

Major Issues in the History of US-China Relations

Fall 2026
Tuesday 3:00–5:50 p.m.
Rm 2611, Lifts 31–32

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OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday, 5–6:00 p.m.

Course Description

This course examines the historical origins and evolution of the complex relations between China and the United States from the early 19th century to the late 20th century. It explores some of the most important events and persistent issues in political, military, economic, and cultural relations between the two countries. It also introduces students to major competing interpretations by American and Chinese scholars.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

- (1) Gain a better understanding of US-China relations from diplomatic, military, cultural, and personal perspectives.
- (2) Identify the underlying dynamics, enduring patterns, persistent issues (including Taiwan, North Korea, human rights, etc.), and perceptions and/or misconceptions.
- (3) Improve analytical skills through evaluating competing historical evidence and interpretations.
- (4) Improve analytical writing skills through completing three book reviews and a multi-draft historiographical paper.

Books and Readings

Secondary readings have been selected to introduce the works of major historians and new interpretations of recently declassified archival sources. An important focus will be how scholarly debate and understanding have evolved over time. Along with reading secondary works, students are also encouraged to read relevant primary sources in English and Chinese, including:

Foreign Relations of the United States, available online at
<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/FRUS/Browse.html> (1861–1958/1960)
<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments>

Woodrow Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project digital archives
<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/digital-archive>

The American Presidency Project
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

All reading assignments should be completed **before the class meeting** when we plan to discuss them. I recommend reading the texts in the order they are listed on the syllabus. In addition to pages assigned, MPhil students in particular should read the “acknowledgments” section (or preface) of each monograph. This will help you develop an understanding of the structure and politics of the field.

All listed books have been put on reserve at UST Library.

- Pomfret, John. *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom: America and China, 1776 to the Present*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2016.
- Chen, Jian. *Mao's China and the Cold War*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- Mitter, Rana. *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937–1945*. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.
- Taylor, Jay. *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.

- Tsou, Tang. *America's Failure in China, 1941–50*. University of Chicago Press. 1963.
- Tuchman, Barbara W. *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–45*. New York: Macmillan, 1970.
- 齊錫生. 《劍拔弩張的盟友：太平洋戰爭期間的中美軍事合作關係(1941–1945)》. 台北：中央研究院－聯經出版社, 2011).
- 呂迅, 《大棋局中的国共关系》. 北京: 社会科学文献出版社, 2015.

Assignments and Grading:

Please be forewarned: Students are required to complete a substantial amount of reading and other assignments every week. You are expected to have **completed all readings assigned for that day before class**. Class attendance is required. If you are not committed to consistently performing the following tasks, don't take this class.

Attendance and Participation	10%
Timelines, reading notes & discussion questions	20%
Book reviews x 2	30%
Historiographical essay outline	10%
Historiographical essay	30%

1a. Chronology/Timeline

In the first **10 minutes** of each class, one student will make a concise presentation on the historical background of each time period that we will discuss on the day. The presenter may choose to use Word or PowerPoint document (5 pages of texts maximum, plus maps), but do NOT make it a lecture. The responsible student should post the timeline in Canvas/Discussion on **Canvas by 10:00 pm, Monday**. Responsibility for the timeline and presentation will rotate to ensure that each student will present at least once. All students are required to build their own timelines. You will submit your final timeline at the end of the semester.

1b. Reading notes and discussion questions

For each required text, one student will prepare a one to two-page reading notes with **one or two discussion questions** and post them on **Canvas by 10:00 pm, Monday**. The same student will present that text and lead discussions in class. Other students are expected to spend enough time on that text to be familiar with its basic argument and to be ready to discuss it; but in weeks with a heavy reading load, they will not be expected to cover it with the same degree of thoroughness as the presenter. Responsibility for notes and presentations will rotate to ensure that the task is equally shared.

2. Two book reviews

Each of the book reviews should be approximately **800–1,200 words** in length on a book of your choice. The first paragraph should state the book or article's main argument concisely; the following paragraphs should identify the text's subsidiary arguments, its sources, and its principal contribution(s) to the field. How does this text speak to the issues in question and to the works of other scholars? Finally, clearly state your evaluation of its scholarly contribution.

You are encouraged to consult published reviews, including JSTOR, Project Muse, and CAJ. Remember that all your classmates and the instructor will or have read them. Therefore existing reviews are no substitute for your own reading and analysis.

