

ECON 0232A, *The Chinese Economy*

Will Pyle

Spring 2023

Warner Hall 312

Tuesday and Thursday, 8:15 a.m. – 9:30 a.m., Warner 105

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Open (walk-in) office hours: Tuesday, 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

[Appointments](https://calendly.com/wpyle/) (calendly.com/wpyle/): Monday, 8:30 am – 10:00 am, Thursday, 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

**Subject:** We will explore China's economy under Communist Party rule, giving particular attention to its organization, growth, and transformation since the late 1970s. Although our disciplinary focus will be on economics, we will inevitably attend to important political and historical factors.

The course is organized more-or-less temporally. We first address the historical roots of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) rise to power and examine the nature and consequences of the economic model it imposed under Mao's leadership. We then chronicle the post-Mao reforms, which, starting with those launched by Deng, set the country on a path of unprecedented growth, poverty reduction, and structural change. Along the way, we deal with specific topics relevant to China's economic accomplishments and current challenges: the CCP-led state's evolving role, the urban-rural divide, demographic trends, and integration into the global economy. You will find that as much as our subject is about the organization and trajectory of a national economy, we often will reflect on how periods of rapid growth and structural change play out in the lives of ordinary individuals.

Our subject is daunting in size and complexity. China possesses, by one measure, the world's largest economy and it is very much a moving target. Its younger generation, very much like the one before it, is coming of age in a country vastly different from the one in which its parents grew up. To begin to make sense of it all, we will draw on a range of sources. Our syllabus includes the work of journalists, documentarians, and academics representing multiple disciplines. Guest speakers will join us too. Furthermore, many of you have studied, traveled, and/or even grown up in China; your perspectives can be just as interesting and valuable for us all!

**Required Reading and Viewing:** Ours is a reading and viewing intensive class. There are four books for purchase at the [College Bookstore](#), each of which can also be checked out on a short-term basis from the Davis Library Circulation Desk.

- The second edition of Arthur Kroeber's *The Chinese Economy: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2020) is the closest thing we have to a textbook; its virtues include its relatively up-to-date and comprehensive coverage as well as its balanced tone. The author, a "friend of Middlebury," will be Zooming into our class on May 4<sup>th</sup>.
- The journalist Peter Hessler's *Country Driving* (2011), a personal favorite, will serve as the basis for a book review that you will submit in March; as much as any writing about China, it addresses my aim that you gain an appreciation for how periods of rapid economic change play

out in the lives of ordinary people. (An [e-version](#) of this book can also be accessed via MIDCAT at the Davis Library.)

- *Invisible China: How the Urban-Rural Divide Threatens China's Rise* (2020), by Scott Rozelle and Natalie Hell, addresses one of China's biggest socio-economic challenges. One of the world's leading experts on rural China, Rozelle, also a "friend of Middlebury," will join our class on Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup>. He will also give a public talk on the afternoon of Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>.
- *The World According to China* (2022) by Elizabeth Economy provides an up-to-date account of the global ambitions, economic and otherwise, of China under Xi Jinping.

Additional books from which I have assigned multiple chapters include Orville Schell and John DeLury's *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-first Century* (2013), Andrew Walder's *China under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* (2017), and Richard McGregor's *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers* (2010). I have placed copies of these on short-term reserve at the Circulation Desk.

Other than the four books available at the College Bookstore, all assigned readings can be accessed electronically on our class Canvas page via [CourseHub](#).

Assigned video material can also be accessed on our class Canvas page via [CourseHub](#). A couple of short audio and video clips are only accessible via embedded links in the schedule below. The documentary [One Child Nation](#) is available only via *Amazon Prime*.

