China and the Internet: 
Challenging America in Cyberspace
BLHV 393-01

Instructor: Paula Harrell, Ph.D.
Adjunct Professor of Liberal Studies
psh24@georgetown.edu
Tel: 301-980-7748
Office hours: by appointment

Course Information
September 3 – December 10
Wednesday 5:20 PM – 7:50 PM
*online class Saturday 9/13,
4:00 – 5:30 PM
*no class 11/26

Course Description
With US-China cybertensions, Alibaba’s upcoming IPO launch, and Chinese expansionary moves in the East and South China seas dominating the news media these days, Americans in 2014 are tuned in as never before to China’s projection of economic and political power on the global stage. Less well understood are how China’s Internet-based economy developed so rapidly, how the multiple cyber challenges we see today will affect relations between the US and China, the world’s first and second largest economies, and what China’s 600 million Internet users appear to want from their own Internet in this era of unprecedented connectivity. BLHS 393-01 aims to fill this gap. It provides a comprehensive look at China’s economy, business, technology, and social media along with analysis of the ongoing impact of these fast-changing sectors on the party-state structure and relations with the US and other regional actors in the Pacific.

The course is organized into five study units: 1) an initial “China briefing” introduces students to China’s geography, resources, environmental problems, political system; 2) a historical context section traces the role of new communications technology from the early 20th century to China’s stunning economic rise post-1979; 3) a section on business and technology examines China’s e-commerce market, online entertainment, and the strategic steps China is taking to move from being a component parts supplier to a high-end manufacturer of Internet devices; 4) a section on domestic Internet governance focuses on online activism in particular and, in general, on the process whereby the Chinese state and its citizens negotiate new boundaries in the new public space created by the Internet; and 5) a final section on US-China engagement in cyberspace grapples with the currently contentious issues of cybersecurity, cyberlaw, and cyber risks to multinationals doing business in China.

Course Goals
The course aims to introduce students to China’s IT sector—what the Internet means to China and what China means to the Internet—at the same time as enabling them to develop important “China skills,” i.e., familiarity with China’s geography and language and knowledge of its
political, social, economic systems. Being able to talk knowledgeably about China at a time when China is at the center of global economic decision making will no doubt give students an edge in discussions with present and potential employers in a range of fields. The course will be conducted through the usual classroom lectures, discussions, media presentations, and guest speakers, but with particular emphasis on student summaries of and opinion pieces on the assigned readings. Through a semester research paper, students will have the opportunity to explore in depth a single aspect of “China and the Internet,” an enormously important topic for their own and America’s future.

**Learning Objectives**
The student who has mastered the content of this course will be able to:

1) describe China’s geographic setting and system of governance;
2) think in broad historical terms about the role of information technology in China;
3) tell the basic story of China’s industrial development, 1980s-present, and identify problems and prospects for China’s economy moving forward;
4) provide for the non-China watcher an overview of the multiple ways in which the Internet functions in Chinese society today;
5) discuss in depth Chinese perspectives on such issues as Internet governance, the Internet as a tool for dissent, and the role of U.S. Internet companies in China;
6) read with a discriminating eye U.S. media reports on China and the Internet;
7) demonstrate familiarity with the major (English language) source materials and leading experts engaged in analyzing China Internet issues;
8) discuss knowledgeably the balancing act the Chinese state faces today as it actively promotes the spread of cutting edge Internet technology on the one hand while on the other it seeks to control and circumscribe Internet content; and
9) write succinct analyses of book chapters/articles and produce a well written, mature research paper that develops a logical argument backed by evidence from reliable sources.

**Course readings**
All readings for this course will be available either online or through Lauinger Library’s e-reserve.

