

Course Form for PKU Summer School International 2026

Course Title	Title in English: Understanding China's Governance: Theory and Methods
	Title in Chinese: 理解中国治理：理论与方法
Teacher	Professor Yanjun LIU
First day of classes	July 20, 2026
Last day of classes	July 31, 2026
Course Credit	3 credits
Course Description	
<p>Objective: This course introduces core theories and methods in political analysis through the lens of China's governance. It aims to (1) provide students with major analytical frameworks for understanding governance—state capacity, policy process, representation/responsiveness, and state–society relations— (2) situate China in comparative and global perspective, and (3) train students to design and evaluate rigorous research on governance in China and beyond using appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods.</p>	
Pre-requisites /Target audience	
No prerequisites. Open to undergraduate and entry-level graduate students interested in China's governance, comparative politics, and political analysis.	
Proceeding of the Course	
<p>The two-week course combines ten morning lectures (9:00–12:00) with five afternoon learning sessions (LS, 13:00–17:00). The afternoon sessions include two end-of-week student panel presentations and discussions based on assigned readings, two on-site documentary /film screenings with short written commentaries, and one field trip in Beijing.</p>	
<u>Week 1</u>	
July 20 (Mon): Lecture 1	
July 21 (Tue): Lecture 2	
July 22 (Wed): Lecture 3; LS1 – Field trip	
July 23 (Thu): Lecture 4; LS2 – Documentary screening and commentary	
July 24 (Fri): Lecture 5; LS3 – Week-1 student panel presentations and discussion	
<u>Week 2</u>	
July 27 (Mon): Lecture 6	
July 28 (Tue): Lecture 7	
July 29 (Wed): Lecture 8; LS4 – Film screening and commentary	
July 30 (Thu): Lecture 9; LS5 – Week-2 student panel presentations and discussion	
July 31 (Fri): Lecture 10	

Assignments (essay or other forms)	
Readings will be assigned in advance of each lecture. Students are expected to attend all morning lectures, participate in afternoon learning sessions, and complete a final paper.	
Evaluation Details	
<p>Morning lecture attendance: 20%</p> <p>Afternoon learning activities: 40%</p> <p>Final term paper: 40%</p>	
<p><u>Attendance policy</u></p> <p>Students are expected to attend all lectures on time. Absences without penalty are allowed only for illness, with a signed written explanation submitted afterward. For other reasons, a written request must be submitted in advance. Each unexcused absence will result in a 10% reduction in the attendance score, up to the total of ten lectures.</p>	
<p><u>Final term paper</u></p> <p>The final paper may take the form of a book review essay, a research design, or a complete research/analytical paper. It should be 3,000–5,000 words. Evaluation will be based on topic relevance and originality (20%), theoretical and/or empirical quality (25%), rigor of reasoning and analysis (25%), writing and presentation (15%), and organization and format, including references and bibliography (15%).</p>	
Text Books and Reading Materials	
There is no required textbook. Readings are assigned for each lecture: those marked with an asterisk (*) must be completed in advance, while the remaining readings are recommended as time permits and will be used for end-of-week student panel presentations and discussions.	
Academic Integrity (If necessary)	
Plagiarism is strictly prohibited. Plagiarism is defined as presenting others' work as one's own. All non-common-knowledge ideas or materials must be properly acknowledged. Any evidence of plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and will be reported to the university authorities.	
CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to adjustment)	
Session 1: Introduction; What is Political Science?	Date: July 20, Mon.
【Description of the Session】	
This session introduces political science as a scientific approach to studying power, institutions, and collective outcomes. It clarifies how political science differs from normative theory and policy advocacy, and outlines what it means to “think like a political scientist” and analyze state governance phenomenon.	
【Questions】	
What distinguishes scientific explanation from opinion or normative argument? What kinds of questions are central to political science? How do theory, evidence, and causality relate to one another?	

