HI3U1-30 Taiwan versus China: A Flashpoint for the Third World War?

26/27

Department
History
Level
Undergraduate Level 3
Module leader
Song-Chuan Chen
Credit value
30
Module duration
22 weeks
Assessment
100% coursework
Study location
University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This module examines the historical and contemporary tensions between Taiwan and China, analyzing their implications for regional stability and global geopolitical conflict. It explores the roots of these tensions, including the legacy of Chinese imperialism, Taiwan's colonial history, and the Cold War dynamics that shaped cross-strait relations. Key topics include Taiwan's evolving identity and sovereignty, China's geopolitical ambitions, Taiwan's democratic transformation, and Taiwan's role as a convergence of Chinese and Western civilizations. The module also considers the involvement of Britain, the United States, and other global powers, as well as the significance of the Taiwan Strait as a potential flashpoint for conflict. Students will investigate broader themes such as economic interdependence, military posturing, and the influence of media narratives and deliberate propaganda in shaping public perception. The module invites critical engagement with the question: Is the Taiwan Strait truly a flashpoint for a third world war, or can diplomacy and multilateral engagement chart a path toward peace, democracy, and a multicultural world?

Module aims

This module provides students with the opportunity to explore a diverse range of primary sources—government documents, memoirs, diplomatic correspondence, news reports, and

translated archives—that illuminate the complexities of Taiwan-China relations. By analysing these materials, students will gain a deeper understanding of the historical and contemporary dynamics of cross-strait interactions, regional alliances, and global power politics.

Seminars will address key questions at the heart of the Taiwan-China relationship: How do sovereignty, identity, and democracy shape the interaction between these two political entities? What roles do imperialism, colonial legacies, military strategies, and economic power play in their evolving dynamics? Additionally, discussions will engage with broader theoretical and practical issues, such as the challenges of national identity in a globalized age, the influence of historical narratives, and the role of international actors like the United States in shaping the Taiwan Strait's geopolitical landscape.

By adopting both micro and macro perspectives, this module examines how everyday politics and social developments in Taiwan and China connect to broader themes in global geopolitics. Through these lenses, students will critically analyse whether the Taiwan Strait represents a potential flashpoint for world war or a case study in conflict resolution, developing the analytical tools to assess complex international issues.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

TERM ONE—Week One: Introduction to Taiwan-China Relations; Week Two: Historical Roots of Cross-Strait Tensions; Week Three: The Role of the United States in the Taiwan Strait; Week Four: Sovereignty and Identity: Taiwan's Status; Week Five: The Military Dynamics of the Taiwan Strait; Week Six: Reading Week (No Seminar); Week Seven: Economic Interdependence and Rivalry; Week Eight: Regional Alliances and Global Politics; Week Nine: Flashpoint in Global Geopolitics: The Taiwan Strait; Week Ten: Case Study: The Role of International Actors in Taiwan-China Relations.
TERM TWO—Week One: Nationalism, Identity, and Conflict in Taiwan and China; Week Two: The Role of Democracy in Taiwan's Political Landscape; Week Three: Military Escalation and International Response; Week Four: Economic Sanctions and Trade Wars; Week Five: The Taiwan Strait and Human Rights; Week Six: Taiwan's Role in the Indo-Pacific Security Framework; Week Seven: Social Movements and Taiwan-China Relations; Week Eight: The Role of China's "One China" Policy; Week Nine and Week Ten: Student Research and Presentation.
TERM THREE—Week One: Conclusion: Taiwan-China Relations in Global Context

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the historical and theoretical interpretations of Taiwan-China relations, with a focus on key themes such as sovereignty, identity, and military and economic power in the context of global geopolitics.
- Critically analyse and evaluate a broad range of primary sources and scholarly texts related to Taiwan-China interactions, examining their historical and contemporary significance and their implications for regional and global power dynamics.

- Effectively communicate ideas and construct coherent, persuasive arguments on the Taiwan-China conflict, exploring how factors such as nationalism, identity, economy, and international alliances intersect and shape the broader geopolitical landscape.
- Take responsibility for designing and presenting a well-researched project on Taiwan-China relations, creating content that is accessible to a non-academic audience while reflecting a deep understanding of the complexities of cross-strait interactions.
- Critically review and synthesize theoretical, methodological, and historiographical approaches to the study of Taiwan-China relations, integrating insights from international relations, history, and politics to deepen understanding of the conflict's role in global geopolitics.

Indicative reading list

Reading lists can be found in Talis

Subject specific skills

See learning outcomes.

Transferable skills

See learning outcomes.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	19 sessions of 2 hours (13%)
Tutorials	1 session of 1 hour (0%)
Private study	261 hours (87%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

History modules require students to undertake extensive independent research and reading to prepare for seminars and assessments. As a rough guide, students will be expected to read and prepare to comment on three substantial texts (articles or book chapters) for each seminar taking approximately 3 hours. Each assessment requires independent research, reading around 6-10 texts and writing and presenting the outcomes of this preparation in an essay, review, presentation or other related task.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Seminar Contribution	10%		No
Reassessment component			
1000 word Reflective Essay in lieu of Seminar Contribution			Yes (extension)
Assessment component			
Policy brief or news analysis essay	10%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
Applied History Project	40%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
Final Essay	40%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			

Feedback on assessment

Written comments on class participation, applied project, policy brief, and essay which will be returned to students within 20 workdays; and opportunity for further oral feedback in task / essay tutorials.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- Year 4 of UENA-VQ33 Undergraduate English and History (with Intercalated year)
- Year 3 of UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
- Year 4 of UHIA-V104 Undergraduate History (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 4 of UHIA-V101 Undergraduate History (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V9 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V6 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 4 of UHIA-VL17 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 4 of UHIA-VL14 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with Year Abroad)

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 4 of UHIA-VM15 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Intercalated Year)