SOSC 1190 China and the World: China’s Development in Historical and Comparative Perspectives, 1550-1911

Fall Semester, 2019
Classroom: Room 2502, Lift 25-26
Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 3 pm to 4.20 pm

Instructor:
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Course Description and Objectives:
The rapid economic development in China after 1978 and particularly the high-speed growth after the mid-1990s have attracted increasing attention to the historical background of this great economic transformation. Scholarship in recent decades has demonstrated the emergence of a vibrant market economy in China between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, many key characteristics of which were similar to those of the market economy in pre-Industrial Revolution Western Europe. Why, then, didn’t an industrial breakthrough occur in late imperial China?

This course focuses on the interactions between the state and economy in late imperial China from comparative and social science perspectives. In the first two weeks of the course, we will introduce some basic historical background and critically examine the causal structure of “growth without development”. Upon this basis, we will explore specific topics in agrarian economy, city and market, merchant ethics, state-market interactions in famine relief, industrial development and capital formation, and monetary system and public finance. Beyond observing parallels between pre-Industrial Revolution Western Europe and late imperial China, we will also examine some of the institutional defects of the Chinese economy (state?) and how they affected the transformation of China into a modern economy in the late nineteenth century.

Methodologically, this course will expose students to the basic concepts and analytic tools in political economy such as market economy, the state, conflict of interests, correlation and causality, and selection bias. The aim is to illustrate the importance of causal explanations in social scientific inquiry and encourage students to make comparisons with similar causal reasoning in science and engineering.

Requirements:
Read the assigned readings before the class and participate in class discussion.

**Grading:**
Mid-term exam: 40 percent
The mid-term exam will be a close-book exam.

Final Group Project: 60 percent
In the final group project, three students will form one group to work on the following topics and collectively submit a term paper of 14-16 double-spaced.
Suppose that there had been no Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95 and only international trade in a peaceful East Asia after 1895. What kind of changes, if any, do you think would have happened in the Chinese economy in the 30 years after 1895, and why?

In the term paper of this group project, your hypothetical scenario should be based upon the facts of the indigenous resources for economic development in China and the pros and cons of the Chinese political economy by 1895 as we have discussed in this course. You MUST collect some materials from contemporary newspapers published in China in either English (such as the *North China Herald*) or in Chinese (申報) in the term paper. The conclusion of this essay is open-ended.

Please be noted that the three students submitting the final term paper as a group would receive the same grade based upon the quality of the paper. The mid-term exam would be a 100-point exam. If your grade in the mid-term exam is below 20 points, your final grade would be a F regardless the grade received for the final paper.

**Readings:**

**Week 1: Introduction: The connection of late imperial China to the world**

**Week 2: Commercial development in China: 1684-1820**

**Week 3: Growth without Development?**


**Week 4: The land issue: Cause or effect?**

**Week 5: Business ethics and development**


**Week 6: Famine relief in late imperial China: State and Economy**


**Week 7: A revisionist view of the pre-20th century Chinese economy**


**Week 8: Silver in and silver out:**

**Week 9: The deadly good: The opium trade and the Opium War**

**Week 10: The Self-Strengthening Movement: 1863-1895**


**Week 11: Civil Society and the Public Sphere in the Chinese Society, 1870-1895**

**Week 12: The tributary system and the international law: China in East Asia**

**Week 13: What is China? The legacy of the Qing empire**