3. Historiographical essay

This long paper represents your effort to sum up the course by closely considering one or more key themes that run through the course as a whole. You should make a clear argument, support it with evidence from the reading, and come to a clear conclusion. Make sure to push your analysis of your chosen theme beyond the level of your short papers and our weekly class discussions. You will receive NO credit for

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 (9/1):

Introduction

杨奎松, “从历史的眼光来看待中国的民族主义问题,” 《国际政治研究》 2006 年第 1 期, 88–95.

Week 2 (9/8)

The myth of a special relationship

Tsou, *America's Failure in China*

- vii–xiii, 3–30 (Preface and Introduction)
- 219–236 (The source of the general misunderstanding of the nature and intentions of the Chinese Communist Party)

Week 3 (9/15)

1930s, Edgar Snow and *Red Star Over China*

Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Press, 1968)

- 11–18 (Fairbank's introduction, Preface);
- 35–39 (Some unanswered questions);
- 68–76 (The Insurrectionist);
- 89–105 (Soviet Strong Man, Basic Communist Policies);
- 150–155 (Prelude to Revolution);
- 443–444 (On the Comintern, China, and Outer Mongolia)

Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History*.

- Introduction
- Chapter 2 “The Red Star – Revolution by the Book”

*Bernard S. Thomas, *Season of High Adventure: Edgar Snow in China* (University of California Press, 1996), Chapters 8 & 10. [e]

<http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft9p30098q;brand=ucpress>

Week 4 (9/22)

WWII and the Joseph Stilwell-Chiang Kai-shek controversy

Hans van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China* (Routledge, 2003), 1–11 (intro), 19–63 (“Stilwell revisited”).

Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–45* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 396–406 (Ch. 16, “China's Hour at Cairo”)

Mitter, Rana. *Forgotten Ally*, Chapters 12 (Road to Pearl Harbor), 13 (Burma), 17 (Cairo).

Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo*, 245–261 (Cairo).

*Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*, Ch. 20 Burmese Days (280–291); 21 Dangerous Liaisons (292–305).

吕迅, 《大棋局中的國共關係》, 1–76.

*吕迅, “論蔣介石與史迪威矛盾中的中共因素”, 《社會科學研究》(2016.02): 148–158.

*齊錫生, 《劍拔弩張的盟友：太平洋戰爭期間的中美軍事合作關係(1941–1945)》(台北：中央研究院－聯經出版社, 2011), 352–373 (開羅會議).

Week 5 (9/29)

The Chinese Civil War: The “Loss of China” or the “Lost Chance”?

Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*, Ch. 23 The East is Red (320–331); 24 Keys to the Kingdom (332–341); 25 The Beginning of the End (342–355); 26 Mission Impossible (356–363); 27 A Third Force (364–378)

The U.S. Department of State, *The China White Paper*, August 1949.

- Van Slyke's Introduction
- Dean Acheson, Letter of Transmittal (III–XVII)

John S. Service and Joseph Esherick, *Lost Chance in China: The World War II Despatches of John S. Service* (New York: Random House, 1974).

- xiii–xxiii, 387–399 (Intro & Epilogue by Esherick);
- 93–96 (“domestic troubles”), 177–182 (“first impressions”), 288–309 (Mao interview with John S. Service, August 23, 1944; “Communist policy toward the U.S.”).

* 吕迅, 《大棋局中的國共關係》, 211–312 (Chs. 4–6).

* Chang, *The Hijacked War*, Chapter 1 “Embracing or Fleeing the Communists.”

* Chen Jian. *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 1–48 (Intro and Chapters 1–2).

杨奎松, “关于解放战争中的苏联军事援助问题——兼谈治学态度并答刘统先生”, 《近代史研究》 (2001.01): 285–306.

杨奎松, “美苏冷战的起源及对中国革命的影响”, 《历史研究》 (1999.05): 5–22.

Week 6 (10/6)

The Korean War and Taiwan’s “undetermined status”

Tsou, *America’s Failure in China*, 555–591 (Korean War and the Emergence of Communist China as a Great Power)

Shen Zhihua. “Sino-Soviet Relations and the Origins of the Korean War: Stalin’s Strategic Goals in the Far East.” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2, no. 2, (Spring 2000): 44–68. [e]

Hsiao-ting Lin, *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-shek, the United States, and the Making of Taiwan* (Harvard, 2016), 1–34.

