

PT 340 Modern Society and Human Rights:
the case of China and Taiwan

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Description

Taught simultaneously at Bard College Berlin and NSYSU Taiwan, this OSUN network collaborative course will examine two visions of modern society elaborated by classical liberalism on the one hand, and the left radical tradition on the other. Probing the different understandings of human rights as a normative ideal and its role in each of those visions, the course will trace how these understandings played out in the modern history of the Mandarin speaking world. Our point of departure will be Tocqueville's assertion in the Introduction to *Democracy in America* that democracy, defined by the principles of equality and popular sovereignty, is on the rise the world over. As Tocqueville anticipated, whether modern democratic societies enshrine and protect individual rights or sacrifice them on the altar of national sovereignty and omnipotent statehood would depend on a host of factors that shape the trajectory of modernization. A key among those factors is how the modern age itself is understood.

After tracing a paradigmatic liberal conceptualization of modernity and human rights, and its comprehensive critique by Marx and Lenin, we will take up the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (Taiwan) as case studies. Starting from similar cultural legacies and related ideological standpoints, and both embracing the Leninist vision, in the course of the 20th century China and Taiwan developed two distinct and idiosyncratic paths to modernity. To understand how and why this happened, in the second part of the course we will trace the political history and probe the theoretical and cultural debates about human rights that have shaped modern Taiwan and China respectively.

The course will culminate with a one-day conference on current human rights practices in China and Taiwan, and their significance for the politics of Asia-Pacific and the world, to be hosted at Bard College Berlin.

Required Texts

Course Reader

Additional Resources

Library and Book Purchase Policies

Students are expected to have at their disposal a hard copy of all required texts. Copies of the required books and additional readings are available on reserve at the library.

Requirements

Attendance and Participation

Careful preparation, regular attendance and active participation are essential to the success of this course. Absences beyond two will affect the seminar grade. **Arriving late or leaving in the middle of a session will count as half an absence.**

Writing

Reflection paper and presentation: over the course of the semester, students will take turns to reflect on the proceedings of each week, and present these reflections at the beginning of the following week. The reflection paper should offer a concise (up to 1500-word) account of the week's reading and discussions that recapitulates its main themes, probes deeper a key issue, and articulates questions for further discussion. The reflection papers should be posted on google classroom by 5 pm on Mondays.

Joint Assignments: In the course of the semester, students will team up with Taiwan counterparts for the following joint assignments (JA): **JA1**: Meet to discuss and collaborate on writing a 1-2 pp report (~500 words) that compares and contrasts the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) with the Declaration Of Rights Of The Working And Exploited People (1917); **JA2**: Proposal (up to 500 words) for a collaborative final project. Guidelines both for the proposal and the project itself will be circulated in advance. (Dec 3); **JA3**: Class presentation of the project proposals (Dec 12); **JA 4**: Submit collaborative projects (Dec 17)

Assessment

Assessment will be based on seminar participation (20%); reflection paper and presentation (20%); a joint project proposal and presentation (30%) and final project (30%).

Late Submission and Academic Integrity

Late papers will be downgraded in light of the policy outlined in the Student Handbook. Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Deadlines at a glance:

The schedule for reflection papers will be set up by Sunday, September 10

Two declarations assignment due on Sunday, October 29

Proposals for final projects are due on Sunday, December 3

Project Proposal Presentation: Tuesday, December 12

Final Project due: Friday, December 17

Schedule:

Week	Tuesday	Th	Assignments
1: Sept 5, 7	<u>Joint session 1:</u> Introducing the syllabus China/Taiwan today (article)		
2: Sept 12, 14	Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> Introduction, vol. 1 part 1 chs 2-5; part 2, chs. 6-8		
3: Sept 19, 21	<u>Joint Session 2:</u> Tocqueville, DA, vol. 1 part 2 ch. 10		
4: Sept 26, 28	Marx On the Jewish Question Communist Manifesto Critique of the Gotha Program		
5: Oct 3, 5	Federal holiday		
6: Oct 10, 12	Lenin Socialist Revolution and the right to Self-determination State and Revolution		
7: Oct 17, 19	<u>Joint session 3</u> History of China/Taiwan Shortest history of China, ch. 10/11 Taiwan, Political History, ch. 3		<u>Joint project 1:</u> Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen vs Declaration Of Rights Of The Working And Exploited People
Fall Break Mon, Oct. 23 – Fri, Oct 29			
8: Oct 31, Nov 2	Sun Yat-sen		
9: Nov 7, 9	Hu Shih		
10: Nov 14, 16	Mao Zedong		
11: Nov 21, 23	Deng Xiaoping		
12: Nov 28, 30	The Institutionalization of China's People's Democracy (1979~2023) – HR in China CH human rights article (Amnesty International)		<u>Joint project 2:</u> proposals due (Dec 3)

13. Dec 5, 7	<p><u>Joint session 4 [Chiahao in Berlin]</u> The debate on “Preparing” a Young Democracy: The Case of Taiwan under the KMT// The Road to Democracy in Taiwan (1970~2000) – HR in Taiwan</p>		
14: Dec 12, 14	<p><u>Joint session 5 [Chiahao in Berlin]</u> Why two paths to modernity?</p>		
15: Dec 11-15	Completion week + Workshop		