
LSE-PKU Summer School 2016

LPS-DV302

China in Comparative Perspective: The Political Economy of Transformation

Course Outline

Instructor

Dr. Mayling Birney, Assistant Professor, Department of International Development, LSE

Dr Mayling Birney is an Assistant Professor in the LSE Department of International Development, and a comparative political economist with a special expertise in China. She is currently finishing a book about China's distinctive form of authoritarian governing, in which she highlights its consequences for stability, justice and reform. Prior to arriving at LSE, Dr. Birney was a fellow and lecturer at Princeton University; and a fellow at the Brookings Institution, a major think tank in Washington DC. She previously served as a Legislative Aide in the United States Senate. She holds a PhD in Political Science from Yale University, an MSc in Economics from LSE, and a BA in Government from Harvard University.

Course Summary

This course considers China's political, economic, and social developments in a comparative and theoretical perspective. We examine China's experiences in relation to experiences across the globe, engaging current controversies about the best approaches to international development. Students will gain a deeper political economy understanding of how and why China has developed; China's capacities and possible pathways for approaching future challenges; and whether and how China may be a model for other developing countries.

The course opens with consideration of the causes and obstacles for development around the world, delves into China's experiences, and then relates these back to debates within international development. We explore the huge shifts in global economic performance and global political structures over time, and a much larger transformation of personal fortunes since about 1800. At that time, average life expectancies at birth were rarely higher than 35 years anywhere in the world. French men and women born in 1789 could expect to live on average only for 28 years. Today, average life expectancy at birth in France is 82 years, while in China it is 75 years. We focus on how modern China has achieved exceptional reductions in poverty and broader development, examining both its uneven experiences pre-1978 and its exceptional economic growth story post-1978. At the same time, we consider the political, economic, and social challenges it has and will face. These experiences are related to competing theories of development.

As we explore China's transformation, we reflect on questions relevant to development around the world: Are some countries doomed to remain poor because of their climates or physical geography, or indeed their locations? What forms of politics or 'governance' are most supportive of sustained economic growth and other development goals? What drives authoritarian stability, governance reforms, and/or democratization, and what determines whether these are successful? Is economic growth best promoted by market and trade development, economic independence, structural transformations and/or state-directed approaches? Theory and evidence drawn from other countries, such as India, add additional perspective on China's experiences.

Along the way, we ask whether developing countries can really expect to learn important lessons from China. Do different countries face similar types of development problems? If so, would they be able to apply the same solutions? We conclude by evaluating whether and how China might successfully engage key future challenges, such as heightened inequalities, diversity-related tensions, environmental protection, corruption, shadow banking, promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation, and a rising global impact.

Sample Reading List

- Daron Acemoglu & James Robinson (2012). *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity & Poverty*. Crown Business.
- Barry Naughton (2010). "China's Distinctive System: can it be a model for others?" *Journal of Contemporary China*, 19(65): 437-460.
- June Teufel Dreyer (2014). *China's Political System: Modernization & Tradition*, 9th edition, Pearson, Chapters 5, 6 (PRC Politics Under Mao 1949-1976, PRC Politics in the Post-Mao Era 1976-2010)
- Pranab Bardhan (2010) *Awakening Giants: Assessing the Economic Rise of China and India*, Princeton University Press, Chapters 1, 10
- Andrew Wedeman (2013). *Double Paradox: Rapid Growth & Rising Corruption in China*. Chapters 1-2 (A Double Paradox & Developmental Corruption), pp. 1-51.
- Mayling Birney (2014). "Decentralization and veiled corruption under China's 'rule of mandates.'" *World Development*.
- Dani Rodrik (2008). *One Economics Many Recipes: Globalization, Institutions & Economic Growth*, Princeton University Press, Chapter 1: 50 Years of Growth (and Lack Thereof)
- *The Economist* (2012). Special Report: "State Capitalism." January 21, 2012.
- Philip Pan (2008). *Out of Mao's Shadow: The Struggle for a Soul of a New China*. (Simon and Schuster) Chapter 8: "The Honest Doctor," pp. 199-234.

Prerequisites

None

Assessment

Essay (1500 words):	50%
Final Exam:	50%

Course Overview (Provisional)

Session 1 – Development around the World: Causes and Obstacles

Session 2 – China's Political, Economic & Social Development Before 1978

Session 3 – China's Political, Economic & Social Development in the Post-1978 Reform Era

Session 4 – Democracy, Authoritarianism, and Development: Perspectives on China

Session 5 – Democratization, Authoritarian Stability, and Regime Change: Perspectives on China

Session 6 – Governance, Anticorruption, and Rule of Law Reforms: Perspectives on China

Session 7 – Economic Growth – Neoclassical & Dependency Theories: Focus on India

Session 8 – Economic Growth – State-Directed Approaches: The China Model Debate

Session 9 – China's Future Challenges

Session 10 – Comparative Developmental Lessons from China // Review for Exam