**Grades:** Your final grade will be a function of your performance on a book review (20%), a video essay assignment (20%), a short opinion essay (20%), a final exam (25%), and class attendance and participation (15%). We will periodically devote a portion of class time to discussion. And I will often interrupt my lectures to ask you questions, often based on the reading and viewing material. Your ability to react thoughtfully will, along with both regular attendance and performance on small-stakes, in-class quizzes, determine your participation grade. Assignments that are turned in late will be docked one-third of a grade for each day that they come in past the deadline.

**Laptop and electronic resources policy:** Because the class works best when you are fully engaged, and because the internet is a potential source of distraction, I request that you take notes by hand. If there are extenuating circumstances that make it much easier for you to type your notes, please see me to discuss an exception to this rule.

## CALENDAR

**February 14**

*Introduction(s)*

**February 16**

*Imperial China*

Read for class

- Wang, Z. 2014. *Never Forget National Humiliation*, chapter 2.

**February 21**

*The Rise of Mao and the Communist Party*

Read for class

- Schell, O. and J. Delury, 2013. *Wealth and Power*, chapter 9.
- Mao, Z. 1927. "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan."

Watch for class

- Williams, S., 1989. *China: A Century of Revolution, Part One: China in Revolution 1911-1949*.

**February 23**

*Mao's blueprint and development strategy*

Read for class

- Schell, O. and J. Delury, 2013. *Wealth and Power*, chapter 10.
- Walder, A., 2015. *China under Mao: A Revolution Derailed*, chapters 5 and 8.

Watch for class

- Williams, S., 1994. *China: A Century of Revolution, Part Two: The Mao Years 1949-1976*.
- Yang, J., 2013. [Interview](#) with author of *Tombstone*.

**February 28**

*Daily life at the end of the Mao era*

Read for class

- Schell, O., 1977. "China I: Peking and Shanghai," *The New Yorker*, March 7.
- Schell, O., 1977. "China II: The Factory and the Farm," *The New Yorker*, March 14.

Watch for class

- Antonioni, M., 1972. *Chung Kuo*, Part I ([4](#) and [5](#)), Part II ([1](#), [2](#), and [3](#)), Part III ([1](#) and [2](#)).

**March 2*****Deng's "reforms without losers"***

Read for class

- Schell, O. and J. Delury, 2013. *Wealth and Power*, chapter 11
- Schell, O., 1984. "The Wind of Wanting to Go It Alone," *The New Yorker*, January 23.

Watch for class

- Coldstream, R., 2009. *China's Capitalist Revolution*, "Opening the Door: How Deng Xiaoping Transformed China's Economy."

Listen to for class

- Kestenbaum, D. and J. Goldstein, 2012. "[The Secret Document that Transformed China.](#)"

**March 7*****Deng's social contract***

Read for class

- Schell, O. and J. Delury, 2013. *Wealth and Power*, chapter 12

Watch for class

- Coldstream, R., 2009. *China's Capitalist Revolution*, "Becoming a Superpower: Deng Xiaoping's Reforms and their Legacy."

**March 9*****Turn-of-the-century "reform and opening-up"***

Read for class

- Schell, O. and J. Delury, 2013. *Wealth and Power*, chapter 13

Watch for class

- William, S., 2003. *China in the Red*.

**March 14*****Country Driving, day 1***

Read for class

- Hessler, P., 2011. *Country Driving: A Journey through China from Farm to Factory*.

**March 16**

*Country Driving, day 2*

Read for class

- Hessler, P., 2011. *Country Driving: A Journey through China from Farm to Factory*.

*Assignment 1: Book review, due Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 pm.*

*March 20 - 24. No class. Spring break.*

**March 28**

*The rural economy and internal migration*

Read for class

- Kroeber, A. 2020. *China's Economy*, chapters 4 and 6

Watch for class

- Fan, L., 2009. *Last Train Home*.

*Scott Rozelle public lecture, Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm.*

**March 30**

*Scott Rozelle's in-class visit*

Read for class

- Rozelle, S. and N. Hell. 2020. *Invisible China: How the Urban-Rural Divide Threatens China's Rise*, chapters 1 - 5.

