

Oberlin College
Department of Politics

Politics 313: Seminar: The Transition to Capitalism in China

Spring 2008

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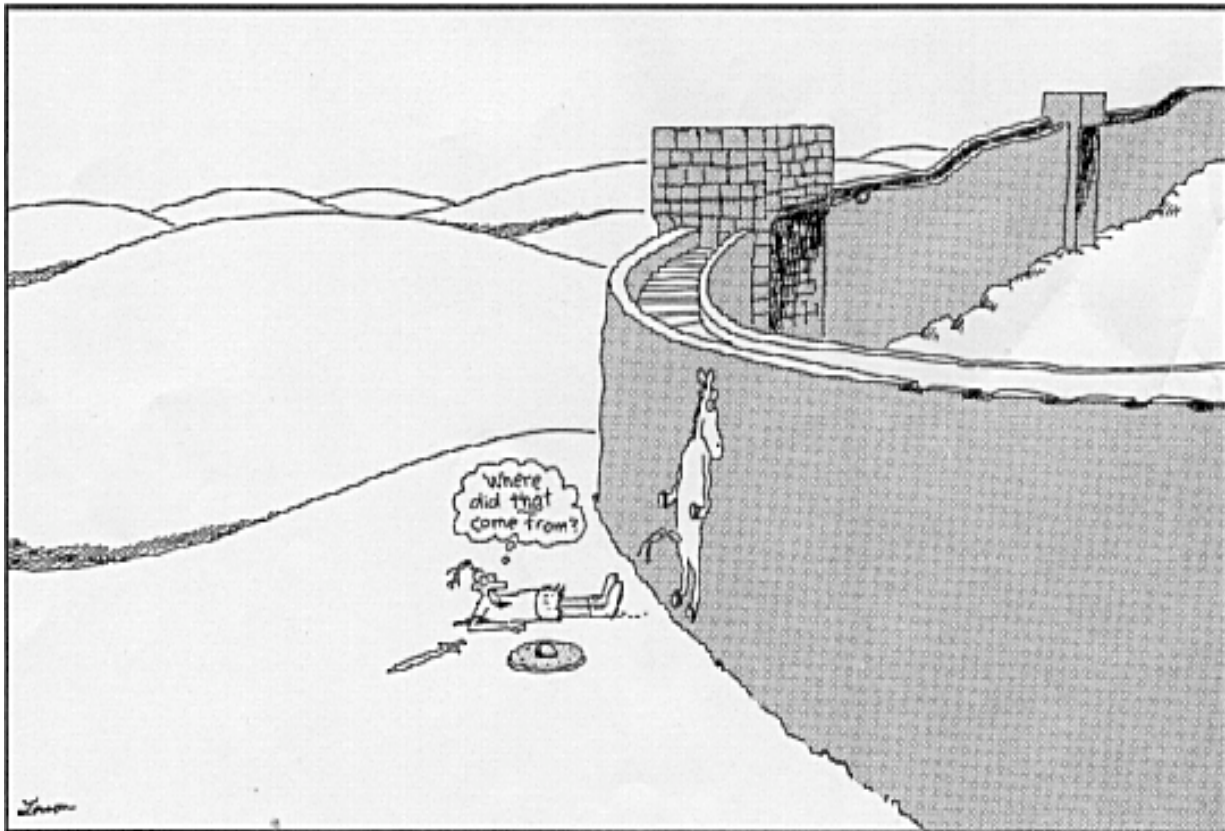
Website: [www.oberlin.edu/faculty/mblecher/
m-blech.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/faculty/mblecher/m-blech.html)

Office hours: Tuesday 3:00-4:00 &

Friday 1:00-2:30 (see signup

sheet outside my office door)