<p>【Readings】 *Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. <i>Principles of Comparative Politics</i>. CQ Press, 2017, ch.1-3.</p>	
<p>Session 2: The Modern State and Varieties of Regime</p>	<p>Date: July 21, Tue.</p>
<p>【Description of the Session】 This session examines the origins of the modern state and the diversity of political regimes. It introduces core theories of state formation and compares political institutional logics across historical and global contexts.</p>	
<p>【Questions】 What defines a modern state? How do regimes differ in how they govern? What explains different political regimes across the globe?</p>	
<p>【Readings】 *Clark, William Roberts, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder. <i>Principles of Comparative Politics</i>. CQ Press, 2017, ch.4, 6-7.</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i> Tilly Charles, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in Peter Evans, et al. eds., <i>Bringing the State Back In</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 169-186. Dincecco, Mark, and Yuhua Wang. "Violent Conflict and Political Development Over the Long Run: China versus Europe." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 21, no. 1 (2018): 341-358. Stasavage, David. <i>The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today</i>. Princeton University Press, 2020, chs.1, 5-6. Przeworski, Adam, and Fernando Limongi. "Modernization: Theories and Facts." <i>World Politics</i> 49, no. 2 (1997): 155-183. Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. <i>The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty</i>. Penguin, 2019, Chapters 1-2.</p>	
<p>Session 3: State Capacity and the Chinese State</p>	<p>Date: July 22, Wed.</p>
<p>【Description of the Session】 This session introduces state capacity as a key concept in comparative politics and applies it to China. It examines major dimensions of state capacity and situates China’s experience in historical and cross-national perspective.</p>	
<p>【Questions】 What is state capacity and how can it be measured? In what ways is the Chinese state strong or constrained? How does China’s experience inform theories of state building?</p>	
<p>【Readings】 *Dincecco, Mark, and Yuhua Wang. “State Capacity in Historical Political Economy.” In Jeffery A. Jenkins and Jared Rubin eds. <i>The Oxford Handbook of Historical Political Economy</i> (Oxford University Press, 2024), pp. 253-270.</p>	

- *Hanson, Jonathan K., and Rachel Sigman. "Leviathan's Latent Dimensions: Measuring State Capacity for Comparative Political Research." *Journal of Politics* 83, no. 4 (2021): 1495-1510.
- *Heilmann, Sebastian, and Elizabeth J. Perry, eds. *Mao's Invisible Hand: The Political Foundations of Adaptive Governance in China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011, Chapters 1-2.

Recommended:

- Mann, Michael. "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives européennes de sociologie* 25, no. 2 (1984): 185-213.
- Mann, Michael. "Infrastructural Power Revisited." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43, no. 3 (2008): 355-365.
- Lee, Melissa M., and Nan Zhang. 2017. "Legibility and the Informational Foundations of State Capacity." *Journal of Politics* 79(1): 118-132.
- Chang, Charles, and Yuhua Wang. "The Reach of the State." *Comparative Political Studies* 57, no. 8 (2024): 1243-1275.
- Migdal, Joel S. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton University Press, 1988, Part One.
- Bell, Daniel A. "Legalist Confucianism: What's Living and What's Dead." In Zhengxu Wang ed. *The Long East Asia: The Premodern State and Its Contemporary Impacts*, pp. 231-248. Singapore: Springer Nature, 2023.
- Bell, Daniel A. *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy*. Princeton University Press, 2016, Chapters 2-3.
- Bell, Daniel A., and Chenyang Li, eds. *The East Asian Challenge for Democracy: Political Meritocracy in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 2013, Introduction and Chapters 9, 12.
- Perry, Elizabeth J. "Studying Chinese Politics: Farewell to Revolution?" *The China Journal* 57 (2007): 1-22.
- Alesina, Alberto, et al. "Persistence through Revolutions." National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No.27053, August 2020.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way. "The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes." *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3 (2013): 5-17.
- Evans, Peter, and James E. Rauch. "Bureaucracy and growth: a cross-national analysis of the effects of 'Weberian' state structures on economic growth." *American Sociological Review* 64, no. 5 (1999): 748-765.
- Bizzarro, Fernando, et al. "Party Strength and Economic Growth." *World Politics* 70, no. 2 (2018): 275-320.
- Fravel, M. Taylor, Melanie Manion, and Yuhua Wang. "A 'China in the World' Paradigm for Scholarship." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 56, no. 1 (2021): 1-17.

