: From Rapid Community Building to Steady Urbanization?" *China Information*, online (September 2019): pp. 1-21.

4/11 Week 11: Environment (Tuesday: quizz)

- Ding, Iza. 2020. "Performative Governance." *World Politics* 72(4): 525-556.
- Kostka, Genia. 2016. "Command without Control: The Case of China's Environmental Target System." *Regulation & Governance* 10: 58–74.

Optional reading/reference:

- Benjamin van Rooij, Qiaoqiao Zhu, Na Li and Qiliang Wang, "Centralizing Trends and Pollution Law Enforcement in China," *The China Quarterly*, vol. 231 (September 2017), pp. 583-606.

4/18 Week 12: Collective action in real and digital space (Thursday: short map presentations)

- Jeremy L. Wallace and Jessica Chen Weiss, "The Political Geography of Nationalist Protest in China: Cities and the 2012 Anti-Japanese Protests," *The China Quarterly*, vol. 222 (June 2015): pp. 403-429.
- Margaret E. Roberts, *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018, chapter 1, "Introduction," pp. 1-20.
- Mareike Ohlberg, Shazeda Ahmed, Bertram Lang, "Central Planning, Local Experiments: The Complex Implementation of China's Social Credit System" *Merics China Monitor*, December 12, 2017.

4/25 Week 13: Geo-politics under Xi Jinping: The "One Belt One Road" doctrine

- Kent E. Calder, *Super Continent: The Logic of Eurasian Integration*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. Read chapter 1, "Eurasian Reconnection and Renaissance," pp. 1-21.