

TAIWAN'S DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION

Stanford University
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Version 1.1

Instructor: Kharis Templeman

Email: kharis@stanford.edu

Office: Room 311, HHMB (Hoover Inst.)

Office Hours: Tu 1:30-3:30, and by appt.

Website: www.kharistempleman.com

EASTASN 143/243

Time: Tu-Th 10:30-11:50

Classroom: STLC 119

Canvas site: S25-EASTASN-243-01/143-01

Course Description:

Contemporary Taiwan is one of the leading success stories of the “Third Wave” of democratization. Over the span of about 40 years, Taiwan was gradually transformed from a poor, insecure autocracy ruled under martial law into a prosperous liberal democracy. It now features free, fair, and fiercely contested elections, an independent legislature, a diverse and critical media, and a vibrant civil society sector. At the same time, it has retained a state capable of effective and responsive governance, from the smooth creation of a widely admired universal health care system to the construction of world-class mass transit and high-speed rail systems. Taiwan’s public health authorities also responded to the COVID-19 outbreak with admirable speed and efficiency, striking a careful balance between effective public health measures and the protection of civil liberties that contrasts well with the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, there are also worrisome challenges facing Taiwan’s democracy today. For the last two decades, bitter partisan fights have hindered government responses to rising inequality, an increasingly unbalanced tax base, an aging population and low birth rates, a worsening cross-Strait security balance, and environmental and energy concerns.

Above all, Taiwan’s politics remains fundamentally divided over its relationship with the autocratic People’s Republic of China (PRC), an economic juggernaut and rising military power that asserts the right to rule over Taiwan. There is still no consensus among the Taiwanese about how to balance economic and security interests in their relationship with the PRC, or how to counter the rising military threat from across the Strait. As a consequence, Taiwan’s long-term future is as imperiled as any democracy in the world today.

Taiwan’s global impact has been far greater than its geographic size and population might suggest. Its economy is among the 20 largest in the world, and it has become a key link in the multinational production chains that crisscross East Asia and the Pacific. It is also the home base of one of the world’s most strategically important companies, TSMC, which grew with state backing into the dominant producer of the most advanced semiconductor chips that power everything from smartphones to spy satellites. The cross-Strait relationship is crucial for regional and global security, too, and it remains the only issue that could plausibly draw the United States and the PRC into an armed conflict against one another. Finally, Taiwan is important as a democratic model: it provides a powerful counterexample to the argument that liberal democracy is inappropriate for Chinese-speaking or “Asian values” societies, including the PRC, and it is one of the shining successes of the Third Wave. Democratic failure there, whether through internal unrest or external invasion, would be deeply tragic.

This course assumes no previous knowledge of Taiwan, China, or East Asia, but some familiarity with major themes, concepts, and debates in political science is recommended. These include:

- What causes democracy? That is, what leads to authoritarian breakdown, transitions to democracy, and the successful consolidation of democracy?
- What causes development? That is, what leads to economic growth, improvements in living and health standards, and the capacity of the state to deliver public goods and services to its citizens?
- What explains state survival and death, and inter-state war and peace?
- Why nationalism? That is, how are “national” identities formed, and with what consequences for society and politics?
- Who wins elections, and why?
- When do social movements arise, and how and when do they succeed?
- What is state capacity, and where does it come from?
- How can public officials best be held accountable to citizens?

Each of these broad questions will motivate our examination of a distinct aspect of contemporary Taiwanese politics, and we will use what we learn about the Taiwan case to critically evaluate the general theories offered by political science and other social science disciplines. Thus, a central goal of the class is to place Taiwan’s contemporary politics in broader comparative and theoretical perspectives, drawing out both the ways in which Taiwan is distinct and the commonalities it shares with other democracies.

Course Materials:

Required Books:

Dafydd Fell, *Government and Politics in Taiwan* 2nd Edition (Routledge, 2018)

Thomas Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (M.E. Sharpe, 1986)

Shawna Yang Ryan, *Green Island: A Novel* (Penguin Random House, 2016)

Other readings will be posted to the Canvas site. Some of the readings are excerpts from books; these are available on reserve at Green Library. Most of the rest are also available online through Stanford University library’s various electronic journal databases (e.g. MUSE, JSTOR).

