

**HIST/EALC 296B:
China and Africa: Historical Encounters and Contemporary Legacies**

Instructor: Ruodi Duan

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Office Hours: Mondays 1:30-3:30pm (Hall Basement 1C)

Time: Mondays/Wednesdays 11:30-1pm

Location: GEST 101



Tanzanian Vice President Rashidi Kawawa, accompanied by Chinese officials, inspecting construction of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (1972)

China's economic and cultural presence in Africa has expanded dramatically since 2000, especially after Chinese President Xi Jinping's launch of the "Belt and Road Initiative" in 2013. To fully understand the China-Africa relationship of the twenty-first century, it is essential to examine its historical precedents. Records of trade and diplomacy between China and East Africa date back to premodern times. During the Cold War, the China state supplied material aid, military support, and ideological legitimacy to newly independent countries and liberation movements throughout continental Africa—under the logic of Afro-Asian solidarity and to present its own model of modernization and development as alternatives to Western Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Contemporary China-Africa relations echo the Mao era in rhetoric even as new patterns of investment and migration have taken hold.

This semester, we will draw from scholarship, journalism, film, and popular culture to explore the modes and implications of foreign aid, diverse experiences of travel and resettlement between China and Africa, and the role of race in past and present constructions of China-Africa relations. No previous experience in the study of Chinese or African history is assumed or required.

Texts:

1. Jamie Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway: How a Chinese Development Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009)
2. Ching Kwan Lee, *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017)
3. Gordon Mathews, *Ghetto at the Center of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011)

All of these books are held on reserve at the library, and other assigned articles and chapters will be made accessible on Moodle.

Class Requirements and Grades:

Attendance (20%): Attendance is important because our discussions together are the heart of the class, and your participation is valuable. Remember, there are many different ways that you can participate and push a conversation forward. In addition to drawing an observation about a given text, you might also: ask someone to clarify or elaborate a statement, make a connection between multiple contributions, explain how you found another comment useful, or build on what someone else has said.

Reflections (15%): Five times during the semester, you will upload to Moodle discussion threads your brief reflections (200-300 words) on the readings for the week, to be submitted by the end of the day on Tuesday; they can serve as a space to meditate on themes distilled from course readings, classroom discussions, personal experiences, and relevant questions or problems in the contemporary world. All on-time submissions will receive full credit. You're invited to read through the reflections of your peers before class on Wednesdays.

Midterm Paper (20%): The prompt for the midterm paper (5-7 pages, double-spaced) will be distributed during the semester. The due date is the end of day on Friday, March 3. I will provide detailed written feedback on your paper.

Project Proposal (5%): A short proposal (150-250 words) for your final project is due to Moodle on Wednesday, March 15 before class. It should identify a clear research question or topic, the medium through which you plan to convey your findings, and a few potential sources you may wish to consult. All on-time submissions will receive full credit.

Final Paper or Multimedia Project (25%): You have a choice of medium for this final project. It can take the form of a traditional written paper (6-8 pages), a short film, a creative work, an infographic, a webpage, or something else entirely. Detailed requirements will be provided later in the semester, but the topic—so long as it's broadly related to the past or present of China-Africa relations—is open to you. The due date is 5PM on Saturday, May 6 (for seniors) and 12PM on Friday, May 12 (for non-seniors).

Presentation on Final Paper or Project (15%): Three of the final class meetings are reserved for student presentations on their final papers and multimedia projects. Detailed guidelines will be provided later on during the semester.

Accessibility:

I am committed to partnering with you on your intellectual journey. I recognize that your ability to thrive academically can be impacted by your personal well-being and that stressors may impact you over the course of the semester. If the stressors are academic, I welcome the opportunity to discuss those with you to find solutions together. If you are experiencing other challenges, I hope you will also consider reaching out to the resources available on campus. They include CAPS (free and unlimited counseling is available), the Office of Academic Resources, Health Services, Professional Health Advocate, Religious and Spiritual Life, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the GRASE Center, and the Dean's Office. Additional information can be found [here](#).