**April 4**

*Governance and the economy, day 1*

Read for class

- Kroeber, A. 2020. *China's Economy: What Everyone Needs to Know*, chapters 3 and 5.
- McGregor, R. 2010. *The Party: The Secret World of China's Communist Rulers*, chapters 1 and 2.

**April 6**

*Governance and the economy, day 2*

Read for class

- Kroeber, A. 2020. *China's Economy* chapter 8
- McGregor, R. 2010. *The Party*, chapter 6.

Watch for class

- Zhou, H. 2015. *Chinese Mayor*.

**April 11**

*Governance and the economy, day 3*

Read for class

- Kroeber, A. 2020. *China's Economy* chapter 9

Listen for class

- Wong, S. 2022. [The Prince](#), episodes 1 through 4.

**April 13**

*Energy and the Environment*

Read for class

- Kroeber, A. 2020. *China's Economy*, chapter 10.

*Assignment 2: Digital essay, due Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 pm.*

**April 18**

*Demography*

Read for class

- Kroeber, A. 2020. *China's Economy*, chapter 11.

Watch for class

- Wang, N., 2019. [One Child Nation](#). Available on *Amazon Prime*.

**April 20**

*Consumption and inequality*

Read for class

- Kroeber, A. 2020. *China's Economy*, chapters 12 and 13.

Watch for class

- Kingdon, J., 2021. *Ascension*.

**April 25**

*China and the global economy, 1*

Read for class

- Economy, E. 2022. *The World According to China*. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Friedberg, A. 2018. "Globalization and Chinese Grand Strategy," *Survival* 60, 7-40

**April 27**

*China and the global economy, 2*

Read for class

- Economy, E. 2022. *The World According to China*. Chapters 4 - 6.

**May 2**

*China and the global economy, 3*

Read for class

- Economy, E. 2022. *The World According to China*. Chapter 7.
- Kroeber, A. 2020. *China's Economy*, chapter 15.

**May 4**

*Arthur Kroeber's virtual visit*

*Assignment 3: Opinion essay, due Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 pm.*

**May 9**

*In-class discussion / debate, day 1*

**May 11**

*In-class discussion / debate, day 2*

*Final exam: Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 - 5:00 pm.*

Write a 1000-word review of Peter Hessler's *Country Driving*.

You have a great deal of discretion in terms of structure and focus. A review is your reaction to the book and thus should reflect what you found noteworthy and if, why, and how you felt the book enhanced your understanding of and/or interest in the subject. Even though its purpose is more than simply to summarize, somewhere in your review you should include a short description of the book's organization and structure. Whether you reflect on themes that are broad (e.g., the dynamism of Chinese society at the turn of the century) or narrow (e.g., the challenges of starting a business), whether you home in on a few anecdotes or give broad and equal attention to all three sections, your review should make clear how Hessler illustrates important features of the Chinese economy; consider your audience, that is, to be a well-educated individual with an interest in China, generally, and its economy, specifically.

Your review should be clearly written and thoughtfully organized. It should be stylistically interesting and easy to read. Be creative. This is not a traditional essay in the sense of needing an introduction and conclusion or even formal references to secondary material. You are strongly encouraged to draw in knowledge you have picked up from readings, class discussions, or elsewhere. But so long as you do not quote directly from other materials (which I do not want you to do), there is no need to provide a formal bibliography. You can include a block quote or two from the book (which should not count toward your 1000-word requirement), but only if you absolutely need Hessler's words to illustrate a point; otherwise, you should use your own words.

Your grade will be a function of the review's organization, argumentation, and style. I will ask myself the following sorts of questions as I read it: Do your paragraphs flow logically from one to another? Do you choose your evidence well to back up your main point(s)? Do you present a creative and thoughtful interpretation? Do you demonstrate expertise and knowledge commensurate with the material covered in class? Do you avoid grammatical, punctuation, and spelling mistakes? Do you write economically and clearly?