Newspaper Reading

Because we will refer regularly to current events in this course, I encourage you to follow the news in Taiwan on a daily basis. I recommend the *Taipei Times*, Taiwan’s primary English-language daily newspaper, available online at <https://www.taipeitimes.com> or the Central News Agency’s English-language outlet, *Focus Taiwan*, at <https://focustaiwan.tw>. In addition to these, I will post a list of other online media resources (both English- and Chinese-language) on the Canvas site.

Additional Readings and Resources

I may occasionally assign other materials, and I will also post resources for your research projects on the Canvas site. So, please make sure that you have access to the course Canvas site. I also will make frequent use of the Canvas announcement tool and will keep you up to date on course assignments, activities, and any changes via that system, so double check that you can access your official Stanford email account to ensure you receive these notifications.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation

This course will include a mix of lecture and discussion. In general, I will use Thursday’s class to introduce the topic and motivating questions for that week’s material, and the next Tuesday’s class will be

a discussion of the readings. **Assigned readings for each week should be completed before the discussion.**

I expect students to attend every class. Missing a class meeting will have a significant impact on your ability to contribute to the course. More than two unexcused absences (those not due to religious exemptions, COVID-19-related or other major illnesses, or university-approved activities) will lower your final letter grade one interval (e.g. A to A-) per absence. In addition, arriving late to class can be disruptive and is an inconvenience to the rest of us; habitual tardiness will likewise adversely affect your grade.

The simple rule of thumb here: if something outside your control comes up and prevents you from participating in class, let me know as soon as you can, and we will find a way to get you caught up.

Discussion

As befits an upper-level seminar, student-driven discussion is a central part of this course. To this end, you should come to our weekly discussion class prepared to talk about all the assigned readings. Note that the reading load is moderate-to-heavy, and that we will only hold discussion once a week; please plan accordingly.

Discussion Comments

Before 8am on the day of our discussion session, you will post a one- or-two paragraph question or comment about at least one of the assigned readings or recent news items to the Canvas discussion page. I will use these to structure our class discussion around what you find odd, perplexing, controversial, or otherwise worth talking about. This question can ask for a clarification—for instance, about evidence or the argument that you do not understand. Or it can be a substantive issue that you think would be helpful to discuss in class—for instance, how does a reading or recent development in Taiwan relate to something from the lecture? It can even be a critique—say, “this reading sucks, and I want to talk about why!”—or a response to something one of your peers has written. These comments are due before every discussion class (i.e. once a week). You may miss up to two comments before your discussion grade is adversely affected.

I encourage you to use these discussion prompts to engage with each other as well. If one of your classmates posts a discussion question, you can also make your contribution for the week by responding to that question in the forum. This prompt is a chance for you to speak directly with (and argue with—respectfully, of course!) your peers.

A final note here: **if you are responsible for a recap (see next item), you are not required to post a discussion question** for that week—just concentrate on preparing a good recap!

Lecture and Speaker Series Event Recaps

At the beginning of each discussion section, we will have a student give a ~5 minute summary of the previous lecture and/or Taiwan speaker series talk. This presentation should be verbal (no power points or handouts)—think of it as a “cliff notes” briefing of the topics discussed in the previous session. This assignment has a couple objectives: to remind everyone what we previously covered, and to set the stage for that day’s discussion. You will each be responsible for giving one summary presentation to the class. I will pass around a sign-up sheet for recaps on Thursday, April 3.

Commentary Paper on a Weekly Topic

One of the most common forms of media content about Taiwan is the “commentary,” such as what you will find in online magazines like [The Diplomat](#), [Foreign Policy](#), [The National Interest](#), and [The Atlantic](#). These typically take one of two forms (and sometimes both): analysis or advocacy. An *analytical*

commentary provides a detailed discussion of a contemporary political or social issue, informed by a theoretical framework that is meant to help the reader better understand what is happening and why. An *advocacy commentary* presents a clear opinion, often with a recommended set of principles, policies, or courses of action that the writer seeks to persuade readers should be followed.

To give you practice writing in this genre, you will write a ~1000 word commentary on one of the topics of the course. Your commentary should be on a topic of relevance to contemporary Taiwanese politics and should be clearly related to one of our motivating questions or themes. But you are otherwise free to choose the topic, the analytical framework and the position you wish to advocate for. To help stimulate your thinking, I have included several recent sample commentaries in Canvas.