Additionally, Haverford College is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and providing equal access to students with a disability. If you have a learning difference or disability—mental health, medical, or physical impairment—please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at hc-ads@haverford.edu.

Students who have been approved to receive accommodations should share their accommodation letter and speak with me about how accommodations can be implemented. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and do require advance notice. But if at any point in the semester, a disability or personal circumstances affect your learning and there are ways in which the structure of the course could be adapted to better facilitate your full participation, do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Citations:

The preferred citations for this class are Chicago-style footnotes or endnotes, which are most often used in history. A short guide can be found [here](#).

Tentative Course Schedule:

Week 1:

Introductions

January 18th:
Syllabus & Expectations

Week 2:

What is the China Model?

January 23rd:

1. Howard French, "[The Next Empire](#)," *The Atlantic* (May 2010)
2. Deborah Brautigham and Megan Rithmire, "[The Chinese 'Debt Trap' is a Myth](#)," *The Atlantic* (February 6, 2021)

January 25th:

1. Eli Friedman, "[Why China is Capitalist](#)," *Spectre* (July 15, 2020)
2. Richard Smith, "[Why China isn't Capitalist \(Despite the Pink Ferraris\): A Reply to Eli Friedman](#)," *Spectre* (August 17, 2020)
3. Hong Zhang, "[Builders from China: From Third-World Solidarity to Globalized State Capitalism](#)," *Made in China Journal* (December 1, 2021)

Week 3:

Premodern Encounters

January 30th:

1. Julie Wilensky, "[The Magical Kumbh and Devil Slaves](#)," Sino-Platonic Papers No. 122 (July 2002)
2. [Giraffe with Two Keepers](#) (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

February 1st (In-class visit with librarians):

1. Krishan Kumar, "What Can the Chinese Experience of Empire Tell Us About the Belt and Road Initiative?" *Theory and Society* 51 (2022): pp. 729-760
2. Khanya Mtshali, "[China's Ancient South Africa History is Based on a Misunderstanding](#)," *Quartz* (July 14, 2017)

Week 4:

Empire, Labor, and Gold Rush

February 6th:

1. Yoon Jung Park, "Early Chinese Migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa: Contract Labourers and Traders," in Karsten Giese and Laurence Marfaing eds., *Chinese and African Entrepreneurs: Social Impacts of Interpersonal Encounters* (Leiden: Brill, 2019): pp. 84-99
2. Mae Ngai, "Trouble on the Rand: The Chinese Question in South Africa and the Apogee of White Settlerism," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 91 (2017): pp. 59-78

February 8th:

1. Tu T. Huynh, "Loathing and Love: Postcard Representations of Indentured Chinese Laborers in South Africa's Reconstruction, 1904-1910," *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 9 (2008): pp. 395-425
3. [Recommended] Christopher Lee, "Decolonizing 'China-Africa Relations': Toward a New Ethos of Afro-Asianism," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 33 (2021): pp. 230-237

Week 5:

The Cold War

February 13th:

1. G. Thomas Burgess, "Mao in Zanzibar: Nationalism, Discipline, and the (De)Construction of Afro-Asian Solidarities," in Christopher Lee ed., *Making a World after Empire*, pp. 196-234
2. [Recommended] Christopher Lee, "Introduction: Between a Moment and an Era," in Christopher Lee ed., *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010): pp. 1-32

February 15th:

1. Jeremy Friedman, "Free at Last, Now What: The Soviet and Chinese Attempts to Offer a Roadmap for the Postcolonial World," *Modern Chinese Studies* 22 (2015): pp. 259-592
2. Gregg Brazinsky, "[Showcasing the Chinese Version of Modern-tea in Africa](#)," Working Paper #80, The Cold War International History Project (July 2016)

Week 6:

Maoism and Ideology

February 20th:

1. Priya Lal, "Maoism in Tanzania: Material Connections and Shared Imaginaries," in Alexander C. Cook ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014): pp. 96-116

