

MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Doctoral School of Social Sciences

April 1 - June 30, 2025

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Topic:

This lecture tackles one of the most consequential and, at times, also one of the most dangerous conflicts in the 20th and 21st centuries, namely between China (or the People's Republic of China) and Taiwan (or the Republic of China). In March, *The Economist* (2021) called Taiwan "the most dangerous place in the world" and the question of how to best deal with China has divided Taiwan's society more than ever before, spurring protests and leading to political stalemates in parliament.

But what lies behind this conflict? Is it about territory or sovereignty? Why is Taiwan so important for China, and has this always been the case? Why has a small island in the western Pacific been risking to plunge China and the USA into war since the 1950s? What keeps Taiwan from becoming a recognized state according to international law and has this always been the case? What have both sides undertaken to make their voice heard and prevail globally? How does this relationship affect domestic politics in Taiwan? How do the people in Taiwan and China think and feel about this relationship? And how does it affect people from other countries if they accidentally get into the middle of the conflict?

To answer these and more questions, this lecture approaches China-Taiwan Relations from multidisciplinary perspectives, including political science, international relations, sociology, as well as literature and cultural studies. Students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical origin and evolution of this relationship and its impact on politics and policies, laws and conventions, as well as on people across the Taiwan Straits and globally. Although Taiwan is a small island in the Western Pacific, its future will impact our societies at large. A formally declared independent Taiwan, either recognized by other states or not; a Taiwan forcefully brought under the control of the People's Republic of China; a peaceful resolution of the conflict or the continued status quo; the ramifications of all options would also be tangible in our countries.

Goal and Output:

This lecture aims to connect the academic advancement of students and the generation of real societal impact. It will support students in acquiring advanced general knowledge of a critical topic of our times, further practice their research abilities to become independent researchers, and improve their research communication skills at various levels.

Students will first conduct independent studies individually or in small groups (dependent on the number of participants) based on their disciplinary background, formulating and solving a research question by analyzing existing academic studies and accessible primary data. They will discuss their work in class and provide oral and written feedback on the projects of their peers.

As a primordial outcome, students will produce up-to-date and research-oriented bilingual learning materials in a group effort for high school teachers to use in their classes on

international history, politics, and geographies. In a final online event, organized by the students, they will present the materials to key stakeholders.

Approach & Methods

This lecture will be conducted in a blended format using a multidisciplinary approach. It incorporates active pedagogical methods supported by modern educational technologies to enhance student engagement, foster ownership of topics, and encourage independent study through various discussions, reflection exercises, project-based group work, peer learning, flipped classrooms, and independent research activities.

To establish a shared knowledge base essential for meaningful discussions and reflections, students will be provided with a mandatory reading and viewing list that includes a selection of academic articles, analyses, and other audiovisual materials. They will further expand this base through their own research.

Engagement will be encouraged through diverse discussion formats, including plenary sessions, small-group discussions, and alternative silent discussions on Mentimeter, ensuring a balanced and inclusive learning environment.

Oral and written peer feedback will help students develop the ability to formulate constructive advice and critically evaluate feedback from others to improve their own research outcomes. Through this process, students will acquire essential skills and competencies necessary for active participation in the academic community. Similarly, during the final group project, which integrates individual research efforts, students will develop key collaboration skills, learning to align expectations and work toward a shared goal.

The primary outcome of the course—the creation of real-world learning materials for high school teachers—will strengthen and diversify students' English proficiency and their ability to communicate effectively with specific target audiences. Additionally, by organizing a stakeholder event where these learning materials will be presented and feedback will be collected from key stakeholders such as teachers and high school administrators, students will gain valuable organizational skills and learn how to translate their research into real societal impact.

Learning outcomes:

Knowledge:

Students will gain an advanced understanding of the various implications of the conflict in the Taiwan Strait over time, including its impact on the region, international relations, and the people and economies of the affected societies.

Abilities:

Drawing on their own disciplines and respective theories and methods, students will develop their ability to identify, formulate, and address complex questions related to one of the most pressing dilemmas of our time. They will learn to integrate diverse and emerging sources while critically reviewing and synthesizing existing academic literature.

Students will also enhance their communication skills in three key ways:

1. Engaging in scholarly discussions about their own and their peers' research in both oral and written forms.
2. Conducting these discussions in English, thereby improving their ability to express themselves within an international academic discourse.
3. Synthesizing and innovatively presenting their findings for a non-academic audience, gaining essential adaptive skills in research communication.

Social Competencies:

Through peer learning and group work for the final dissemination output, students will develop critical social skills necessary to become independent researchers. They will learn to collaborate effectively, grow through feedback from others, and support their peers' development through constructive critique.

