

7YYCN005

CONTEMPORARY CHINESE POLITICS



7YYCN005 - Contemporary Chinese Politics (2024-25)

Instructions:

Choose one of the following questions, based on recent news articles, and write a 3,000-word essay for assessment (summative, 90%). Questions are deliberately broad so that you have scope to develop the topic in a way you find interesting. You should draw on the themes of the module in your answer, and must refer to a minimum of 5 readings from the module reading lists.

Before the end of term, you must also submit a 250-500 word plan for the same essay, as your formative assignment (0%). Please engage with the feedback you receive on this when you draft your summative essay.

Note: Re-sitting students should select a different question from the list below.

Essay questions:

1. *"If Mao came back to life, what would he think of a People's Republic of China filled with mega malls, millionaires and multiplexes?"* (South China Morning Post, June 2016). What would Mao be pleased and displeased with politically were he to visit today's China, and why?
2. *"Smartphones, internet and urban living rule out a repeat of Mao's famine cover-up"* (Nikkei Asia, January 2023, on China's Covid-19 death toll). To what extent do you agree with this claim?
3. *"With the topic [of the Cultural Revolution] increasingly taboo, it's hard to imagine that Mr. Liu would be able to publish a book with that premise now."* (The New York Times, April 2024, on Liu Cixin's 2008 book *The Three Body Problem*). Is this true, and if so why?
4. *"The Chinese people understand that the CPC made a decisive decision in 1989 that saved the country and its reforms and opening-up [so that] China eventually withstood a looming color revolution"* (Global Times, June 2021). Has suppression of the 1989 protests enabled the Chinese state to avoid more recent political unrest?
5. *"[The hukou system] gives the lie to common prosperity... Rural people have paid the price for all this prosperity in the cities"* (Financial Times, November 2023). Is this a plausible account of China's development since the early 2000s?
6. The 2022 White Paper Protests were *"part of a series of events that saw a resurgence of critical voices in China in recent years...a political awakening [that] continues brewing among young people in China"* (BBC, December 2023). How accurate is this as a characterisation of contemporary China's political scene?

7. *"The ultimate goal... is to decimate any remaining civil society, so Chinese people only exist as isolated individuals that have no agency, no thinking of their own and no power to resist state control"* (Washington Post, June 2024, on the sentencing of #MeToo activists for "subversion of state power"). Is this a convincing account of the aims of the current Chinese state?
8. *"This kind of violence is the result of long-term education of hatred"* (CNN, September 2024, on the murder of a Japanese schoolchild in Shenzhen, 2024). To what extent is this a plausible assessment of China's patriotic education under Xi?
9. *"Whereas liberals thought Xi would follow the policies of Wang Yang – the Guangdong secretary who negotiated with revolting peasants and tolerated the existence of NGOs – it's actually Bo he seems to have drawn inspiration from"* (Le Monde, May 2024). Is the comparison between Xi Jinping and Bo Xilai a useful one?
10. *"Recent archaeological findings in Kashgar, Xinjiang... prove beyond doubt the region has always had historical, cultural and political relations with China. The developments will... help build a theoretical framework for the Chinese nation's unified identity."* (China Daily, September 2024). Why might such a theoretical framework be deemed necessary by the Chinese state?

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