Class meets Tuesday,
1:00-2:50, King 235



Circa 300 B.C.: The first barbarian invader reaches the Great Wall of China

We can forgive Larson's hapless equestrian. China has surprised many people — both its own leaders and people as well as foreign observers, including your professor — more often than most of them care to remember, and its recent history poses a profound set of puzzles. The Chinese Communist Party and its government, the People's Republic of China, comprise the largest surviving socialist state in the world, one of only four of any size. It is a rather unlikely survivor. Between 1949 and 1976, it presided over perhaps the most tempestuous of the world's state socialisms. Nowhere — not in Eastern Europe, the USSR, Cuba, Vietnam or North Korea — did anything occur like the Great Leap Forward, when the country tried to jump headlong into communism, or the Cultural Revolution, when some leaders of the socialist state called on the masses of people to rise up against the socialist state's own bureaucracy. Indeed, the Cultural Revolution brought China to the brink of civil war. The radical policies of the Maoist period were extremely innovative and iconoclastic, and they accomplished a great deal; but they also severely undermined the foundations of Chinese state socialism. Yet somehow it survived. Then in 1979 the Chinese state switched course, pioneering broad-gauged structural reform way ahead of any other socialist country. Economic forms that were quite inconsistent historically and theoretically with rule by a communist party and its government proliferated, taking mixed "market socialist" forms in the 1980s that developed into full-fledged capitalism by the latter 1990s. 1989 showed us that even these early forces of halfhearted "reform" almost overcame the socialist state. Indeed, the comparison with Russia and Eastern Europe was stunning: in China a huge phalanx of furious citizens engaged in massive demonstrations all over the country lasting almost two months. Nothing like this occurred in Russia and Eastern Europe, where gradual political openings were being contemplated and embarked upon. Yet state socialism there would be brought down amidst popular movements that were minuscule in scope and duration compared with the Chinese. But again the People's Republic of China managed to survive, this time by moving more sternly, decisively and successfully against popular demands for reform than any other socialist state did at the time. Starting in the 1990s, China began the transition to full-fledged capitalism — interestingly and paradoxically, without the massive outburst of protest seen in 1989 after a decade of more tentative change. What can be called capitalist authoritarianism — China's combination of repressive politics and free-market economics — has not just lasted a good deal longer than most observers expected, but it seems unexpectedly resilient at least for the foreseeable future. This has defied the confident theories of western liberals and modernization theorists — including the US government — who have argued that capitalism and markets go hand in hand with democracy (even as the individualism and the rise of a middle class, which are meant to stimulate democracy, have indeed occurred). Indeed, China's capitalist authoritarianism has not just survived, but has chalked up significant successes. It has produced repeated spurts of economic growth that have often surprised even its own promoters. Capitalist authoritarianism has also made China a more influential force on the world stage than ever before in its history.

Yet, today Chinese capitalist authoritarianism is also shot through with contradictions. The country's overall quiescence does not necessarily indicate political stability or social peace; on the contrary, protests, strikes, riots and small insurrections have become a daily fact of life. Nor do China's palpable industriousness and economic dynamism necessarily reflect the happy equilibrium of an upward spiral of development. Will China consolidate capitalist authoritarianism or break with it? If it makes a break, will the process be smooth and gradual, or rough and sudden? And what would emerge from such a break? Does China hold out the prospect of a "third way" — a hybrid combining in a new way features of state socialism and capitalism? China is too complex, its present situation too unprecedented, and social science too indeterminate to permit easy or sure answers. But to make educated guesses, we need to analyze the many contradictory economic, social and political forces at play. Some of them are the subject of Politics 313.

During the first half of the seminar, we will read, contemplate, and discuss some of the best new scholarship on various specialized topics related to Chinese society and politics. In the second half you will work on research papers on a topic of interest to you, which need not be related to the particular issues we will have studied. In our final weeks, you will present to the seminar early drafts of your research papers, to be circulated in advance. You will also read classmates' drafts and contribute to discussions that will help all of us learn about the subject matter of the various papers, while also providing suggestions to each author about ways to develop the research paper in progress. Finished seminar papers revised on the basis of class discussion and my comments will be submitted at the end of the semester. I will present some of my own work in progress as well.

Effective learning requires a strategy of active study, thinking and interchange. To encourage reflective reading, by 9 AM on Tuesday of each week you will write on our Blackboard blog a short reflection on the book or draft research paper we will have read; you are also invited to comment there on what others in the class have written there. You may also use the forum to raise questions on which you would like help from me or from fellow students. You should also read the forum on Tuesday before class, to find out what everyone else in the class is thinking. All this preparatory work will help make our discussions more productive. I also expect you to participate regularly in class discussions, which are the lifeblood of a seminar.