Chang, *The Hijacked War*, Chapter 4 “Chiang, MacArthur, Truman, and NSC-81/1.”

Documents:

- Truman’s news conference remarks, January 5, 1950.
<https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/11/presidents-news-conference>
- Truman’s statement on the situation in Korea, June 27, 1950.
- [Statement by the President, Truman on Korea | Wilson Center Digital Archive](#)

10/14. Book Review 1 due

Week 7 (10/13)

The Korean War Over POWs; China, Indonesia, and September 30th Movement, 1965

Chang, *The Hijacked War*, Introduction, Chapter 10 (“Prisoner Repatriation Debated in Washington, Panmunjom, and Taipei”), Conclusion.

Barton J. Bernstein, “The Struggle over the Korean Armistice: Prisoners of Repatriation?” in *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943–1953*, edited by Bruce Cumings (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), 261–307.

* 常成, “新中國’的叛逃者: 韓戰反共戰俘的生死逃亡路, 1950–1954,” 《漢學研究》 34 (2016.02): 245–280.

* 沈志华, “1953 年朝鲜停战: 中苏领导人的政治考虑,” 《世界史》 2001 年第 2 期.

* 杨奎松, “中国对朝鲜停战问题态度的变化”, (韩) 《6-25 战争 50 周年学术研讨会论文集》, 2002. (<http://www.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/PaperCollection/Details.aspx?id=3008>)

* 邓峰, “美英学术界对朝鲜停战谈判的研究”, 《冷战国际史研究》 (2010.02): 160–180.

Week 8 (10/20)

The Cold War, containment, and Jinmen bombardment

Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, Ch. 5 (China and the First Indochina War); Ch. 7 (Beijing and the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1958); Ch. 8 (China’s Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964–1969)

Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*, Ch. 30 (A Cold War) (404–414); 31 (Dead Flowers) (415–425)

杨奎松, “毛泽东与两次台海危机——20 世纪 50 年代中后期中国对美政策变动原因及趋向,” 《史学月刊》, 2003 年第 11, 12 期。

Week 9 (10/27)

1960s, Sino-Soviet split and Sino-US stalemate

Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*, Ch. 32 Bloody Marys (426–431); 33 Pictures of Chairman Mao (432–441); 34 Out of Bad Things (442–451)

Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, *After Learning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011), 247–255 (“Epilogue: the demise of a Communist alliance”)

沈志华,《中苏关系史纲》, 531–540 (中苏同盟破裂的内在原因).

程映虹,“向世界输出革命——‘文革’在亚非拉的影响初探”,《当代中国研究》2006年第3期.

Week 10 (11/3)

Nixon’s visit to China and “Normalization”

Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*, Ch. 35 Not Because We Love Them (452–461); 36 Tacit Allies (462–476)

Chen Jian, 238–276 (Ch. 9 “Sino-American rapprochement, 1969–1972”)

Tyler, Patrick. “The (Ab)normalization of U.S.–Chinese Relations.” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 5 (Sept/Oct 1999): 93–112. [e]

Week 11 (11/10)

The 228 Incident, Taiwanese nationalism, and democratization

Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang, *The Great Exodus from China: Trauma, Memory, and Identity In Modern Taiwan* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2, Epilogue.

Lai Zehan, Ramon Hawley Myers, and E Wei, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 168–196 (“The nature and aftermath of the tragedy”).

C. L. Chiou, Review of *A Tragic Beginning*, *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 28 (July 1992), 206–209.

Linda Chao and Ramon Hawley Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1–18 (“Posing the problem”), 295–304 (Conclusion).

* Film, 悲情城市 *City of Sadness* (1990), directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien 侯孝賢.

Week 12 (11/17)

Reflections and outlook

Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (Summer 1989), pp. 3–18.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>

杨奎松,“新中国的革命外交思想与实践,”《史学月刊》(2010.02): 62–74.

Perry Link, “My Disillusionment: China, 1973,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 22, 2011.

Kurt M. Campbell and Ely Ratner, “The China Reckoning: How Beijing Defied American Expectations,” *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 2 (2018): 60–70.

“How the West Got China Wrong,” *Economist*, Mar. 1, 2018.

Week 13 (11/24)

Final paper presentation and critique

12/5. Book Review 2 due

12/10. Final paper outline due

12/23. Final paper due