

Introduction to Modern China

Code:	
Term:	Summer
ECTS credits:	6
Lessons per week:	90 + 90 min
Language:	Eng.
Instructor:	James Thomson
Form of study:	Tutorial & seminar

Course objectives

China is no longer a just a rising economic power. Its growing wealth, increasingly assertive foreign policy and authoritarian model of governance present a challenge to liberal democracies worldwide. Yet its complex history, political culture and ethnic diversity remain little known in the West.

This course will provide students with a framework to understand China's history, geography, politics, economy, and its contemporary regional and global influence.

Participants will learn about China's culture and recent history, its relations with neighbouring countries and territories, sources of internal and external conflict, the modern state's attitude to human rights, and the country's economic strengths and weaknesses.

Students will work with primary and secondary historical sources in English, as well as more recent journalism. They will be expected to master the basic chronology of events in modern China.

The aim of the course will be to give students a nuanced understanding of modern China, and provide some historical context for the contemporary political and philosophical writings that they may be asked to study in other courses at BISLA.

Lectures, seminars and discussions, informed by preparatory reading, will form the core method of learning, accompanied by essays and presentations by students.

Contents

The 'Middle Kingdom': what is China, and what does it mean to be Chinese?

Geography and cultural heritage

Confucianism

Relations with Europe, including central Europe

Ancient China: Three dynasties, Qin, Han, Tang, Ming, Qing

Late imperial China

The Qing dynasty, the Opium Wars & the Taiping Revolution

The Boxer Rebellion, the fall of the empire and cultural change

Republican China

Sun Yat-sen, Chinese nationalism and the May Fourth Movement
The Communists and the Long March
The Sino-Japanese War, World War II & the Civil War

The People's Republic

Mao Zedong
The Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution
Reform, the democracy movement, Tiananmen Square
Economic transformation since the 1990s
Life in contemporary China

Sources of tension

Hong Kong and Taiwan
Tibet and Xinjiang
The South China Sea
Demographic trends, the hukou system

Chinese art & literature

Chinese politics and the question of succession

Is China a role model?

Course materials

Mitter, Rana. *Modern China: A Very Short Introduction* (2nd edition, Oxford, 2016)

Keay, John. *China A History* (HarperCollins, 2009)

de Bary, William Theodore; Lufrano, Richard (editors). *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume II: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century* (second edition, Columbia, 2000)

Schoppa, R. Keith. *Revolution and Its Past: Identities and Change in Modern Chinese History* (Routledge, 2016)

Schoppa, R. Keith. *Twentieth century China: A History in Documents* (Oxford, 2004)

Wasserstrom, Jeffrey. *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, 2010)

Short, Philip. *Mao: The Man Who Made China* (second edition, I.B. Tauris, 2017)

Evaluation criteria

30% Active participation in classroom discussion, based on preparatory reading

40% Writing work – essays and tests during the semester

15% Presentation paper (at least 2,000 words)

15% Leading class discussion on the seminar paper subject matter

Course evaluation (%)

A – excellent: 100-93%,

B – very good: 92-84%,

C – good: 83-74%,

D – satisfactory: 73-63%,

E – sufficient: 62-51%,

Fx – fail: 50-0%.