The first draft of your commentary will be due on **Friday, May 9, by 5pm**. I will review these and meet with you to provide feedback on your drafts in a one-on-one meeting in office hours, and you are encouraged to revise them. Final drafts are due on **Tuesday, June 10 at noon**. Submit your commentary by uploading the paper via the Canvas assignment feature. Your draft should be double-spaced and numbered, using 12-point Times New Roman font, with your name, class number, week and date in the upper left-hand corner. For references, it is now standard in these commentaries simply to include links within the text, [like so](#), rather than footnotes or a bibliography.

Credit Units: 4.0 vs 5.0

The default unit number for this course is 4.0 credits. If you wish to register for the 5.0 credit option, you will be asked to write a longer commentary, on the order of 4-5000 words rather than 1000-1200. This is the only additional requirement to earn the extra unit.

Final Take-Home Exam

On May 29, you will be given a take-home final exam, covering all of the material from lectures, discussion, and readings up to that point. The exam will also include a set of essay prompts from which you may choose two to respond to. You will have five days to complete the exam. **The final exam is due on June 3 in class.**

Grading:

Your course grade will be determined as follows:

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| • Participation: | | 30% |
| ○ Attendance: | 10% | |
| ○ Discussion (on Canvas and in class): | 10% | |
| ○ Lecture or event recap: | 10% | |
| • Commentary: | | 30% |
| ○ First draft: | 5% | |
| ○ Final draft: | 25% | |
| • Final exam: | | 40% |

Other Stuff:

Privacy and Security Concerns

Some of the topics we will cover in this course may be politically sensitive. Our class sessions will not be open to the public or recorded, and they are accessible only to registered Stanford students and auditors whose attendance I have explicitly approved. However, this course will also include the option to attend events sponsored by the Hoover Institution's Project on Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific Region, including its

speaker series and symposia. Most of these events will be public. In addition, I may invite special guests with expertise relevant to our course to join our discussions as opportunities arise. I encourage your direct participation in these events and engagement with our guest speakers. But, recognizing that some students may be uncomfortable appearing in public forums, active engagement in these sessions is not required. If you have concerns about privacy or security, please contact me directly.

Email

Email is the easiest way to reach me—I check frequently, and I will do my best to reply promptly. (The one exception is on the weekends, when I do not normally answer email: I will respond on Monday.) I will also send important class announcements to your email account via the Canvas announcement function, so please make sure you have a working email account and check it regularly.

Office Hours

Office hours are for your benefit. I urge you to come to my office hours to talk about any questions you may have about the class or to discuss a topic touched upon in class or in the readings. If you cannot make my regular office hours, I am happy to schedule individual appointments. My office is located at the Hoover Institution in the Herbert Hoover Memorial Building (the old building east of Hoover Tower and north of Green Library), Room 311.

Academic Dishonesty

Per the university, academic dishonest includes “all forms of cheating, falsification, and/or plagiarism.” This includes the use of AI software to generate an essay without permission of your instructor, and swapping answers with a classmate during the final take-home exam. Simply put, don’t do it. If I suspect that you have plagiarized a paper or cheated on an exam, I will follow university procedures to the letter, up to and including receiving a failing grade for the course and referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. Dishonesty has no place in the classroom. If you are not sure what constitutes a violation of this policy, please ask!

Special Accommodations

I am happy to work with students who feel they may require an accommodation for observance of religious holidays, for a disability, or for other kinds of personal issues that may arise over the term. If you anticipate needing a special accommodation, please see me during office hours, preferably early in the term.

I also repost this notice from the Office of Accessible Education (OAE):

“Stanford is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for disabled students. Disabled students are a valued and essential part of the Stanford community. We welcome you to our class.

If you experience disability, please register with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate your needs, support appropriate and reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Academic Accommodation Letter for faculty. To get started, or to re-initiate services, please visit oae.stanford.edu.

If you already have an Academic Accommodation Letter, we invite you to share your letter with us. Academic Accommodation Letters should be shared at the earliest possible opportunity so we may partner with you and OAE to identify any barriers to access and inclusion that might be encountered in your experience of this course.”

And this statement of the University's Campus Disruption Policy (adopted in 1967):

"Because the rights of free speech and peaceable assembly are fundamental to the democratic process, Stanford firmly supports the rights of all members of the University community to express their views or to protest against actions and opinions with which they disagree. All members of the University also share a concurrent obligation to maintain on the campus an atmosphere conducive to scholarly pursuits, to preserve the dignity and seriousness of University ceremonies and public exercises, and to respect the rights of individuals.