【Afternoon Learning Sessions】

Chinese History & Political Culture: Field Trip

Session 4: The Politics of Economic Development—China and Beyond	Date: July 23, Thu.
<p>【Description of the Session】 This session surveys major political explanations of economic development and applies them to China and other late-developing regions. It focuses on how institutions, political incentives, and state strategies shape development paths and outcomes.</p>	
<p>【Questions】 What are the main political theories of economic development? How does China’s development experience compare with other regions and late-developing countries (LDCs)?</p>	
<p>【Readings】 *Besley, Timothy, and Torsten Persson. <i>Pillars of Prosperity: The Political Economics of Development Clusters</i>. Princeton University Press, 2011. Chapter 1. *Valenzuela, J. Samuel, and Arturo Valenzuela. "Modernization and Dependency: Alternative Perspectives in the Study of Latin American Underdevelopment." <i>Comparative Politics</i> 10, no. 4 (1978): 535-557. *Xu, Chenggang. "The Fundamental Institutions of China’s Reforms and Development." <i>Journal of Economic Literature</i> 49, no. 4 (2011): 1076-1151.</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i> North, Douglass C., and Barry R. Weingast. "Constitutions and Commitment: The evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England." <i>Journal of Economic History</i> 49, no. 4 (1989): 803-832. Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." <i>American Economic Review</i> 91, no. 5 (2001): 1369-1401. Haggard, Stephan. <i>Pathways from the Periphery: The Politics of Growth in the Newly Industrializing Countries</i>. Cornell University Press, 1990, Introduction and Chapters 1-2. Wade, Robert. "East Asia’s Economic Success: Conflicting Perspectives, Partial Insights, Shaky Evidence." <i>World Politics</i> 44, no. 2 (1992): 270-320. Oi, Jean C. "Fiscal reform and the economic foundations of local state corporatism in China." <i>World Politics</i> 45, no. 1 (1992): 99-126. Chan, Hon S. "Cadre Personnel Management in China: The Nomenklatura System, 1990–1998." <i>The China Quarterly</i> 179 (2004): 703-734. Li, Hongbin, and Li-An Zhou. "Political Turnover and Economic Performance: The Incentive Role of Personnel Control in China." <i>Journal of Public Economics</i> 89, no. 9-10 (2005): 1743-1762. Kennedy, Scott. "The Myth of the Beijing Consensus." <i>Journal of Contemporary China</i> 19, no. 65 (2010): 461-477. Ong, Lynette H. "Between Developmental and Clientelist States: Local State-Business Relationships in China." <i>Comparative Politics</i> 44, no. 2 (2012): 191-209. Pearson, Margaret M., Meg Rithmire, and Kellee S. Tsai. "The Political Economy of</p>	

Chinese Development,” In Marino Regini ed. *Handbook of Comparative Political Economy*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2025, pp. 340-358.

Pearson, Margaret M., Meg Rithmire, and Kellee Tsai. *The State and Capitalism in China*. Cambridge University Press, 2023.

Ang, Yuen Yuen. *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*. Cornell University Press, 2016, Introduction.

【Afternoon Learning Sessions】

Chinese Political Economy: Documentary Screening and Commentary

Session 5: Representation, Responsiveness, and the Policy Process in China

Date: July 24, Fri.

【Description of the Session】

This session examines how political representation, government responsiveness, and policy making operate in Chinese and other political systems. It focuses on institutional channels of representation and the role of policy experimentation in shaping governance outcomes.

【Questions】

What channels of representation exist in China? When and why do governments respond to citizen demands? How does policy experimentation shape governance?

【Readings】

- *Grossman, Guy, and Tara Slough. "Government Responsiveness in Developing Countries." *Annual Review of Political Science* 25, no. 1 (2022): 131-153.
- *Manion, Melanie. "Local Congressional Representation in China." *The China Quarterly* 218 (2014): 311-338.
- *Heilmann, Sebastian. "Policy Experimentation in China's Economic Rise." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43, no. 1 (2008): 1-26.

Recommended:

- Hou, Yue. *The Private Sector in Public Office: Selective Property Rights in China*. Cambridge University Press, 2019, Chapters 1-3.
- Truex, Rory. "Understanding Delay in the Chinese Legislative System." *Comparative Political Studies* 53, no. 9 (2020): 1455-1492.
- He, Baogang, and Mark E. Warren. "The Deliberative Turn in Chinese Political Development." *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 2 (2011): 269-289.
- Distelhorst, Greg, and Yue Hou. "Constituency Service under Rule: Evidence from China." *Journal of Politics* 79, no. 3 (2017): 1024-1040.
- Jiang, Junyan, Tianguang Meng, and Qing Zhang. "From Internet to social safety net: The policy consequences of online participation in China." *Governance* 32, no. 3 (2019): 531-546.
- Balla, Steven J. et al. "Notice the comment? Chinese government responsiveness to public participation in the policymaking process." *Governance* 38, no. 2 (2025): e12901.
- Li, Zeren, and Shenghua Lu. "Brokerage and Patronage: Regional Chambers of Commerce and Firm Subsidies in China." *American Journal of Political Science* (2025): 1-18.
- Heilmann, Sebastian. *Red Swan: How Unorthodox Policy-Making Facilitated China's Rise*.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2018, Introduction and Chapters 1-2. Wang, Shaoda, and David Y. Yang. "Policy Experimentation in China: The Political Economy of Policy Learning." *Journal of Political Economy* 133, no. 7 (2025): 2180-2228.