**Requirements and Grading**
Course requirements and their relative weights in the final grade are as follows:

1. Summaries of each week’s readings to be posted on Blackboard before class: 20%
2. Participation in panel discussions in class and Q and A with guest speakers (questions to be prepared beforehand and handed in at the end of class): 20%
3. Two quizzes: 20%
4. Oral presentation on research topic (15 minute): 10%
5. 12-15 page (double space, 12 pt) research paper: 30%

The foundational work of the course in the early weeks will enable the student to home in on a more specialized research topic to be selected by week 7 from a list handed out by the instructor. Papers are due December 10. In writing their papers, students are expected to follow standard citation systems, either Turabian’s *Student’s Guide to Writing College Papers* or *The Chicago
Manual of Style. Students will make oral presentations summarizing the findings of their papers in weeks 13 and 14. The basis for grading the research papers is as follows: written expression (grammar/spelling/word use)=20%, organization (clarity of thesis statement/logical construction of argument or analysis)=30%, evidence (use of solid, carefully considered data in support of main points)=30%, and creativity (original observations and broad insights derived from deep understanding of course material)=20%. The short online postings will be graded with the same weight given to written expression, organization, evidence and creativity but with the emphasis here on succinct summation and synthesis of the main points in the readings. For writing assistance, please note the availability of free coaching at the University Writing Center:
http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu

Georgetown’s grading system is as follows:
93-100%=A, 90-92%=A-
87-89%=B+, 83-86%=B, 80-82%=B-
77-79%=C+, 73-76%=C, 70-72%=C-
67-69%=D+, 60-66%=D, Below 60%=F

No credit will be given for any assignment that is submitted late without the prior approval of the instructor. In the case of an approved late submission, the grade will be reduced by 10% for each day it is overdue. A grade of incomplete for the course as a whole must be submitted for consideration by the Dean by December 3.

In order to cover the required material (see below) in a mere 14 sessions, it is essential that students attend each and every class and, furthermore, that students arrive on time to avoid disrupting the session which will begin promptly at 5:20 pm. Attendance will be checked at the start of class. Being late by 30 minutes or more will constitute an absence. Students with two absences for any reason may receive a failing grade for the course. While audio recording of class sessions is not permitted, students are strongly encouraged to take notes in class; laptop computers may be used for this purpose.

Resources and Policies
Georgetown Honor Code: All students are expected to adhere to the provisions of the honor code absolutely without exception. Please read the honor code material available at www.georgetown.edu/honor, in particular, Honor Council Pamphlet, “What is Plagiarism?” “Sanctioning Guidelines,” and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.” When submitting material in fulfillment of requirements for this course, keep in mind the Georgetown honor pledge as follows:

“In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.”

Any student in violation of the honor code will be subject to academic penalties, including failure of the course which is automatic in the case of plagiarism. Please note that papers in this course may be submitted to Turnitin.com for checking.
If you have a disability, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or arc@georgetown.edu for information about accommodations.

Topics and Reading Assignments

I. Introduction

Week 1: Sept 3: **Review of syllabus/China briefing:** Introduction to the course and each other, and an overview of China’s geographical setting and political structures.

**Reading:**
1. syllabus
3. PowerPoint presentation

Week 2: Sept 10: **Global and China-specific Internet issues:** From his look at the US historical record, Tim Wu argues that communications technologies invariably go through cycles of open and closed systems, freedom for network users followed by monopolies. Further, he (and Goldsmith) argues that it is an illusion to think that sovereignty issues are not at play in global internet communications today. Consider these points as you read the Herold article. Compare the development of the Internet in China and the US and the question of who controls the technology in each case.

**Reading:**


Week 2 **online class:** Sept 13: **Exploration of Chinese websites:** Tour of major Chinese websites, followed by Q and A on Blackboard. Before session **view the videos and sample the websites listed below:**
II. Historical Context

Week 3: Sept 17: **Information technology past and present:** We tend to view today’s Internet in China as a uniquely unstoppable political change agent, but the Zhou readings show that earlier breakthroughs in communications technologies similarly broadened political participation at the same time as triggering government efforts to control both the media and the message. To move us to the post-1979 context for IT development, the Lieberthal and Steinfeld readings take a comparative look at early 20th and early 21st century China in societal attitudes, state-society relations, and patterns of institutional and technical borrowing from abroad.

**Reading:**

**Quiz on the China briefing from week 1**

Week 4: Sept 24: **Internet growth in a booming economy, 1990s-2013:** Steinfeld explores the assumptions behind the “China rise” phenomenon, providing the context for Zhou’s discussion of government policy toward Internet growth and the CNNIC’s macro look at Internet development as of July 2013.