I will evaluate your work in Politics 313 according to the following weightings:

Weekly computer forum comments	25%
Quality (not quantity) of participation in class	25%
Paper	50%

PLEASE TAKE CAREFUL NOTE OF THESE PROPORTIONS. They reflect my conviction that the week-to-week process of participating in the course through reading, thinking and contributing to everyone else's learning in discussion is as important to your learning as the paper you will write. In the past students who assumed that the paper was their only responsibility for the course were surprised at the end of the semester. ☺

Please consult the schematic chronology (below) and the guide to the rudiments of Chinese pronunciation (below). The latter will help you to discharge your responsibility as advanced students of China to pronounce Chinese words and names properly.

You should keep up with the news from China. There are several possibilities:

§ The best China journalism in major US papers can be found *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*, all available in Mudd or on line. Chingching Ni, a writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, is a veteran on Politics 110, which, I like to think, helps account for her penchant for stories about the human costs of China's very rapid development.

§ Official news from China can be found in the *Beijing Review* (a weekly magazine, in Mudd) and *China Daily*. They are not as boring and slanted as they used to be. The *China Daily* is available on line: <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/en/home/>

§ Yahoo provides a reasonably comprehensive source of Western wire-service reports at: <http://asia.news.yahoo.com/cn/>

§ So does the *Financial Times*: <feed://www.ft.com/rss/world/asiapacific/china>

§ The Chinese Embassy to the US web site contains official government news releases and other basic information): <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/>

Newspapers and cyberspace can provide timely information; but information is not knowledge. For that, we still need analyses contained in books. Each year Americans spend five times as much on dog food as on college books. Politics 313 is doing its part to help us get priorities right. The following books are available for purchase at the Oberlin Bookstore:

- Marc Blecher, *China Against the Tides* (recommended for students with little background on contemporary China)
- Mary Gallagher, *Contagious Capitalism: Globalization and the Politics of Labor in China*
- Ching-kwan Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*
- Ching-kwan Lee, ed., *Working in China: Ethnographies of Labor and Workplace Transformation*
- Elizabeth J Perry and Mark Selden, eds., *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance* (2nd edition [*Nb. Do not get the first edition.*])
- William Strunk and E.B. White, *Elements of Style* (any edition)
- Kellee S. Tsai, *Capitalism Without Democracy: The Private Sector in Contemporary China*

Schedule of Classes, Topics and Assignments

February 5: Introduction

February 12: Overview of China's Political Economy; Historical Perspective on China's Transition to Capitalism

Marc Blecher, *China Against the Tides* (second edition **ONLY**), chapters 3, 4, 6, 7

Richard Walker and Daniel Buck, "The Chinese Road: Cities in the Transition to Capitalism" (posted on Blackboard)

February 19: The Political Economy of the Private Sector

Kellee S. Tsai, CAPITALISM WITHOUT DEMOCRACY: The Private Sector in Contemporary China

February 26: Global Capital, National Capital, and the Transition to a Capitalist Labor Market

Mary Gallagher, *Contagious Capitalism: Globalization and the Politics of Labor in China*

March 4: Work in the New Capitalist Economy

Ching-kwan Lee, ed., *Working in China: Ethnographies of Labor and Workplace Transformation*

March 11: Labor Protest in the New Capitalist Economy

Ching-kwan Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt*

MARCH 18: CLASS CANCELED DUE TO MY PROFESSIONAL TRAVEL.

Preliminary research paper prospectus due.

April 1: Protest in the New Capitalist Economy

Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden, eds., *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance* (2nd edition [*Nb. Do not get the first edition.*])

April 8: Research proposals due April 7; individual meetings to discuss them

April 15: Annotated bibliographies due April 14; individual meetings to discuss them

April 22: Detailed outlines due April 21; individual meetings to discuss them

April 29: Class presentations of research paper complete drafts

May 6: Class presentations of research paper complete drafts; Conclusion
 Marc Blecher, *China Against the Tides*, chapter 8.

MAY 13, 4:30 PM: PAPERS DUE

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Schematic Chronology Of Chinese Politics