【Afternoon Learning Sessions】

Week-1 student panel presentations and discussion

Session 6: Civic Participation and Social Governance in China

Date: July 27, Mon.

【Description of the Session】

This session examines civic participation, contention, and grassroots governance in contemporary China. It focuses on how the state accommodates, manages, and channels participation while maintaining social order and regime stability.

【Questions】

What forms of civic participation are tolerated or encouraged in China? How do citizens engage the state? How does participation affect governance outcomes and regime adaptability?

【Readings】

- *Stromseth, Jonathan R., Edmund J. Malesky, and Dimitar D. Gueorguiev. *China's Governance Puzzle*. Cambridge University Press, 2017, Chapters 1 and 5-8.
- *O'Brien, Kevin J. "Rightful Resistance." *World Politics* 49, no. 1 (1996): 31-55.
- *Spires, Anthony J. "Contingent Symbiosis: Understanding China's Grassroots NGOs." *American Journal of Sociology* 117, no. 1 (2011): 1-45.

Recommended:

- Hsu, Szu-Chien, Kellee S. Tsai, and Chun-Chih Chang eds. *Evolutionary Governance in China: State-Society Relations*. Harvard University Press, 2021, Chapters 1-2.
- Tsai, Lily L. "Solidary groups, informal accountability, and local public goods provision in rural China." *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (2007): 355-372.
- Tsai, Lily L., and Yiqing Xu. "Outspoken insiders: Political connections and citizen participation in China." *Political Behavior* 40, no. 3 (2018): 629-657.
- Wang, Howard H., Edmund W. Cheng, Xi Chen, and Hai Liang. "How institutionalized feedback works: Online citizen complaints and local government responsiveness in China." *Governance* 38, no. 2 (2025): e12907.
- Teets, Jessica C. "Let many civil societies bloom in China." *The China Quarterly* 213 (2013): 19-38.
- Zhang, Changdong. "Nongovernmental organizations' policy advocacy and government responsiveness in China." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2018): 723-744.
- Tomba, Luigi. *The Government Next Door: Neighborhood Politics in Urban China*. Cornell University Press, 2014, Introduction and Chapters 1-2.
- Cai, Yongshun. "Power Structure and Regime Resilience: Contentious Politics in China." *British Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 3 (2008): 411-432.

Tang, Beibei. "Grid Governance in China's Urban Middle-Class Neighborhoods." *The China Quarterly* 241 (2020): 43-61.

Session 7: Experimental Methods

Date: July 28, Tue.

【Description of the Session】

This session introduces experimental methods as tools for causal inference in political science. It covers laboratory, field, survey, and natural experiments, with examples from various political issues and settings.

【Questions】

Why are experiments useful for identifying causal effects? What are their key limitations? How can experiments be conducted in various forms and contexts? How can we design experiments to understand China's governance?

【Readings】

- *Angrist, Joshua D., and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. *Mastering 'Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect*. Princeton University Press, 2014, Introduction and ch.1.
- *Druckman, J.N., et al., eds. 2011. *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge Univ. Press, chs. 2, 6 and 9.
- *Mutz, Diana. 2011. *Population-Based Survey Experiments*. Princeton Univ. Press, chs. 1 and 4.