**Reading:**
III. Internet Business and Technology

Week 5: Oct 1: **Who uses the Internet in China?** This session fills out the statistical overview provided in the CNNIC report with a closer look at Internet users by social grouping and the reality of Internet use in an individual’s everyday life. **Guest speaker: Dr. Wang Jiao,** University of Hawaii/Manoa

**Reading:**

Week 6: Oct 8: **China’s e-commerce, entertainment, social networking:** This session shifts the focus from Internet users to Internet entrepreneurs in China and what makes their startup experiences and business practices distinctively Chinese.

**Reading:**


“Alibaba, a trailblazing Chinese internet giant, will soon go public”

In-class YouTube video: Alibaba’s Jack Ma/Stanford University Business School

Week 7: Oct 15: **Mobile Internet Sector/Partnering with Foreign Firms:** Guest speaker, Song Lin, General Manager, Opera China at Opera Software, will explain the strategic thinking and operational considerations behind the joint venture concluded in 2011 between Norway-based Opera, the world’s leading provider of mobile browsers, and China’s major mobile phone distributor, Telling Telecom. The latest (July, 2013) numbers from CNNIC suggest the huge market opportunity in the mobile Internet sector: 464 million of China’s 591 million netizens now use smartphones or other wireless devices instead of or in addition to a laptop or PC.

Reading:
Steinfeld, “Playing to Win?” *Playing Our Game*, 141-175.

**Paragraph on selection of research paper topics due today**

**IV. Domestic Internet Governance**

Week 8: Oct 22: **The Internet, Political Contention, and Cybercontrols:** The burgeoning of China’s Internet population over the last decade has intensified the debate over the impact of online life on Chinese social norms, cultural patterns, and political institutions. Is democratization happening? If so, what form is it taking? Is there room for liberal activists like Ai Weiwei? Or is the Party-state norm itself morphing into something more acceptable to Internet users who are increasingly senior citizens and perhaps therefore more accepting of Internet controls?
Reading:


Interview with artist/celebrity blogger Ai Weiwei: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29tk6vQXV64 (listen to parts in English)

Quiz on China’s Internet websites

Week 9: Oct 29: The Internet and Civic Activism: As a facilitator of social networks and the free flow of information, the Internet is usually viewed as a democratizing instrument, inherently opposed to the type of one-party system that exists in China. In actual fact the China case is more complex than that. While the jury is out on its ultimate political impact, the Internet in China to date has served to moderate state-society tensions by allowing netizen groups to air complaints and press for policy changes and the government to distribute information and mobilize public opinion in support of its goals.

Reading:


“The Sichuan Earthquake and the Changing Landscape of CSR in China,” www.knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/printer_friendly.cfm?articleid=2213


Week 10: Nov 5: New Internet Nationalism: The Internet provides fertile ground for the growth of popular nationalism, and in this sphere political participation is tolerated and robust. But this new youth-inspired nationalism is a double-edged sword: it can be a unifying device supportive of Party-state legitimacy or turn against the regime for perceived weaknesses in protecting China’s sovereign rights.
Reading:
- Fengshu Liu, “From Political Indifference to Vehement Nationalism,” *Urban Youth in China: Modernity, the Internet and the Self*, 161-179.

In-class YouTube video: Uighur riots, Xinjiang 2009

V. US-China Engagement in Cyberspace

Week 11: Nov 12: Cyber risks to doing business in China: Guest speaker: (Mountain View, Global HQ). The case of Google versus China points up sharply not only the day-to-day operational complexities of doing business in China but also the big unresolved question of global Internet governance: will it/should it follow the Google business model (privatized control as some would call it), the Chinese authoritarian network model or something in between? To put it differently, is the Internet changing China or is China changing the Internet?

Reading:


“Google’s Schmidt Predicts End of China’s Internet Firewall,” (July 10, 2012) [www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2406879,00.asp](www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2406879,00.asp)

Week 12: Nov 19: Cybersecurity: Readings for our final sessions are intended to stimulate sober, analytical discussion of the American and Chinese positions on cybersecurity and global
Internet governance generally. Is there room for accommodation on these issues so enormously important to the future of US-China relations?

Reading:


U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, July 2013

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/12/world/asia/us-and-china-to-discuss-investment-treaty-but-cybersecurity-is-a-concern.html?_r=0


No class November 26

Week 13: Dec 3: Cybersecurity: December 2014 update and final class debate

Week 14: Dec 10 ***Research Papers due*** student oral presentations on research findings

Note: This syllabus may be corrected or updated during the semester.