c. 500 B.C.E.	Confucius (and other Zhou thinkers, including Daoists & Legalists)
c. 220 B.C.E.	First Emperor of Qin unifies China, makes virtual revolution
c. 200 B.C.E.	
- 200 A.D.	Han Dynasty founded (and Buddhism from India)
c. 600 A.D.	Turkic ruling houses regenerate the empire in Sui and Tang
c. 750	Mid-Tang revolution (capita taxes to land, migration north to south)
c. 1000-1300	Song (policy-making traditions; culture stronger than army)
1368	Ming expels the Mongols' harsh and short Yuan Dynasty
1644	Manchus come to power after the Ming falls in a peasant rebellion
1840	Opium War (unequal Treaty of Nanjing in 1842)
1850-64	Taiping Rebellion (Han gentry/proto-warlord armies save the Qing)
1895	Sino-Japanese War ends with China's loss
1898	Hundred Days of Emperor's reform ended by Empress Dowager & friends
1905	Confucian exams abolished for posts: Sun Yatsen founds proto-Guomindang
1911	Fall of the empire; Republican Revolution
1915	21 Demands (Japan wants China as protectorate); Yuan wants the throne
1919	May 4 Movement protests Versailles gift of Shandong enclaves to Japan
1921	Chinese Communist Party founded (then a minor event, in Shanghai)
1923	First United Front of Guomindang and Communist Party (Sun-Joffe Agreement)
1925	Sun Yatsen dies
1926	Beginning of Northern Expedition of Jiang Kaishek to unify warlords under Guomindang
1927	Jiang attacks Communist Party, forces it to countryside, begins "Nanjing Decade"
1929-34	Jiangxi Soviet (land reforms) (Jiang's "encirclement campaigns")
1932	Japan seizes Manchuria (N.E. China), installs Qing emperor there
1934-35	Long March ("go north to resist Japan"), Mao becomes head of Communist Party

- 1936 Xi'an Incident (anti-Japanese Guomindang generals kidnap Jiang temporarily)
- 1937 Japan invades N. China Plain & coasts; Guomindang-Communist Party "Second United Front"
- 1941 Pearl Harbor (U.S. enters war); Guomindang-Communist Party military conflict in Anhui
- 1945 Japanese surrender; cities given to Jiang's Army: civil war resumes
- 1948 People's Liberation Army attacks in North and Central China; U.S. aids Jiang
- 1949 "Liberation": October 1 founding of People's Republic of China
- 1950 Korean War (June 25; China enters, October 25); land, labor, & marriage laws
- 1951 Main land reform; patriotic bourgeois support for CCP in war; truce talks
- 1952 "Three-anti/five-anti" to purify & scare bureaucrats/businessmen in cities
- 1953 Lower-stage agricultural coöps begun: mutual aid _ pooling inputs; Stalin dies; Korea truce
- 1954 Constitution, centralization; rations; Gao & Rao (regional leaders) purged
- 1955 Higher-stage agricultural coöps; First Five Year Plan announced
- 1956 Hundred Flowers campaign
- 1957 Antirightist Campaign; send-down
- 1958 Great Leap Forward (oversized communes, new factory capital, mobilization)
- 1959 Defense Minister Peng Dehuai purged for criticizing Mao; revolt in Tibet
- 1960 Famine in post-Leap economic depression; Soviet technicians leave China
- 1961 Retrenchment to smaller communes, last of "3 bad years"; Cuba, Berlin Wall
- 1962 Border war with India
- 1963 Socialist Education Campaign: workers & peasants advantaged in jobs, education
- 1964 Atom bomb successfully tested; army organizes movements for proletarian pride
- 1965 "On Dismissal of Hai Rural-urban inequality"/"People's War" (pre-Cultural Revolution radical tracts, Yao/Lin)
- 1966 Red guards from cadres' families, then among ex-bourgeois & contract labor
- 1967 Cultural Revolution at height: red guard factional coalitions, civil wars
- 1968 Clean class ranks: soldier-worker-cadre teams force order; USSR invades Prague
- 1969 Lin Biao named "Mao's successor"; May 7 cadre schools; Ussuri River fighting
- 1970 Zhou Enlai-Mao Zedong political coöperation: Mao supports "Gang of 4" too

