**Description**

China's rise as a great power raises important questions about how that power might be used in its relations with other states. Nowhere are such questions more salient than in the future trajectory of China's conflict behavior, including its approach to deterrence, crisis management and the use of force. To explore these important questions in China's international relations, this seminar examines the evolution of Chinese strategic thought, in primary sources as well as its reflection in the interactions among Chinese states and between China and other states. To understand the degree of continuity between the past and the present, the majority of the course will explore the evolution of strategic thought in ancient and imperial China, while the role of strategy in modern and contemporary China will be examined in the final sessions. The seminar will focus on a close reading of classic Chinese texts on strategy, such as Sun Zi's *Art of War* and Mao Zedong's writings, along with relevant secondary literature on diplomatic, military and intellectual history.

The course has several goals. The first is to introduce students to the content of Chinese strategic thought in order to understand the degree of continuity and discontinuity reflected in subsequent theory and practice. The second goal is to consider the extent to which China may be described as possessing a unique strategic culture or approach to strategy.

The seminar will raise many questions, but few may be answered decisively. Students will be expected to read widely and wrestle with concepts, not just accumulate facts. The reading load is heavy and students must complete all the assignments for each session. Class meetings will emphasize discussion, not lectures.

**Materials**

The following books are available for purchase at the Coop or online:

Sawyer Ralph (trans). *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Westview, 1993)
Smith, Kidder (trans). *The Art of War: The Denma Translation* (Shambhala, 2001)

Other readings are available on the Stellar website:

**Requirements and Grading**

The first requirement is active participation in seminar discussion. A successful seminar requires attendance at every meeting, completion of all readings and active, and engaged participation in the class. To stimulate discussion, students may be assigned to give short presentations on assigned readings or to serve as “resident expert” for that week’s readings. The second requirement is a research paper on the topic of your choice. Grades will be determined as follows: class participation (50%) and research paper (50%).

**Information for Undergraduates**

Advanced undergraduates may enroll in the course only with the permission of the instructor. A background in China as well as international relations is necessary for mastering the material that will be covered. Undergraduates will be evaluated along the same criteria: class participation (50%) and a research paper (50%). Undergraduates may choose a second a grading option, substituting two take-home essays, each roughly 15 pages in length, for the research paper. These essays must demonstrate a command of the readings in the course.

**Course Information and Policies**

**Disabilities.** If you have a disability and require accommodations, please contact me immediately so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

**Extensions.** Make-up exams or extensions will not be granted except in case of emergency and in all cases require a note from the Dean or your doctor. Late work will be penalized by one third of a grade for each day that the assignment is late (e.g., a B to B-). The key dates for assignments in this course are outlined above.

**Plagiarism.** Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is “a piece of writing that has been copied from someone else and is presented as being your own work.” This includes ideas as well as specific phrases, sentences or paragraphs. **Do not misrepresent your own work.** See Avoiding Plagiarism from MIT’s Writing Center (web.mit.edu/writing/Citation/plagiarism.html) and MIT’s rules regarding academic honesty (web.mit.edu/policies/10.0.html).

**Writing.** The Writing and Communication Center (12-132) offers you free professional advice from published writers about oral presentations and about all types of academic, creative, and professional writing. To schedule an appointment, go to http://web.mit.edu/writing and click on the yellow sunburst. The Center’s hours are Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Friday 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; and Sundays, 5:00-9:00 p.m.
SCHEDULE MEETINGS AND READINGS

3 FEBRUARY

Introduction

10 FEBRUARY

Strategy and Strategic Culture


Cerami, Joseph and James Holcomb, eds., *U.S Army War College Guide to Strategy* (Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), Ch. 6, 7, Appendix

Johnston, Alistair Iain. *Cultural Realism*, Ch. 1


17 FEBRUARY

(No Class – Monday Schedule of Classes)

24 FEBRUARY

Ancient Chinese Thought


3 MARCH

Sun Zi and the Art of War


10 MARCH

Six Secret Teachings, Wu Tzu and Wei Liao-tzu


17 MARCH

Romance of the Three Kingdoms


24 MARCH

*(No Class – Spring Break!)*

31 MARCH

Commentaries on the *Art of War* and Deception


7 APRIL

Mao Zedong: Thought

Mao, Zedong, in *Selected Military Writings*:
“Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War“
“Problems of Strategy in Guerilla War Against Japan“
“On Protracted War“
“Problems of War and Strategy“

Mao, Zedong, “On Contradiction,” in *Selected Works*


14 APRIL

Mao Zedong Practice


Mott, William H. and Jae Chang Kim, The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture (Palgrave, 2007), pp. 16-42

Korea


Scobell, Andrew. China’s Use of Military Force (Cambridge, 2003), Ch. 4.

Soviet Union


Fravel, M. Taylor. Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China’s Territorial Disputes (Princeton, 2008), Ch. 4

21 APRIL

(No Class – President’s Day)

28 APRIL

Contemporary China: Military Strategy


5 MAY

Contemporary China: Grand Strategy


China’s National Defense in 2008 (State Council Information Office, 2009), pp. TBD

Sawyer, Ralph. The Tao of Deception: Unorthodox Warfare in Historic and Modern China, 375–401.

12 MAY

Assessing China’s Strategic Culture

Johnston, Alastair Iain. Cultural Realism, Ch. 2, 3, 6, 7.

Michael Handel, Masters of War, Sun Tzu, Clausewitz and Jomini (Frank Cass, 1992), pp. TBD.

