

# Princeton University

Honors Faculty Members  
Receiving Emeritus Status



**May 2011**

The biographical sketches were written by  
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## *Faculty Members Receiving Emeritus Status*

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## Lynn Townsend White III



Lynn White grew up in California, attending Oakland public schools for most of his early education. He moved east to attend rural Williams College—a great place in winter to read books on political economy (his major field) and to campaign against the selective fraternities that dominated the Williams campus until the end of his senior year there.

Lynn's interest in China started with an appreciation of the vastness of the Asian continent on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. So after a Williams-in-Hong Kong stint teaching English at New Asia College, he went to the University of California–Berkeley for a Ph.D. under the auspices of its Center for Chinese Studies. Berkeley in the 1960s was a hotbed of civil rights and anti-war movements, in which Lynn participated—and the university also had a spectacularly fine academic staff for work on Asia and politics. Teachers there included Chalmers Johnson, Sheldon Wolin, and Robert Scalapino. Lynn then married Barbara-Sue White, another Californian, a writer, and string/keyboards player who was then studying music with Darius Milhaud and Luciano Berio. (He also enjoys music, sings occasionally, and was once in the Princeton Chapel Choir.) Lynn studied Chinese in Berkeley and then Taipei. His American passport meant that he could not visit the People's Republic at that time; so his dissertation on Shanghai's local politics was largely written at Universities Service Centre, Hong Kong. He also spent a year and a half at Kyoto University's Center for Southeast Asian Studies (whose Japanese director generously declared Shanghai an honorary part of Southeast Asia for the purpose of that stay). After a year's teaching at Berkeley, Lynn joined the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Department of Politics, and Program in East Asian Studies at Princeton. He became a full professor in 1988.

From the start, Lynn's research focused on the broad themes of urbanization, economic development, the role of local government, and the centralization of authority. *Careers in Shanghai: The Social*

*Guidance of Personal Energies in a Developing Chinese City 1949–1966* was published in 1978. This book represents the culmination of a large body of research on the role of local politics on the implementation of central policies in China. The book provides meticulously detailed and rich information on the ways in which ordinary urban citizens coped with getting jobs, housing, rations, and respectability as China's new socialist regime consolidated itself in the 1950s.

The research that culminated in *Careers in Shanghai* left Lynn perfectly positioned to study the Chinese Cultural Revolution. *Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Causes of Violence in China's Cultural Revolution* shows that the violence of Shanghai's Cultural Revolution during the late 1960s arose when earlier victims of official campaigning, monitoring, and labeling used the same methods against cadres who had wronged them. A review in *Foreign Affairs* describes the book as “an original and penetrating work of scholarship that explores the origins of China's Cultural Revolution and, in the process, casts a good deal of light on the organization of Chinese politics and society since 1949.”

Lynn's research continued to illuminate changing events in China. *Unstately Power*, a two-volume book on China's economic, intellectual, legal and governmental reforms, shows that China's “reforms” began in the early 1970s—earlier than the date of 1978 often assigned to them—and arose from triple cropping, illegal rural industries, and greater independence among local leaders on the Yangzi Delta. The first volume of this book won the Association for Asian Studies Joseph R. Levenson Award as the best book on modern China published in its year.

Although China has been Lynn's major focus, his research extends into other countries. His book *Political Booms* shows how quick growth in Taiwan, East China, and Thailand localized power—and how the same paradigm can explain the long delay of the Philippines in becoming an East Asian tiger, either economic or political, at the crucial local levels. Lynn has also published analyses of Taiwan's globalization and cross-strait relations, as well as China's constitutional development, and has explored numerous other topics in journal articles and books he edited or co-edited.

Lynn is known for his intense dedication to teaching, leading many Woodrow Wilson School policy task forces and policy conferences. Although he has taught large undergraduate classes, his favorite course, “State, Society, and Development,” is a seminar on the variety of social studies. Lynn is a legendary adviser of both doctoral students and undergraduates. He has graduated more than 30 Ph.D.s (reportedly more than any other Chinese politics thesis adviser in this country) and advised numerous undergraduates, some of whom received doctorates elsewhere in Chinese politics or law. Whenever any of Lynn’s advisees have come up for tenure at any institution, including at leading centers for the study of politics and Asia, such as the University of Chicago and the University of Michigan, none has failed to jump that hurdle. Lynn, unfailingly modest, attributes this success exclusively to their own efforts rather than to the quality of advising they received on their dissertations.

An outstanding University citizen, Lynn headed the Woodrow Wilson School’s undergraduate program and the Master of Public Affairs program, each for several years. He has been active in the journal *World Politics*. He was director of graduate studies in politics for a year in which the department needed (and successfully recruited) a major intake of students. Lynn also acted as master of Forbes College. He is an honorary member of Princeton’s Great Class of 1984.

As to his post-retirement plans, Lynn says he will continue to conduct research on the political futures of the Philippines and China, and that there will be no change in his habit of going for research stints in Asia, especially Hong Kong, Manila, and Shanghai. He looks forward to continued connections with Princeton’s China and the World Program, which he directed for a year, and with other groups on campus. And, he says that he will advise any students who approach him, and will continue service for his favorite organization, Princeton in Asia, of which he is a trustee.