Illustrative Assignments for Various China Week Events

Students, faculty and staff all have a host of serious (and sometimes less serious) questions about the significance of rising Chinese influence…ask your students what their questions are and build an assignment around those questions that links China Week events (as nontraditional texts) to the scholarly materials you cover in your class.

Below are some illustrative assignments of this type, shared to spark our thinking about how to help our students make thoughtful connections between what we do in the classroom and the real world questions, challenges, and conflicts we all face beyond the classroom…in this case challenged related to rising Chinese influence.

Sample Paper Topic: Since an emerging China is already one of the most powerful nations on the planet, please describe three potential conflicts that might emerge between China and the US in the next decade and what the US might be able to do now to prevent, or resolve, or reduce the harms associated with these potential conflicts.

OR…

Send your students to hear one of our two keynotes, Governor Jon Huntsman…our most recent Ambassador to China and a 2012 Republican candidate for president, who will speak on “Reflections on Sino-US Relations in a Presidential Election Year,” at EJ Thomas on Monday October 15 at 7:30pm.

Sample Assignment: Use the analytical framework provided by Jon Huntsman in his lecture to analyze the current state of US power and position in the global political-economy, with particular attention to how an emerging China creates both challenges and opportunities likely to impact levels of tolerance, our commitment to valuing diversity, the rule of law, democratic decision making, and our tradition of welcoming immigrants from all across the globe as engines of innovation for prosperity.

In this youtube clip you can hear Ambassador Huntsman speaking Chinese and discussing China as our ‘most important relationship in the 21st century.’
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPb-5AZuzXo

And here is an ABC News story, during the campaign, that provides some basic biographical information about Jon Huntsman.
http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/voice-vote-meet-jon-huntsman/story?id=14563408

OR…

Dr. Huey-Li Li will present on “Rethinking Confucianism and Feminism,” on Tuesday October 8, 2012 in Student Union 335.

"Confucius even now remains the mind of China, and always returns again, whatever the regime." —Harold Bloom

Sample Assignment: Imagine living in a world where the world view and values articulated by Confucius where those we all took for granted, accepted as common sense, and used to judge the moral content of our character, the performance of our leaders, and the impact of patriarchy on our mothers, daughters, sisters and partners. How might you, as you are today, fit into this world? How might your mother, daughter, sister or partner fit? Describe an ordinary day in your life where there is at least one gender-based conflict based on the mismatch between you, as you are today, and a Confucian world AND at least one surprising or unexpected perfect fit between you, as you are today, and a Confucian world.
OR…

In addition to other great keynote speakers, China Week will include conversations during the daytime on topics ranging from Chinese Calligraphy to Tai Chi, from Chinese Traditional Health Beliefs and Practices to China Through the Eyes of American Students Just Returning from China, from a panel on growing as an adopted Chinese-American, to films, presentations from business leaders, The Physics of Ping Pong, Chinese Fashion, A Chinese Poetry Slam, Geoparks in Henan Province, and Sino-US Relations in the 21st Century. Since these are all during the daytime, each presents an opportunity to bring your entire class to discuss any one of these (or other) topics! There are so many questions our students have, such as…

Since international conflicts over global warming often center on China’s rapid growth and associated appetite for fossil fuels, and this was the primary reason President Bush gave for not signing the Kyoto Accords, what is China’s perspective on these conflicts? Are there opportunities for productive collaboration around the battle against global warming? Can the most recent US Ambassador to China, Jon Huntsman, provide insight into these questions?

How does family poverty compare in the US and China?

What is it like to grow up as an adopted Chinese-American in Ohio?

As we disengage with Afghanistan, continue to try to prevent Iran from going nuclear, and still struggle with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, how might understanding Chinese interests and influence in the Middle East improve our own capacity to lead an international coalition in stabilizing the region? Can a deeper understanding of Chinese Philosophy and Confucianism help us prepare to build more collaborative relationships with Chinese leaders when our interests overlap?

Do Asian Americans experience unique cancer risks?

Check out the language skills of UA students studying Chinese in our first Chinese Poetry Slam!

Chinese have dominated world class ping pong for generations and yet when an American ping pong team was invited to visit China before President Nixon’s historic trip to Beijing, the Chinese players demonstrated that China takes seriously the proverb ‘friendship first, competition second,’ and our players actually won a few games! Would the Chinese understand America better if they knew more about Friday Night Lights and our deeply important football traditions? Then, consider checking out ‘the physics of ping pong’ and the demonstration that follows by the Table Tennis Club during China Week and learn more about China’s national game.

Interested in learning about the development of Classical Chinese Dance from a former Chinese Olympic Gymnast?

What are the job and business opportunities to look for as Chinese influence grows?

UA is a world leader in Polymer Science and Engineering, thanks to the pioneering work of many researchers, but no one more so that Dr. Stephen Cheng, the Dean of our College of Polymer Science and Engineering. If you are interested in what else we can learn from China in this area, consider the talk from one of Dr. Cheng’s colleagues at Peking University, “The Development of Polymer Science and Technology in China.”

Are China and the US allies or adversaries?

What would it be like to sit in on your first day of Chinese language class?
Are you a Chinese language speaker, native or as a second language? Well, this year we will have our first ever China Week presentation entirely in Chinese. Dr. Chyi from the UA Department of Geology will provide a geologists perspective on Chinese Geoparks (like what we call National Parks) and we will broadcast this talk to our partner institution, Henan University.

Intellectual property rights are regularly violated in China, resulting in billions of dollars of lost sales revenue for US companies. Do we have any leverage on this issue?

US debt is a serious problem and China holds over a trillion dollars of that debt. How does this relationship impact our ability to protect US interests around the globe and at home?

Chinese human rights violations, including their widespread use of the death penalty, are regularly criticized by American leaders. Will China’s emergence as a world power and as one of our primary creditors change that?

China’s response to Tibetan demands, tensions over control of the South China Seas, and ongoing struggle with Taiwan create threats to regional and global stability. Can the US or UN play a positive role?

If you want to develop an assignment that focuses on any of these questions…there is at least one, and likely more that one, speaker/event during China Week that will help your students better understand these conflicts. If you would like to brainstorm with me, or any other member of the planning committee, about these topics (or another topic of interest to you), please contact me at your convenience…I would love to get a coffee and talk about any of these topics.

Join us in support of interesting and illuminating co-curricular engagement on campus by integrating one or more of these speakers into your fall syllabi.