

2023-1-GPAD4015-001 Selected Topics in International Relations  
**Global China and China-Africa Relations**  
(Abridged)

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15 teaching weeks

Classes: 17 August – 30 November 2023

Final exam period: 4 – 16 December 2023

This course is designed for students interested in international relations, China-Africa contacts, and innovative methods. What do we make of China-Africa engagements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What accounts for the polemical debate around Chinese projects in Africa? How has the subject been studied academically and what is the way forward? This course connects Global China and China-Africa relations so that students gain a panoramic view of peace and conflict, of cooperation and competition, of challenges and possibilities. The course contains a strong visual and sonic component, offering students the chance to experiment with alternative writing styles. Previous knowledge of Africa or of the Portuguese language is not required.

“Global China and China-Africa Relations”

- ✓ exposes students to some of the new advances in international relations and interdisciplinary borrowings;
- ✓ connects IR (the discipline) and ir (the practice);
- ✓ assesses the concept and method of Global China;
- ✓ disseminates knowledge by other means, namely public-facing writings and photo-essays; and
- ✓ introduces students to political aesthetics and the power of visuals in international politics.

Evaluation:

**20% Class participation / discussion**

There will be several in-class exercises. Students will be expected to participate actively, even though the exercises will not be stringently graded.

**30% Presentation** (in the form of one individual photo-essay + oral presentation)

Following instructions, each student will put together one photo-essay about any politically relevant aspect of China-Africa engagements. The student may use his/her own photos and develop a story around those photos. Alternatively, he/she may refer to other people's photos and comment on the visual politics.

Minimum word count is 800 and maximum is 1600. Oral presentation inclusive.

**50% Final exam**

*25% Seen* (in the form of one individual public-facing article, refer to the content of Week 8 and Week 9). Each student will follow instructions to write one piece of public-facing article about any politically relevant aspect of Global China from 700 to 1000 words.

*25% Unseen*. Multiple choices, one long question, and five brief conceptual questions.

Structure of course: The course is organized in five parts. Students are expected to participate actively in all of them.

**Readings:** These are academic works in political science, international relations and area studies. A good grasp of the contents and theories is required.

**On recommended list:** On the recommended list are works that are interdisciplinary or that pertain to other sciences, the arts and humanities. Students may feel free to consult them.

**Resources:** Resources include sonic and visual materials as well as alternative texts. Students are encouraged to use them wisely.

Part I Understanding Global China and Chinese engagements in Africa

Readings:

Soulé F (2020) "Africa+1" summit diplomacy and the "new scramble" narrative:

Recentering African agency, *African Affairs* 119(477): 633–646.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adaa015>

Franceschini I and Loubere N (2022) *Global China as Method*. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108999472>

Gani J and Marshall J (2022) The impact of colonialism on policy and knowledge production in international relations. *International Affairs* 98(1): 5–22.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiab226>

Hountondji PJ (2009) Knowledge of Africa, knowledge by Africans: Two perspectives on African Studies. *RCCS Annual Review* (edited by Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra) 2009(1): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rccsar.174>

On recommended list:

Akyeampong E (2000) Africans in the diaspora: The diaspora and Africa. *African Affairs* 99(395): 183–215.

Lee CK (2017) *The Spector of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Melber H (2022) Africa's middle classes. *Africa Spectrum* 57(2): 204–219.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00020397221089352>

李安山：中國的非洲研究：回顧與展望《中國非洲學刊》2020年第1期 (in Chinese)

### **Week 1: Introductory class: Why study Global China. Why Africa matters.**

The instructor will present the syllabus and invite questions.

Films:

Teaser of [Eat Bitter](#) (Pascale Appora-Gnekindy, Ningyi Sun, Mathieu Faure)  
[China in Ethiopia](#) (Paul Zhou)

In-class debate:

Where will today's young people look for a job?

Resources:

Li YJ (2022) With jobs at home scarce, young Chinese are heading to Africa. [Sixth Tone](#), 22 December.

Why more young Chinese professionals are looking for work in Africa – Li Yijuan ([The China in Africa Podcast](#), 19 January 2023)

### **Week 2: Approaching Global China as a phenomenon and as a method**

Brainstorming exercise:

What is Global China? Where do we locate African agency in Global China? What becomes of Global South cooperation?

