Local Governance and Grassroots Politics in China

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Course Description:
This graduate class is designed to provide students with information and analyses of local governance and grassroots politics in contemporary China. Topics covered in the class include: central-local relations in China, Chinese local government at provincial, municipal, county and township levels, governance in ethnic minority areas, local people’s congress election, village election, mass political culture and participation, grassroots organizations in urban areas, and non-governmental organizations. The class will be conducted in a comparative fashion by comparing China with neighboring Asian countries, Western countries and developing countries.

Course Requirements:
Students are required to finish the assigned readings prior to each class. Students are expected to be fully involved in the class and to participate in class discussion. Students are also required to write a term paper on Chinese local governance and grassroots politics. The paper is due the last week of the class.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy:
Since this is primarily a seminar at graduate level, students are required to finish all reading assignments for each class before the class. Completion of reading materials is crucial for your success in the class. Also, your familiarity with the reading materials facilitates your participation in the class discussions, which are expected of all students and will be a significant part in the evaluation of your overall class performance. Needless to say, regular attendance of the class is a given.

Students are required to write an analytical research paper of 20-25 pages in length on any subject matter covered in the class. Comparative studies are encouraged. The research paper should be original and not just a literature review or a simple description of institutions, political behavior, governmental process, etc. The topic for the paper must be selected in consultation with the instructor. (More on the paper will be explained in class.) The paper should be typed in double-line spacing and properly footnoted. The paper is due at the conclusion of the class. Late papers will not be accepted without a proper reason.
Grade distribution:

class presentation/discussion: 50%
research paper: 50%

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Feb. 27): Introduction to the class and Chinese governmental structure (Prof. CHEN)

Required readings:

Week 2 (Mar. 6): Theoretical frameworks of central-local relations and Chinese local government in history (Prof. ZHONG)

2. Yang Zhong, Local Government and Politics in China (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), Chapter 1 (“Introduction”), pp. 3-17; and Chapter 2 (“Chinese Local Government in Historical Perspective”), pp. 18-46

Week 3 (Mar. 13): Central-local relations in comparative perspective (Prof. ZHONG)

2. Student presentations (students describing their own country’s central and local governmental structures)

Week 4 (Mar. 20): China’s provincial and municipal governance (Prof. CHEN)

2. Tse-Kang Leng, “Centrally Administered Municipalities: Locomotives of National Development,” in Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, eds., China’s

Week 5 (Mar. 27): China’s county and township governance (Prof. ZHONG)
1. Yang Zhong, Local Government and Politics in China, Chapter 3 (“Governmental and Party Organizations at County and Township/Town Levels”), pp. 47-93
2. Yang Zhong, Local Government and Politics in China, Chapter 4 (“Local Officials as Rational Actors in the Chinese Cadre System”), pp. 94-127
4. Jean C. Oi and Zhao Shukai, “Fiscal Crisis in China’s Townships,” in Elizabeth Perry and Merle Goldman, eds., Grassroots Political Reform in Contemporary China, pp. 75-96
5. Lianjiang Li, “Direct Township Elections,” in Elizabeth Perry and Merle Goldman, eds., Grassroots Political Reform in Contemporary China, pp. 97-116

Week 6 (Apr. 3): Central-local fiscal relations and economic development in China (Prof. CHEN)

Week 7 (Apr. 10): Village governance and village elections in China (Prof. ZHONG)

Week 8 (Apr. 17): Grassroots governance in urban China (Prof. CHEN)
1. Tao-Chiu Lam and Carlos Wing-Hung Lo, “The Urban District: Half or Full Administration,” pp. 196-220

Week 9 (Apr. 24): Non-governmental organizations in China (Prof. CHEN)

Week 10 (May 1): No Class, International Labor Day

Week 11 (May 8): Governance in ethnic minority areas (Prof. ZHONG)

Week 12 (May 15): Mass political culture, public opinion and Internet in China (Prof. ZHONG)
2. Steve Chan, “Chinese Political Attitudes and Values in Comparative Context:


**Week 13 (May 22): Formal and informal political participation in China (Prof. CHEN)**


**Weeks 14-15 (May 29 and Jun. 5): Student research paper presentations**

**Week 16 (Jun. 12): No Class, the Dragon Boat Festival**

**Textbooks**