Recommended:

- Wu, Sherry Jueyu, et al. "A large-scale field experiment on participatory decision-making in China." *Nature Human Behaviour* 8, no. 11 (2024): 2119-2126.
- Anderson, Sarah E., et al. "Non-governmental monitoring of local governments increases compliance with central mandates: a national-scale field experiment in China." *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 3 (2019): 626-643.
- Meng, Tianguang, Jennifer Pan, and Ping Yang. "Conditional receptivity to citizen participation: Evidence from a survey experiment in China." *Comparative Political Studies* 50, no. 4 (2017): 399-433.
- Lü, Xiaobo, Lily L. Tsai, Ping Zhang, and Minh Trinh. "Do government accountability and responsiveness enhance support for property taxes? Experimental evidence from China." *World Development* 194 (2025): 107051.
- Lei, Zhenhuan, and Yishuang Li. "Making local courts work: the judicial recentralization reform and local protectionism in China." *Journal of Politics* 87, no. 4 (2025): 1573-1586.
- Cantoni, Davide, et al. "Curriculum and ideology." *Journal of Political Economy* 125, no. 2 (2017): 338-392.
- Talhelm, Thomas, and Xiawei Dong. "People quasi-randomly assigned to farm rice are more collectivistic than people assigned to farm wheat." *Nature Communications* 15, no. 1 (2024)

Session 8: Case-Oriented Methods

Date: July 29, Wed.

<p>【Description of the Session】 This session focuses on qualitative and case-based research methods. It highlights how case studies contribute to theory building and mechanistic causal explanation.</p>	
<p>【Questions】 What advantages do case studies offer? How should cases be selected and/or compared? How can qualitative evidence support concepts, typologies, and causal claims? How can we design case studies to understand Chinese politics and society?</p>	
<p>【Readings】 *Gerring, John, 2007. <i>Case Study Research: Principles and Practices</i>. Cambridge University Press, skim chapter 3 and read chapters 5-7 in depth.</p> <p><i>Recommended:</i> Zhou, Xueguang, Hong Lian, Leonard Ortolano, and Yinyu Ye. "A behavioral model of 'muddling through' in the Chinese bureaucracy: The case of environmental protection." <i>The China Journal</i> 70, no. 1 (2013): 120-147. Ding, Iza. "Performative governance." <i>World Politics</i> 72, no. 4 (2020): 525-556. Tjia, Linda Yin-nor. "Supply-side reform and subnational entrepreneurialism in China's rail delivery services." <i>The China Quarterly</i> 256 (2023): 905-918. Huang, Dongya, and Minglu Chen. "Business lobbying within the party-state: Embedding lobbying and political co-optation in China." <i>The China Journal</i> 83, no. 1 (2020): 105-128. Huang, Xian. "Expansion of Chinese Social Health Insurance: Who Gets What, When and How?." <i>Journal of Contemporary China</i> 23, no. 89 (2014): 923-951. Yang, Bao, Yufei He, and Wenjin Long. "Alienation of civic engagement in China? Case studies on social governance in Hangzhou." <i>Voluntas</i> 27, no. 5 (2016): 2150-2172. Lei, Ya-Wen. "Delivering solidarity: Platform architecture and collective contention in China's platform economy." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 86, no. 2 (2021): 279-309. Eisenman, Joshua. "China's Vietnam War revisited: A domestic politics perspective." <i>Journal of Contemporary China</i> 28, no. 119 (2019): 729-745. Hwang, Kwang-kuo. "Face and favor: The Chinese power game." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 92, no. 4 (1987): 944-974.</p>	
<p>【Afternoon Learning Sessions】 State-Citizen Interactions in China: Film Screening and Commentary</p>	
<p>Session 9: From Question to Conclusion</p>	<p>Date: July 30, Thu.</p>
<p>【Description of the Session】 This session focuses on academic writing as a core component of political research. It covers how to formulate research questions, develop arguments, and clearly communicate scholarly contributions.</p>	
<p>【Questions】 What makes a good research question? How should arguments and evidence be organized? What makes a research proposal theoretically meaningful and feasible? What distinguishes</p>	

effective academic writing in political science?

【Readings】

*Przeworski, Adam, and Frank Salomon. "Some Candid Suggestions on the Art of Writing Proposals." Social Science Research Council, 2012.

Recommended:

Howard, Christopher. *Thinking Like a Political Scientist: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Booth, W. C., et al. *The Craft of Research* (4th ed.). University of Chicago Press, 2016.

【Afternoon Learning Sessions】

Week-2 student panel presentations and discussion

Session 10: Course Conclusion & Final Paper Proposal

Date: July 31, Fri.

【Description of the Session】

This concluding session synthesizes the main themes of the course and features student presentations of final paper or research design proposals, followed by collective feedback and discussion.

A CV of 250-300 words and a high-resolution personal photo should also be provided.