University of Pennsylvania

Department of History

History 412

***SEMINAR: HONG KONG PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE***

Professor Arthur Waldron

Spring 2017

**Summary:**

Hong Kong became a British colony in 1842 and returned to China in 1997. Her history is essentially that of a minor Chinese trading port, a haven for those who could afford it during such disorders as the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) and World War II until December of 1941, when the Governor Sir Mark Young surrendered and was interned until 1945. Then he returned to his post, advocating electoral democracy for the colony, but was so sick from Japanese torture that he had to leave, dying in England shortly thereafter. Traditionally the permanent population of Hong Kong was small.

With the arrival of communism in China in 1949, the colony became a permanent home for millions of fleeing Chinese: some immediately, millions more during the internal Chinese famines and other catastrophes of the 1950s and 1960s.

Although it depends for food and water on China, and possesses no natural resources, the colony of Hong Kong grew rapidly from the 1950s until the 1990s, until today her per capita GDP is higher (about $46,000) than that of her former British rulers. The sleepy colony burst into flower as an exciting, ever more wealthy, and cosmopolitan city, that could only be compared to pre-War Shanghai.

Massive public housing projects, built without aid from London, housed the millions of refugees who were served as well by excellent state and private schools, as well as universities. Health care became comparable to that in the West.

During this golden age, few imagined that China would ever want the territory back, as she provided such vast income to Beijing. As the expiration date approached for the leases that had, since the 1890s, secured most of the territory, it became clear that assessment was incorrect. The Chinese insisted on a complete British exit, with the former colony becoming a “Special Administrative Region” under what Deng Xiaoping called “One Country, Two Systems.” In the Basic Agreement concluded between London and Beijing, democracy and civil and legal rights were guaranteed.

The story of Hong Kong’s stunning ascent in every dimension is fascinating. So too is the story of developments there after her solemn return to China in 1997. After an initial honeymoon of sorts, the people of Hong Kong began to clash with what turned out to be a partially autocratic government that did not mesh well with what had gone before. By 2016, just nineteen years after her return to China, some Hong Kong people, led by students, were calling for independence from China. After all, the country of Singapore is 278 square miles and fares very well: Hong Kong at 427 square miles might do better. China is implacably opposed.

So the territory is very much in flux at the moment, as Professor Waldron discovered during an eight day visit there last summer, to prepare for this seminar, in which he met with dozens of important people.

This means that this seminar will be a bit of like watching a baseball game in a group, as things will be constantly changing in Hong Kong—where a new Chief Executive is to be chosen this spring, by a method not yet determined, but hotly debated. Who knows what will happen on our watch?

We will not have potato chips, at least not at most meetings, but we will have a variety of fascinating readings covering the whole history—memoirs, historical studies, even the classic somewhat louche but also serious novel *The World of Suzy Wong* (1957) for which Richard Mason, the author, did a year of research (real research!) in a traditional Chinese hotel (since demolished)—and the film of which gave us “Love is a Many Splendoured Thing”—a standby in Chinese Karaoke.

More seriously we will look carefully at the development of Hong Kong community and identity, the successful accommodation of a population perhaps eight times what it was at War’s end; the path of her economy; the policies of Beijing and London; the pro-Communist riots of 1967 amd loss of life to bombs, which succeeded in reducing to a façade Portuguese rule in Macau just across the West River mouth, but against which the Hong Kong people turned their backs and kept the British in power; arts and architecture, and finally the complex business of reversion.

We will meet every Tuesday afternoon in my office (311C College Hall) from 1:30-4:30.. So many good readings exist that I have not yet made the final selection. We will do a topic a week, with each student expected to make a presentation.

A paper—perhaps 15 pages—and your general contribution will determine how you do. Follow the directions and you will be just fine.

I am looking forward to this course very much: an exciting topic at an exciting time. It should turn out well. I welcome your joining. No prerequisites.

Warm good wishes

Arthur Waldron

2 November 2016

**Instructors:**



**Arthur Waldron** has been the Lauder Professor of International Relations in the Department of History at the University of Pennsylvania, since 1997. He works mostly on the history of Asia, China in particular; the problem of nationalism, and the study of war and violence in history. He was educated at Harvard (A.B. ’71 *summa cum laude* Valedictorian,PhD ’81) and in Asia where he lived for four years before returning to Harvard. He previously taught at Princeton University, the U.S. Naval War College (Newport, RI) and Brown University.

He has probably visited Hong Kong forty times since 1971. A wonderful city.

His publications include *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (1989) also in Chinese and Italian; *The Modernization of Inner Asia* (1991); *How the Peace Was Lost: The 1935 Memorandum "Developments Affecting American Policy in the Far East" Prepared for the State Department by John Van Antwerp MacMurray* (1992) also in Japanese; *From War to Nationalism: China’s Turning Point, 1924-1925* (1995) also in Chinese, and (with Daniel Moran) *The People in Arms: Military Myth and National Mobilization since the French Revolution* (2003). His latest book, *The Chinese* should appear in 2018. In addition he has sixteen articles in peer reviewed journals, ten chapters in books, and two edited volumes in Chinese, as well numerous scholarly and popular reviews and journalistic essays.

His most recent research has used PRC sources to confirm the discovery made by Scholar/Diplomat Jay Taylor that the “secret” American negotiations with China, 1969 on, mostly carried out by Henry Kissinger, were regularly reported by Zhou Enlai to Chiang Kai-shek, and discussed, using a Hong Kong channel. This is a fact having tremendous importance for our understanding of American-Chinese relations.

In government, he served as one of twelve members of the highly-classified Tilelli Commission (2000-2001), which evaluated the China operations of the Central Intelligence Agency. He was also an original member of the Congressionally-mandated U.S-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2001-2003). He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and former Director of Asian Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, as well as a Senior Fellow of the Foreign Policy Research Institute. A regular traveler, he has visited some fifty countries, in Asia and beyond. He has lectured all over the world, including Europe, Russia (in Russian), Japan, and Australia. Most recently he has traveled to Japan, Egypt, the Baltic, Russia, and China, and Hong Kong. Born in Boston in 1948 Professor Waldron married the former Xiaowei Yü (born Beijing) in 1988. With their two sons they live in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania.

311C College Hall

[arthurwaldron@me.com](mailto:arthurwaldron@me.com)

awaldron@sas.upenn.edu

**Office Hours:** Th.1:30-4:30 and later if required. Please email if you must come after 4:30 and I will happily wait for you.

**Readings:**

For each unit reading is assigned. Pages will be indicated.

**Course Paper:**

One class paper due on April 30, eight to fifteen (15) typed double spaced pages, or more if you wish, to be delivered as directed. The topic choice is up to you, though we will provide suggestions. Be creative. Present your ideas on a topic of your choice (consult with me) based on perhaps some additional reading. This is not intended as an onerous task, but rather an interesting one.

*We are very sorry that we* ***cannot*** *accept electronic submissions of written work. We simply lack the sort of industrial printing capacity that would require. So your papers and your final should be handed in typed on paper to one of our colleagues.*

**Grading:**

Grading is an art not a science. The paper and your participation and contribution. Justice will be done