We will discuss:

- ✓ Global China as a phenomenon and Global China as a method
- ✓ African agency in South-South cooperation

Cases:

- ✓ Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
- ✓ Forum Macao

Resources:

Van Staden C (2021) How the U.S. can eclipse China in the battle over Africa.

[Politico](#), 22 April.

Summit diplomacy and African agency – Folashadé Soulé ([In Pursuit of Development](#), 24 March, 2021)

Global China as Method – Ivan Franceschini and Nicholas Loubere ([Nordic Asia Podcast](#), 26 August 2022)

Sun IY, Jayaram K and Kassiri O (2017) Dance of the lions and dragons. [McKinsey](#).

### **Week 3: History of colonization and knowledge production**

We will discuss:

- ✓ How to avoid the colonial gaze and pay “greater attention to non-hegemonic record-keeping, story-telling and witnessing beyond elitist and prohibitive barriers” (Gani and Marshall, 2022: 18)
- ✓ Advances in China-Africa knowledge and research gaps

Cases:

- ✓ China knowledge in the West and in Africa
- ✓ “Debt trap”

Resources:

Xiaoning Lu in conversation with Chinese documentarian Yong Zhang, [ScreenWorlds](#).  
張勇：新形勢下如何講好中非故事《中國社會科學報》2021年11月11日 (in Chinese)

Zhou H (2022) Moving beyond a single story of Chinese distant-water fishing (DWF) in West Africa. [International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter](#), 30.

### Part II China in Africa: “small characters” and everyday international relations

Readings:

Björkdahl A, Hall M and Svensson T (2019) Everyday international relations: Editors’ introduction. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 54(2), 123–130.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836719845834>

Neumann I (2005) To be a diplomat. *International Studies Perspectives* 6: 72–93.

Constantinou C (2018) Diplomacy. In: Bleiker R (ed) *Visual Global Politics*. New York: Routledge, pp. 104–110.

Mac Ginty R (2021) *Everyday Peace: How So-called Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bleiker R (2019) Visual autoethnography and international security: Insights from the Korean DMZ. *European Journal of International Security* 4(3): 274–299.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2019.14>

On recommended list:

Zheng W, Cheng Y and Coetzee C (2021) Thinking China from Africa: Encounter with the other other. *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 33(2): 119–129.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2020.1824779>

Du J (2020) *The Shenzhen Experiment: The Story of China's Instant City*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

#### **Week 4: Chinese interests in Africa**

We will:

- ✓ panoramically discuss Chinese investments in Africa, studying the figures and assessing the political and social impacts

In class, students will form groups, collect information and present on the following:

- ✓ Sand-mining on African shores and environmental challenges
- ✓ 5G in Africa, challenges and possibilities
- ✓ Envisioning Africa in China's Global Development Initiative

Resources:

Yu Y (2022) Making the Belt and Road Initiative “small and beautiful”. [\*East Asia Forum\*](#), 24 May.

Wu LT (2023) China's transition from the Belt and Road to the Global Development Initiative. [\*The Diplomat\*](#), 11 July.

邱海峰：又一批“一帶一路”項目建成了《[人民日報海外版](#)》（2021年11月30日第06版）（in Chinese）

Nyabiage J (2021) China promotes “digital silk road” as solution to Africa's data needs. [\*South China Morning Post\*](#), 26 December.

Where to look for updated China-Africa reporting:

*Mail & Guardian*

*The Continent*

*South China Morning Post*

*The Diplomat*

*Africa-China Reporting Project*

## **Week 5: Reinventing IR**

We will discuss:

- ✓ IR as a discipline and IR as a practice
- ✓ The “everyday turn” in international relations
- ✓ Ethnography
- ✓ IR and imagination

Debate:

- ✓ How do ordinary people embody IR knowledge?
- ✓ How do we approach IR ethnographically?

Cases:

- ✓ Digital ethnography?
- ✓ Autobiography?

Resources:

Kušić K and Záhora J (2020) *Fieldwork as Failure: Living and Knowing in the Field of International Relations*. Bristol: E-International Relations.

López Cardozo S (2023) Juan Du’s inter-disciplinary design ethos. [Azure](#), 7 July.