The following regulations are intended to reconcile these objectives.

It is a violation of University policy for a member of the faculty, staff, or student body to:

- 1. Prevent or disrupt the effective carrying out of a University function or approved activity, such as classes, lectures, meetings, interviews, ceremonies, the conduct of University business in a University office, and public events.*
- 2. Obstruct the legitimate movement of any person about the campus or in any University building or facility.*

COURSE SCHEDULE

0. Introduction: Taiwan and Its Place in the World

April 1 (Tu). Introductions, Overview of Course, Historical Background

Background Reading

1. Fell, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-10)

1. The Taiwanese Political Miracle: How and Why?

April 3 (Th). Lecture

Background Reading

1. Fell, Ch. 2, 3 (pp. 11-49)

Required Readings for Discussion: Perspectives on Taiwan's Democratization

1. Dan Slater and Joseph Wong, 2013. "The Strength to Concede: Ruling Parties and Democratization in Developmental Asia." *Perspectives on Politics* 11(3): 717-733.
2. Linda Chao and Ramon Myers, 1994. "The First Chinese Democracy: Political Development of the Republic of China on Taiwan, 1986-1994," *Asian Survey* 34(3): 213-230.
3. J. Bruce Jacobs, 2012, *Democratizing Taiwan*, pp. 5-19.
4. Kharis Templeman, "Taiwan's Transition to Democracy and Beyond (1986-2024), in Gunter Schubert, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Taiwan*, pp. 51-67.

April 8 (Tu). Discussion of readings

*****April 8 (Tu), 4:00pm. Optional Taiwan Project Speaker Series Event*****

Randall Schriver:

"Trump and Taiwan: A Big, Beautiful Relationship or the Deal Maker's Ultimate Bargaining Chip?"
Shultz Auditorium, Hoover Institution

2. The Taiwanese Economic Miracle: How and Why?

April 10 (Th): Lecture

Required Reading

1. Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*, full book

*****April 10 (Th), 2:30-5:30pm. Optional Taiwan Project Speaker Series Event*****

"Boom or Bust: Can Taiwan Secure the Energy Supplies It Needs to Meet Its High-Tech Aspirations?"
Shultz Auditorium, Hoover Institution

April 15 (Tu): Discussion of Gold, *State and Society*

3. Taiwan in the Inter-state System: Free China, Renegade Province, or Client State?

April 17 (Th). Lecture

Background Reading

1. Fell, Ch. 9 (pp.171-195)

Required Readings: Perspectives on Taiwan's Status and Security in the Interstate System

1. Scott Kastner, 2018. "International Relations Theory and the Relationship across the Taiwan Strait." *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* 1(1): 161-183.
2. Chengxin Pan, 2012. "Normative Convergence and Cross-Strait Divergence: Westphalian Sovereignty as an Ideational Source of the Taiwan Conflict," in Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Dennis V. Hickey, eds., *New Thinking about the Taiwan Issue*, pp. 28-47.
3. Richard C. Bush, 2017. "A One-China Policy Primer." East Asia Policy Paper No. 10, Brookings Institution, March.
4. Xin Qiang, 2020. "Selective Engagement: Mainland China's Dual-Track Taiwan Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 29 (124): 535-552.

April 22 (Tu). Discussion of national security readings

4. Nationalism and National Identity: Is Taiwan Chinese, Taiwanese, or Both?

April 24 (Th). Lecture

Background Reading

1. Fell, Ch. 8 (pp. 150-170)

Required Readings: Perspectives on Taiwan's Competing National Identity Projects

1. Rwei-ren Wu, 2020. "Nation-State Formation at the Interface: The Case of Taiwan," in Ryan Dunch and Ashley Esarey, eds., *Taiwan in Dynamic Transition*, pp. 47-79.
2. Robert Edmondson, 2002. "The 2-28 Incident and National Identity," in Stephane Corcuff and Robert Edmondson, eds., *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*, pp. 355-375.
3. Tehyun Ma, 2019. "Making Taiwan Chinese: 1945-60." In Alan Baumler, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Revolutionary China*, pp. 202-216.
4. Pei-chia Lan. 2024. "Contesting Boundaries and Navigating Identities: Second-Generation Adult Children from Cross-Border Marriages in Taiwan," *International Migration Review*, forthcoming.