By preparing up-to-date, research-based learning materials in collaboration with key societal stakeholders, students will further diversify their skills. This experience will help foster a mindset that views research as a vital tool for addressing societal challenges and translating academic work into real-world impact.

Requirements

As a preparation for the kickoff event in April, students will be provided with a recorded lecture on the historical relationship between Taiwan, Hongkong, and China to watch and prepare the following three questions and send them by April 8 to j.marinaccio@cuas.at

- Reflect on the different approaches of both lecturers in tackling developments in Hong Kong and Taiwan and the role of China presented in the lectures
- List three things you learned in this unit that intrigued you and explain why.
- List two things in the unit that you think are very important and explain what makes them important.
- List one question you have about the lectures and would like to discuss in class.

After the virtual kickoff, students will form work teams of 2-3 persons to jointly develop a research question related to one specific aspect of China-Taiwan relations and conduct an analysis as a team. If the class size does not allow for forming several teams, students will work independently on a research question. For the onsite intensive workshop from May 19-20, students must prepare the following tasks:

- Create a bibliography with secondary sources (academic literature, expert analyses, and other materials of reliable sources) and accessible primary sources (newspaper articles, cultural productions, historical documents or photos etc) that help answer the respective research question. The bibliography presents up-to-date knowledge and insights.
- Prepare an oral presentation of their group's project that lasts a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 7 minutes, together with an executive summary (3 pages) of the research findings.
- Prepare written and oral feedback for two other projects in class (peer feedback will be guided and organized by the lecturer)
- Final group work output: Participants will bring together their collectively acquired multidisciplinary knowledge about Taiwan-China relations and its diverse ramifications and create innovative learning materials for high school teachers to use

in their classes. In doing so, they learn important research communication skills and contribute to building competencies of Asian societies in their country. The online quiz shall students prepared

Grading

Students will be graded based on the quality of interaction in class, the presentation in class, and the written assignment according to the national grading system 2-5, with 2 being the lowest and 5 the highest accomplishment.

Schedule

April 1: Provision of a recorded lecture on the history of Taiwan-Hongkong-China relations to course participants

April 11 (10-12 am CET): Virtual kickoff meeting on [TEAMS](#)

May 9: Project meeting with updates on project development and challenges, peer feedback instructions

May 19-20: Onsite intensive workshop with project presentations, peer feedback, and start of logistical planning for final stakeholder event (a detailed program will be shared at the kick-off event)

June: at least two project meetings lasting approximately one hour to prepare the final output and stakeholder event

June: Final dissemination and stakeholder event lasting one hour (exact date and time shall be agreed on based on key stakeholder needs)

Course instructor and contact

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Mandatory Reading List

Brady, Anne-Marie. 2015. "Unifying the Ancestral Land: The CCP's 'Taiwan' Frames." *The China Quarterly* 223, 787-806.

DeLisle Jacques and Bonnie Glaser. 2024. "Why UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 Does Not Establish Beijing's "One China" Principle: A Legal Perspective." German Marshall Fund, https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/GMF_UNGA%20Res.%202758_April%202024%20Report.pdf

Hoeffler Anke and Oliver Sterck. 2022. Is Chinese aid different? *World Development* 156: 105908.

Huang, Chin-Hao and Patrick James. 2014. Blue, Green or Aquamarine? Taiwan and the Status Quo Preference in Cross-Strait Relations. *The China Quarterly* 219, 670-692.

Kironska, Kristina and Thiombiano Dramane. "How Taiwan Lost Africa, and What the Future Holds for Its Last Remaining Alliance with Eswatini," edited by Sabella Ogbobode Abbide, *Africa-China-Taiwan Relations, 1949–2020*, (171-192), Lexington: Rowman & Littlefield.

Lin, Dalton. 2022. "One China' and the Cross-Taiwan Strait Commitment Problem. *The China Quarterly* 252. 1094-1116.

Lo, William Lat Wai. 2020. "China suspends study in Taiwan over cross-strait relations." *World University News*, April 25. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200421113224198>

Marinaccio, Julia, Dominika Remzova, and Yi-ju Chen. 2023. "Taiwan's 2024 presidential election and its candidates: What to expect in foreign policy and cross-Strait relations?" *CEIAS Papers*, Central European Institute of Asian Studies, October 9, <https://ceias.eu/taiwans-2024-presidential-election-and-its-candidates>

Roy, Denny. 2003. „Taiwan in the Cold War.“ In *Taiwan: a political history*, edited by Roy Denny (p. 105-152), Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Yang, Linda. 2023. "Breaking Ties: The Fate of Scholarship Recipients." *Taiwan Business Topics*, August 23, <https://topics.amcham.com.tw/2023/08/breaking-ties-the-fate-of-scholarship-recipients/>