Here are a couple of suggestions and guidelines:

- As you read the book, highlight paragraphs that you find particularly interesting or that seem especially relevant to the overall message that Hessler is trying to convey.
- Upon finishing up the book, spend some time assessing why Hessler chose to structure it in the manner he did. Try to figure out why he chose to emphasize certain themes as well as why he chose to focus on a particular set of places and people. These choices were not random after all.
- Draft an outline for your review and then think how you can best grab your reader's attention at the start.
- You can look at [other](#) reviews but make sure that what you write reflects your own voice, remembering that work of others that is passed off as one's own is plagiarism. If you do quote directly from other sources, reviews or otherwise, provide attribution directly in the text of your review rather than in a formal bibliography.

Lateness will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from B+ to B) per weekday, not including holidays. That is, a review that arrives Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup> (after spring break) will be penalized 1/3 of a grade; one that arrives the next day will be penalized 2/3 of a grade, etc.



Produce a five-minute “digital story” (slide show) – with textual, audio, and visual elements – to summarize a recently-published, high quality academic article related to China’s economy.

The articles from which you can choose are described, in brief, at this Google doc:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-fh9fVOINwtzUb9HJPloJtt167HIKbCPFPxebulEi0Q/edit?usp=sharing>

By noon on Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, enter your top four choices into the Google doc, selecting from among those that are appropriate to your background in statistics and regression. (More detail is provided in the Google doc.) From among your choices, I will send you the final assignment of your article by the end of the day, doing my best to ensure that at least two and no more than three students produce a “digital story” on any one article. To be clear, this is not a collaborative assignment. You will produce your own individual “digital story.”

Your “digital story” should be both accessible to and interesting for your classmates, regardless of their background in statistics and/or regression. It should make the article come alive! At a minimum, it should have the following elements: it should clarify the article’s research question and why it is interesting and/or important; it should review the literature(s) to which the article contributes; it should lay out the evidence that the authors assemble and/or draw on to answer their research question; if you feel it important to your audience’s understanding of and appreciation for the article’s contribution, it should clarify the methodological approach undertaken to analyze the evidence; and it should conclude with a slide that summarizes the article’s key takeaway message(s).

Your “digital story” should incorporate textual, audio, and visual elements. It should be clear, dynamic, and engaging. It should convey enough information to tell a coherent story, but not so much that it overwhelms your audience. In integrating text and/or voiceovers, use your own words in a manner that will be accessible to and interesting for your peers. And in presenting any numbers, be judicious; only display what can be easily absorbed by your audience. Your grade will be a function of the digital story’s clarity, its adherence to your article’s main points, its creativity, and its style. As I watch it, I will ask myself whether it flows seamlessly, whether its presentation is original, and whether it makes clear, accurate, and memorable points about the article.

Here’s a roadmap toward completion:

- read your article carefully, multiple times, noting its important elements;

- consult me if you have questions about its methods;
- storyboard the overall flow and transitions;
- collect and/or produce multi-media elements – *e.g.*, audio files, still photos, maps, and/or video clips;
- draft script to be included as text and/or voiceover;
- integrate media elements and script into editing platform;
- refine and edit, reflecting on clarity, smoothness of presentation, and degree of engagement; and
- include credits at end, listing supplemental secondary sources and/or creators of media elements.

For those of you that do not already have experience with a similar assignment or with an editing platform like Adobe Premiere (see accompanying handout), producing your digital summary will inevitably involve a combination of self-instruction, consultations with DLINQ interns, and learning from your peers. In the coming classes, I will coordinate the within-class sharing of advice and ideas as you search for media elements and work with your editing platform.

Have fun. Be creative. Produce a digital story that makes us all proud! I look forward to seeing and sharing your productions!