- 1971 Lin Biao's fall; Kissinger's secret flight to Peking; China takes UN seat
- 1972 People's Liberation Army budget cut; official violence ebbs a bit; Shanghai Communiqué
- 1973 Commanders shifted among military regions: Deng reappears (purged in '66)
- 1974 "Criticize Confucius" (an allegory: radicals criticize Zhou); leaders ill
- 1975 Deng Xiaoping quasi-premier for Zhou's Four Modernizations (removed, 1/76)
- 1976 Zhou, Mao die; Hua Guofeng Premier (2/76), Party Chair (9/76); "Gang" jailed (10/76)
- 1977 Four Modernizations new line, but under old-style leader Hua; admission exams for colleges
- 1978 Deng in charge at Third Plenum; "democracy wall"; Carter-Hua Communique (US-PRC relations)
- 1979 "Rightists" exonerated: rural reforms extend; Vietnam invasion
- 1980 "Gang of Four" tried: some communes become townships; Zhao Ziyang Premier
- 1981 Rural incomes up, amid urban shortages: Hu Yaobang replaces Hua as Party Chair
- 1982 US defense weapons to Taiwan, but US-China agreement on fewer future sales
- 1983 Spiritual Pollution Campaign stirs doubts in Communist Party, but campaign ends soon
- 1984 Industrial reforms announced; Hong Kong accord
- 1985 Old cadres retired at autumn congress; Gorbachev heads USSR
- 1986 Students protest delay of political reforms, but Communist Party is slow to accommodate them.
- 1987 Dismissal of Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang; movement against bourgeois liberalization
- 1988 Abortive price reform; inflation; beginning of economic austerity
- 1989 Broad popular protests followed by repression and martial law; rise of hard-line leadership
- 1990 Hard-liners in power
- 1991 Consoliation of post-1989 leadership; economic austerity
- 1992 Economic austerity ends; debate on appropriate pace of growth
- 1993 Some releases from prison of 1989 protesters; economic overheating; rural discontent erupts
- 1994 High inflation; continuing expressions of discontent
- 1995 Corruption a major issue; death of Chen Yun; economic soft landing; Taiwan Straits heat up
- 1996 Economy stabilizes; Taiwan Straits hot; US-China relations difficult
- 1997 Death of Deng Xiaoping; return of Hong Kong; Jiang Zemin consolidates the country's leadership at the 15th Party Congress, and then visits US

- 1998 At the National People's Congress, Premier Li Peng is the first top Chinese leader in history to vacate his position in accordance with the Constitution; President Clinton visits China; hardliners rise at end of the year
- 1999 China tense in face of political demonstrations by workers and *Falungong* spiritual practitioners; US bombs Chinese embassy in Belgrade, provoking popular patriotic outrage and state-approved popular demonstrations; Politics 313 tries once again to grasp Chinese politics and political economy
- 2000 Hardliners remain in control, keeping political atmosphere repressive
- 2001 US-China relations tense due to collision of military aircraft; China joins WTO
- 2002 In smooth transition, Hu Jintao succeeds Jiang Zemin as Party General Secretary; massive labor protest in northeast
- 2003 Hu consolidates power, appoints Wen Jiabao as Prime Minister
- 2004 Jiang Zemin resigns Military Commission chair, marking full transition to new generation of leadership; rapid economic growth continues
- 2005 Anti-Japanese protests; major chemical spill exposes political and policy weakness; Bush visits; economy continues to grow
- 2006-7 Continuing economic growth and political authoritarianism; new labor laws passed
- 2008 China hosts the Olympics

Guide To Chinese Romanizations

As a student of Chinese politics, it's your responsibility to try to pronounce Chinese words correctly. There are three major systems of romanization used in the general literature. The first can be called the "post office system", though it is totally unsystematic. It is mainly used for place names, such as Peking, Canton, and Amoy.

The other two are Wade-Giles, which was commonly used through the 1970s, and pinyin, which is the official system of the People's Republic, and has now almost completely replaced Wade-Giles. You will have to discern which one your source is using by inspection. (Most of our readings will use pinyin.) The pinyin system is distinguishable by any of the following: x, q, z, zh, r, g, d, b, ong. By contrast, the Wade-Giles system contains apostrophes and hyphens.

Once you have deduced which system a text uses, you apply a few rules. The main general rule is that practically all words you see, except family names, contain two syllables. Sound them as containing two syllables, even if the letters suggest three or more to you. A few system-specific rules are noted below. The left side of each equation is the romanization, as you might see it on a page; the right is a usual and approximate English equivalent sound.

PINYIN

x = sy z = dz zh = j c = ts ong = ung ian = ien ui = way

i is variable: "-ee" after most initials; "-r" after ch, r, sh, zh; or a deep "-uh" or no sound after c, s, & z.

WADE-GILES

When not followed by apostrophes: k = g p = b t = d ts = dz ch = j. When followed by apostrophes, these all have English sounds.

Also: j = r ih = r ui = way yu = yo yü = yü hs = sy