April 29 (Tu). Discussion of national identity readings

5. Parties and Elections: Is Taiwan's Democracy Precocious or Distorted?

May 1 (Th). Lecture

Background Reading

1. Fell, Ch. 5-7 (pp. 66-149).

Required Readings:

1. TJ Cheng and Yung-ming Hsu, 2015. "Long in the Making: Taiwan's Institutionalized Party System," in Allen Hicken and Erik Kuhonta, eds., *Party System Institutionalization in Asia*, pp. 108-135.
2. Yoonkyung Lee, 2014. "Diverging Patterns of Democratic Representation in Korea and Taiwan: Political Parties and Social Movements," *Asian Survey* 54(3): 419-44.
3. Jaw-nian Huang, 2019, "External Threat and Internal Defence: Freedom of the Press in Taiwan, 2008-2018," in Tina Burrett and Jeffrey Kingston, eds., *Press Freedom in Contemporary Asia*.
4. Kharis Templeman, 2020. "How Taiwan Stands Up to China," *Journal of Democracy* 31(3): 85-99.

May 6 (Tu). Discussion of parties and elections readings

6. Civil Society and Social Movements
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May 8 (Th). Lecture

Background Reading:

1. Fell, Ch. 10 (pp. 196-222).

Required Readings:

1. Chang-ling Huang, 2016. "Civil Society and the Politics of Engagement," in *Taiwan's Democracy Challenged: The Chen Shui-bian Years*.
2. Richard Madsen, 2008. "Religious Renaissance and Taiwan's Modern Middle Classes." In Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, ed., *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation*, pp. 295-322.
3. Szu-chien Hsu, 2017. "The China Factor and Taiwan's Civil Society Organizations in the Sunflower Movement," in Dafydd Fell, ed., *Taiwan's Social Movements under Ma Ying-jeou*, pp. 134-53.
4. Chin-en Wu and Yun-han Chu, 2020. "Populism in Taiwan: A Bottom-up Model," in Chin-en Wu et al, *Populism in Asian Democracies*, pp. 38-58.

*****May 9 (F). Commentary drafts due by 5pm, uploaded to Canvas*****

May 13 (Tu). Discussion of civil society and social movements readings

7. Authoritarian Legacies and "Transitional Justice"

May 15 (Th). Lecture

Background Reading:

1. Vladimir Stolojan, 2016, "Transitional Justice and Collective Memory in Taiwan: How Taiwanese Society is Coming to Terms with Its Authoritarian Past." *China Perspectives* 17(2): 27-35.

Required Reading:

1. Shawna Yang Ryan, 2016. *Green Island: A Novel*.

*****May 16 (F), 9:00am-5:15pm. Optional Taiwan Project Event*****
“Workshop on Semiconductor Security and Taiwan”
Four panels

May 20 (Tu). Discussion of *Green Island*, authoritarian legacies, and transitional justice

8. How Democratic Is Taiwan?

May 22 (Tu). Lecture

Background Reading:

1. Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino, 2004, “The Quality of Democracy: An Overview,” *Journal of Democracy* 15(4): 20-31.

Required Readings:

1. Fell, Ch. 11, pp. 223-248.
2. Wei-ting Yen and Li-Yin Liu, 2022, “When Democracy Meets the COVID-19 Pandemic: Taiwan’s Experience,” in John Fuh-sheng Hsieh and Robert Henry Cox, eds., *Democratic Governance in Taiwan*, pp. 129-143.
3. Wan-Ying Yang, 2022, “From Political Democratization to the Claim for Social Justice,” in *Democratic Governance in Taiwan*, pp. 110-128
4. Kharis Templeman, 2022, “How Democratic Is Taiwan?: Evaluating Twenty Years of Political Change.” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 18(2): 1-24.

May 27 (Tu). Discussion of readings

9. Wrap Up

May 29 (Th). Class review for midterm exam.

*****Take-home exam distributed at the end of class*****

June 3 (Tu). Last Class – Wrap up and final reflections

*****Take-home exam due at beginning of class*****

June 10 (Tu). Final commentary paper draft due at 12noon, uploaded to Canvas

GOOD LUCK ON FINALS AND HAVE A GREAT SUMMER BREAK!