China and US: A Timeline

1900: Boxer Rebellion
1911: Sun Yat-sen
1931: Pearl Buck’s *The Good Earth* and the Warlords
1937-1945: Allies
1950s: Korean War
1972: When Mao Met Nixon
1978-1988: Deng as Reformer
1989: Tank Man vs. Tyrants
1998: Burgers and Bowling
1999/2001: Anti-American Moments
America has a long and ongoing love-hate relationship with China

• "American China Nightmare"--fears about a China threat

• "American China Dream"-- fantasies that China is on the verge of becoming a country just like ours.
The Love-Hate Relationship is fueled by...

swinging back and forth between:

1.) overstating how dangerous China is

2.) mistakenly thinking that China is about to convert to our ways (Christianity at some points, democracy at others).
China as Nightmare

The Boxers (1900)

• Opposed foreign influence in China
Germany and seven other Western nations invade to put down rebellion.
Barbarism Civilization
He’s like us...

Sun Yat-sen:

- Father of Modern China
- 1912: 1st president of the Republic of China
- Founded the Nationalist Party
China as Ally (1937-1945)

- China allied with US World War II

Christian Chiang Kai-shek in charge
- succeeded Sun as leader of the Nationalist Party
- In power:
  Mainland: 1939 – 1945
  Taiwan: 1950 – 1975
China as Enemy (1950s)

• Communist Party takes power (1949)
• Mao Zedong: (in power 1949-1976)
  Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party
  Chairman of People’s Republic of China (PRC)
• (1950) War in Korea: China aids the North Koreans
More like us? (1989)

- 1989 Tiananmen protests in China: Students (and workers)
- imagined to be all about becoming a democracy like America
- really more complicated: most common slogan on posters was anti-corruption, not about elections
They hate us? (1999)

• 1999: American bombs hit the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and anti-American protests broke out
• imagined by some to be purely anti-foreign
• more complicated: What’s the difference between being anti-foreign and patriotic?
American China Dream
American China Nightmare

- The China Threat
- Revolt Against Communism
- Time: Beijing 2008
- Bill Gertz: Red China: The Emerging Challenge
- The World: China Cartoon
China’s Love-Hate Relationship with the US

Sometimes seeing Americans as destined to be friends of the Chinese
• U.S. didn’t take formal colonies in China

Sometimes being bitterly disappointed when we seem just another imperialist
• Fought against China in Korean War
China/Japan Seesaw

Americans seem able to only view either Japan or China as being up when the other is down:

• 1900: Japan Up/China down
• 1937: China Up/Japan Down
• 1950s/60s: Japan Up/China Down
• 1980s: China Up/Japan Down
• 1990s: China up and down/Japan less significant
• 21st Century…

Is China the new Japan?
Big Bad China and the Good Chinese
Contrasting Images of the Meaning of the 2008 Olympics—new versions of the dream and nightmare
Two Faces of Yao Ming
The Takeaway...

It would be good for the two countries to get a more realistic, less romanticized view of the other and realize we actually have a lot in common.