



ITSS
International Team
For the Study of Security
Verona

Summer School Track: US-China relations: history, concepts, and contemporary issues

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Module Description

This track provides a comprehensive, thorough overview of US-China relations over the last five decades. It comes at a very topical moment, just as China celebrated its 20 years within the World Trade Organization on December 11, and fifty years have passed since Nixon and Mao agreed on re-opening relations between Washington, D.C. and Beijing. The module seeks to critically engage with concepts and events core to US-China relations by considering both sides of this dynamic.

Aims

By providing lectures and seminars, we will help our students **embrace and appreciate the complexity** inherent to great power competition. As such, this module aims to **inspire** participants to **think as holistically as possible** about the core tenets and long-term implications of US-China Grand Strategy for the future of international politics. During seminars, we will foster dynamic debates to create interactive, stimulating, and thought-provoking conversations. With classes provided by world-leading experts, this track will explore the great power struggles that will define the next century.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, participants will be able to demonstrate the following:

Knowledge and understanding of:

- Major dilemmas surrounding theories, drivers, and dynamics of great power competition
- History of US and China relations
- Turning points in this bilateral relationship and key friction areas
- Future development in US-China grand strategy and how they will determine the future of global politics

Skills (specific to the module):

- Identification of core Grand Strategy dynamics and debates
- Analysis of the drivers and determinants of great power competition in the 21st century
- Application of key parameters in assessing the US-China bilateral relationship

Transferable/employability skills (through the seminars):

- Communication and presentation skills
- Argumentation based on complexity and systems-dynamics
- Mental flexibility in assessing future political developments
- Making connections between historical realities and current global dynamics
- Respect – for every actor's research, work, and overall perspective

Teaching arrangements

The module is divided into **eight lessons** spread across **four weekends** on Friday morning and afternoon, equalling **12 hours total**. Teaching sessions will be delivered remotely. Lessons feature **frontal lectures** (1 hour) and **short seminars** (30 minutes). Images, videos, online material, as well as live interviews with world-leading experts, will facilitate interactive and practical lectures. Seminars gravitate around one or two pivotal questions that naturally arise from the underlying themes. **Participants are encouraged to engage**, contribute to scholarly debate, defend their arguments, and, ultimately, share potential solutions to concrete problems.

Hence, this is how the module is specifically divided:

Friday, June 10th, 2022

Lesson #1: “Introduction to Grand Strategy”

What is grand strategy? What are the core tenets of American grand strategy? Dr Zeno Leoni (KCL and ITSS Verona) explores these issues, going back to pre-WW2 American grand strategy. Then, we delve into Chinese grand strategy and China’s strategic philosophy.

Lesson #2: “US-China relations from Kissinger’s secret trip to the Bush Administration”

What led to the reproachment between the US and China? We critically engage with the idea of blowback to enquire if the US has awakened its would-be rival. Dr Zeno Leoni (KCL and ITSS Verona) will go back to Carter and the US one-China policy, tensions with Congress, and the ambiguity of Reagan’s China policy to study the development of this bilateral relationship.

Friday, June 17th, 2022

Lesson #3: “The strategic oversight of China’s rise in the post-Cold War years”

Delving into Globalization theory and thinking critically about the unipolar moment, we explore China’s rise. In this session, Dr Zeno Leoni (KCL and ITSS Verona) will provide an overview of the Clinton Administration and China’s access to the WTO, G. W. Bush’s evolution from a China hawk to the War on Terror, and the “responsible stakeholder” speech. Beyond this, we contextualize the main dynamics of Sino-American tensions after the Cold War.

Lesson #4: “A post-American world order?”

In this session, Dr Zeno Leoni (KCL and ITSS Verona) will explore the concepts of multipolarity, bipolarity, and unipolarity, debating about the current nature of power and how multipolarity has affected regions of the world. Additionally, we explore US-China competition in the First Island Chain.

Friday, June 24th, 2022

Lesson #5: “US-China relations from Obama to Biden”

Delving into Obama’s grand strategy, Dr Zeno Leoni (KCL and ITSS Verona) looks at Obama’s pivot to Asia. Then, we shift to Trump’s grand strategy and Trump’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific. In this line, we counter with China’s strategy during the Xi Jinping era and Biden’s Build Back Better World.

Lesson #6: “From unrestricted warfare to Covid-19: China’s grey zone warfare?”

Dr Zeno Leoni (KCL and ITSS Verona) analyzes the core tenets of the book “Unrestricted Warfare”, exploring China’s use of social media during Covid-19 in Italy and China’s military-strategic philosophy (Sun Tzu, Marxism).

Friday, July 1st, 2022

Lesson #7: “A New Cold War?”

We explore the core academic debates surrounding the Cold War. Particularly, Dr Zeno Leoni (KCL and ITSS Verona) presents the core areas of cooperation and competition during this period – including climate change and the Middle East. In this line, we explore differences and similarities in Cold War strategies and the centrality of the allies.

Lesson #8: “How do other countries see the New Cold War?”

Dr Zeno Leoni (KCL and ITSS Verona) explores the economy-security conundrum. Given everything that the track has encountered so far, the last session departs from the US and Chinese perspectives to give us a global view of the implications for other countries – specifically the UK, Italy, South Korean, and Australian perspectives, due to their social, economic, and cultural importance of these states.

Module requirements

There are no formal requirements for this module. Everyone with an interest in the aforementioned topics is welcome.

Referenced sources/Supplemental materials

A full list of reading/viewing materials will be provided in due course.