2. Stephen Jackson, "China's Third World Foreign Policy: The Case of Angola and Mozambique, 1961–93," *The China Quarterly* 142 (1995): pp. 388–422

February 22nd:

1. Julia Strauss, "The Past in the Present: Historical and Rhetorical Lineages in China's Relations with Africa," *The China Quarterly* 199 (2009): pp. 777-795
2. Olu Oguibe, "[Samuel Fosso: Emperor of Africa](#)," *Aperture Portfolios* (January 28, 2016)

Week 7:

An Alternative Development?

February 27th:

1. Jamie Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, pp. 1-12 and pp. 35-70 (Chapters 1 and 3)
2. Political posters from the Stefan R. Landsberger Collection ([Theme: African Friends](#))

March 1st:

1. Jamie Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, pp. 93-123 (Chapter 5)
2. Ismail Einashe, "[Letter from Africa: The Great Train Safari from Tanzania to Zambia](#)," *BBC News* (November 18, 2019)

Mid-term Papers due end of Friday, March 3

Week 8:

SPRING BREAK

Week 9:

China in Africa

March 13th:

1. Ching Kwan Lee, *The Specter of Global China*, pp. 57-92 (Chapter 3)
2. Miriam Driessen, "[Africa Drifters](#)," *Made in China Journal* (January 25, 2021)

March 15th (Project proposal due before class):

1. Ching Kwan Lee, *The Specter of Global China*, pp. 93-122 (Chapter 4)
2. Michael Soi, [China Loves Africa](#) (Installation)

Week 10:

Africa in China

March 20th:

1. Zhigang Li, Laurence J. C. Ma, and Desheng Xue, "An African Enclave in China: The Making of a New Transnational Urban Space," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 50 (2009): pp. 699–719
2. Roberto Castillo, "Landscapes of Aspiration in Guangzhou's African Music Scene: Beyond the Trading Narrative," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44 (2015): pp. 83-115

March 22nd: NO READING

In-class: *Guangzhou Dream Factory* (2016) & Discussion

Week 11:

Race and Difference

March 27th:

1. Philip Hsiaopong Liu, "Petty Annoyances? Revisiting John Emmanuel Hevi's *An African Student in China* after 50 Years," *China: An International Journal* 11 (2013): pp. 131-145
2. Derek Sheridan, "The Semiotics of Heiren (黑人): Race, Everyday Language, and Discursive Complicities in a Chinese Migrant Community," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2022): pp. 1-15

March 29th:

1. Mingwei Huang, "The Chinese Century and the City of Gold: Rethinking Race and Capitalism," *Public Culture* 33 (2021): pp. 193-215
2. Joseph Goldstein, "[Kenans Say Chinese Investment Brings Racism and Discrimination](#)," *New York Times* (October 15, 2018)

Week 12:

Media and Culture

April 3rd:

1. Cobus van Staden, "Watching Hong Kong Martial Arts Film under Apartheid," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 29 (2017): pp. 46-62
2. Roberto Castillo, "[Of Blackfaces and Sino-African Modernities](#)," *Africans in China* (2018)

April 5th: NO READING

Screening of *Wolf Warrior II* (in lieu of class)

Location/time TBD

Week 13:

South-South Globalization

April 10th:

1. Gordon Mathews, *Ghetto at the Center of the World*, pp. 1-6 and 57-103 (Prelude and Chapter 2)

April 12th:

1. Gordon Mathews, *Ghetto at the Center of the World*, pp. 105-150 (Chapter 3)
2. [Recommended] Gordon Mathews, *Ghetto at the Center of the World*, pp. 195-218 (Chapter 5)

Week 14:

Student Presentations

April 17th:

Presentations

April 19th:
Presentations

**Week 15:
Student Presentations & Concluding Discussion**

April 24th:
Presentations

April 26th:
Presentations

Final projects due May 6 for seniors and May 12 for non-seniors