Mei-Ting Schmitz C (2021) Doing time, making money at a Chinese state firm in Angola. [Made in China Journal](#), 25 January.

## **Week 6: Human capital**

We will discuss:

- ✓ People-to-people relationships
- ✓ Understand public diplomacy in context

\*Invited talk (TBC):

- ✓ how to land an internship in an international organization
- ✓ how to join international initiatives
- ✓ how to be a storyteller
- ✓ how to draft an appealing CV for the international market

Resources:

United Nations Internship Programme

United Nations Volunteers Programme

United Nations. [Introducing storytelling with a purpose.](#)

### Part III Africa in China / Reporting China-Africa Relations

#### Readings:

Callahan W (2020) *Sensible Politics: Visualizing International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Parashar S (2013) What wars and “war bodies” know about international relations. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26(4): 615–630.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2013.837429>

#### On recommended list:

Chinoy M (2023) *Assignment China: An oral history of American journalists in the People’s Republic*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bodomo A, Che DW and Dong HJ (2022) Calculator communication in the markets of Guangzhou and beyond. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 43(10): 981–992. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1786575>

Jin X, Bolt G and Hooimeijer P (2021) Africans in Guangzhou: Is the ethnic enclave model applicable in the Chinese context? *Cities* 117, 103320.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2021.103320>

### **Week 7 What has become of the “Chocolate City”?**

#### We will discuss:

- ✓ How to study “the international” in your own country / How to study Africa-China relations in China
- ✓ Africa-in-China research gap

#### Film:

[Africans in Yiwu](#) (Yong Zhang)

#### Resources:

Lofton R (2015) Africans and African Americans in China: A long history, a troubled present and a promising future? *Black Past*, 9 March.

Liu JJ (2022) Africans in China are on the move. *Africa is a Country*, 6 July.

Qian JY (2022) Eventually, China’s borders will reopen. Will foreigners return? *Sixth Tone*, 7 May.

Luo YH (2022). 20 things we learned from China’s 7th census. *Sixth Tone*, 17 June.

Mike Chinoy on his book and documentary series (*Sinica*, 20 April 2023)

### **Week 8 How to report China-Africa relations**

- ✓ Instruct students on public-facing writing techniques with a focus on China-

## Africa relations

To discuss:

Benabdallah L (2021) Don't believe the hype about China's "vaccine diplomacy" in Africa. *The Washington Post*, 5 March, Monkey Cage.

Carrai MA (2021) These two African railway megaprojects tell us a lot about China's development model. *The Washington Post*, 6 March, Monkey Cage.

DeBoom M (2021) African countries are helping China go green. That may have a downside for Africans. *The Washington Post*, 12 March, Monkey Cage.

Chiyemura F (2021) Chinese firms – and African labor – are building Africa's infrastructure. *The Washington Post*, 2 April, Monkey Cage.

Resources:

Writing for Impact Workshop at [Wits Centre for Journalism](#).

### **Week 9 In-class writing**

- ✓ Students will have one hour and a half to work on their public-facing piece about any politically relevant aspect of Global China.
- ✓ They will then read out their draft in class and receive comments from the instructor and fellow colleagues.
- ✓ The final article is to be submitted digitally via Moodle by the end of Week 10.

### Part IV China-Africa Visual and Sonic Politics

Readings:

Bleiker R (2017) In search of thinking space: Reflections on the aesthetic turn in international political theory. *Millennium* 45(2): 258–264.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298166842>

Hansen L and Spanner J (2021) National and post-national performances at the Venice Biennale: Site-specific seeing through the photo essay. *Millennium* 49(2): 314–317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298211031300>

Crilley R, Manor I and Bjola C (2020) Visual narratives of global politics in the digital age: an introduction. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 33(5): 628–637. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2020.1813465>

Möller F and Shim D (2019) Visions of peace in international relations. *International Studies Perspectives* 20(3): 246–264. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isp/eky014>

On recommended list:



Leeb-du Toit J, Simbao R and Anthony R (eds) (2023) *Visualising China in Southern Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

### **Week 10 Unnarrating China-Angola relations: Visual memory, mediating bodies, and bilateral infrastructures of feeling**

- ✓ This is about China-Angola aesthetics in international relations.
- ✓ We locate new sites of China-Angola politics at the juncture of multiple aesthetics.
- ✓ We will learn that expatriate bodies – connected in bilateral infrastructures of feeling – participate in the materialization of political, ideological and cultural principles of a Global China.
- ✓ The China-Angola visual constitutes a political site to negotiate the fuzzy events and processes that concern bilateral relations and to fathom the highly ideological, rhetorical, performative assemblage of Chineseness in Angola.