During the last week of class, we will conduct, on Tuesday, a Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) – a debate that emphasizes engagement with multiple perspectives on controversial issues – and, on Thursday, a follow-up Focus Group exercise. You will each have a role requiring advance reading and preparation. After the completion of the SAC, everybody will be required to turn in a 750-word reflection essay about your experience with the SAC.

The question we will engage in the SAC and follow-up Focus Group is whether the U.S. government should ban or compel the sale of TikTok.

In *The World According to China*, Elizabeth Economy writes: “TikTok ... accomplished something that no other Chinese company [has] ... [it] created a globally appealing breakthrough social media technology. And it was the first Chinese company to hit No. 1 in Apple’s US App store.” But over the past year, trouble has been brewing. Concerned about the ability of its parent, ByteDance, to both shape platform content and access user data, the U.S. Congress and the White House have both been raising concerns. Lawmakers in Washington, D.C. are now considering legislation that would restrict Americans’ access to TikTok and other apps affiliated with ByteDance. For instance, the RESTRICT Act, a TikTok-motivated bill with bipartisan support, would empower the Department of Commerce, in conjunction with other U.S. government agencies, to compel divestment or take other “mitigation measures” in cases of “undue and unacceptable risk” from a particular relationship between a firm and a “country of concern.”

Our SAC will address whether it is in the United States’ interest to pass this or similar legislation. To prepare, I encourage you to cast a wide net in searching for relevant information and reasonable argumentation. As you will quickly find, there is an abundance of material accessible online.

Day One active participants will include a Moderator and two four-member sides: one “pro” forced divestment or ban, one “con.” In advance, both sides should decide on two Speakers and two Answerers. Speakers should prepare and rehearse their opening statements. Answerers should anticipate likely questions and think through potential answers. The Moderator should prepare a list of potential questions for each side, keeping in mind that some questions may need to be modified or dropped depending on the arguments of the groups and the questions already asked by the opposing side. Day One non-active participants will submit in class on May 9<sup>th</sup> a 750-word op ed, such as might appear on a newspaper’s opinion page, expressing a point of view on the question under consideration.

### **Day One**

Part One. Opening statements. 20 minutes.

- (1) Opening “pro” statement by two Speakers. 10 minutes max.
- (2) Opening “con” statement by two Speakers. 10 minutes max.

Part Two. Questions and rebuttals. 25 minutes.

- (1) Groups huddle. 5 minutes. Each Speaker prepares one question for the opposing side.
- (2) “Con” Answerers respond to “pro” Speakers’ questions. 5 minutes max.
- (3) Moderator asks two follow-up questions, one for each “con” Answerer. 5 minutes.

- (4) "Pro" Answerers respond to "con" Speakers' questions. 5 minutes.
- (5) Moderator asks two follow-up questions, one for each of "pro" Answerers. 5 minutes.

Part Three. Conclusion. 10 minutes.

- (1) Groups huddle. 5 minutes. Both sides identify the strongest argument of the other side.
- (2) "Cons" two Answerers state "pro's" strongest argument. 2.5 minutes max.
- (3) "Pros" two Answerers state "pro's" strongest argument. 2.5 minutes max.

## **Day Two**

Focus groups. 30 minutes each.

Moderators will pose questions to solicit the Day One reflections of Focus Group Participants, ensuring that everybody participates and remains engaged. For example, in addition to questions of their own design, the Moderator could ask Participants to share if and how their initial opinions evolved because of the SAC; or they could ask if and how Participants developed a greater appreciation for the other perspective. Being good Moderators and focus group Participants requires paying close attention to the Day One proceedings.

**Evaluation.** 20 points total. For everybody, 10 points for post-SAC reflection essay; the remaining 10 points will differ depending on your role. For Day One active participants, I will evaluate you on a 10-point scale that includes both content and expositional quality. For Focus Group Moderators and Participants, you will be evaluated on a 6-point scale for your pre-SAC op ed piece and on a 4-point scale for your Focus Group participation.