### **Week 11 China-Africa visual politics, affective communities, and global infrastructures of feeling**

- ✓ Inspired by Hansen's and Spanner's creative IR method, we explore physical, virtual and figurative sites where visual politics is activated, performed, remembered, imagined and debated, and we particularly welcome proposals in the photo-essay format.

### **Week 12 Photo-essay**

- ✓ Students will receive instructions on how to prepare a photo-essay on any politically relevant aspect of China-Africa relations.
- ✓ They will then have one-and-a-half hour in class to work on their photo-essay.
- ✓ The final photo-essay is to be submitted digitally via Moodle by the end of Week 13.

Resources:

In English:

[Africa-China Photo Exhibition](#) 2018

Linqi: [Northern Frontier – Dreams in reality](#)

In Chinese:

杜齊眼：[駱駝日子](#)

譚威：[黃金海岸 · 中非跨國掘金者暗流](#)

李琰：[我在現場 · 照片背後的故事](#)

## Part V Focus on Lusophone Africa

### Readings:

Martins V (2015) Ovimbundu identity attributions in post-war Angola. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41(4): 853–867.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2015.1052625>

Sánchez Gibau G (2005) Contested identities: Narratives of race and ethnicity in the Cape Verdean diaspora. *Identities* 12(3): 405–438.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890500203702>

### On recommended list:

Bodomo A and Teixeira e Silva R (2012) Language matters: The role of linguistic identity in the establishment of the Lusophone African community in Macau.

*African Studies* 71(1): 71–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2012.668294>

Baker B (2006) Cape Verde: The most democratic nation in Africa? *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 44(4): 493–511. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4486701>

Verde R (2021) *Angola at the Crossroads: Between Kleptocracy and Development*.

London: I.B. Tauris.

## **Week 13 African political regimes, modern ethnic identities and international development**

### We will discuss:

- ✓ How ethnic identities are defined contemporarily, how this relates to race and colonialism, and why ethnicity is important for our understanding of modern Africa.
- ✓ How Africans perceive themselves and why identity politics matters internationally.
- ✓ How African political regimes are similar/dissimilar, and what this signifies.

### Cases:

Lusophone community in Macao

Greater Lisbon

Grand Paris

### Resources:

African Development Bank (2012) [Cape Verde: A success story](#).

European Commission (2019) [Historical roadmap of an African Lisbon between the 15th and 21st centuries](#).

Verde R (2023) China and Angola: Understanding a complex relationship in times of world polarisation. Speech given on 22 May at [Rui Cunha Foundation](#).

Introduction to African languages. [The African Language Program at Harvard](#).

Kuo L (2015) West Africans have some of the healthiest diets in the world. [Quartz](#), 6 August.

How industrialization reshapes modern ethnic identities – Elliott Green ([In Pursuit of Development](#), 10 May 2023)

### **Week 14 Debate**

Students will form groups to debate the following topics:

1. What is special about Forum Macao? Does it matter that the majority of Forum members are located in Africa? What are the messages of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Forum Macao?
2. What is the future of Portuguese-Speaking Africa? Unity, diversity or division?
3. To what extent does civil society and youth advocacy shape China's relations with Portuguese-speaking countries (esp. African countries)?
4. What are some powerful visuals of China's relations with Portuguese-speaking countries (esp. African countries)? How are we to leverage the visuals for impactful storytelling?

Resources:

São Tomé and Príncipe joins Forum Macau (2017) [Macao News](#), 30 March.

Equatorial Guinea to join Forum Macau tomorrow (2022) [Macao Post Daily](#), 9 April.

### **Week 15 Preparing for the final exam**

Students may raise questions about the course or their own performance.

To prepare for the final exam:

- ✓ We will revisit the major concepts discussed in class
- ✓ We will do a mock exam and then discuss the plausible answers