

Modern Chinese Fiction

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Course Description:

Modern Chinese fiction has gone through unprecedented development since the dawn of the 20th century and has become increasingly connected with the many-faceted global existence. Knowledge of modern Chinese fiction will enable students to understand central aspects of 20th century Chinese culture.

This course introduces selected fictional works by some of the most insightful writers of modern China. The course focuses on significant aspects of these works with an objective to enhance students' fascination with and skill in the reading and analysis of modern Chinese fiction. Participants in this course will study the writers' moral obligation to expose prevalent spiritual corruption in the face of progress and modernization. The participants will also learn to understand the Chinese writers' emotional intensity as well as their faith in human dignity and wisdom. All readings are in English and there is no prerequisite for this course.

Course Outcomes:

Course assignments and class discussion will help students with the following learning outcomes:

1. To develop, through oral and written communication, reading and analytical skills appropriate to the study of literature.
2. To provide the student with the opportunity, both in and outside of class, to practice writing.
3. To introduce basic concepts of literary criticism.
4. To develop the practice of reading literary texts within their social, historical, and cultural contexts.
5. To explore the relationship of literature to other disciplines.
6. To broaden the students' understanding of the multifaceted relationship of Chinese literature to society as mediator, mirror, interpreter, and critique.
7. To deepen the students' understanding of the ethical implications in Chinese literature of the depiction of self and others.

Course Requirements and Form of Assessment:

In addition to regular attendance and class participation, you will do a term project (i.e. an oral presentation), take a mid-term examination, and write a final paper. Details on topics, focus,

and format of the papers will be given to you on each assignment. The following are some specific policies:

1. You are assigned 120-150 pages of readings per week. Reading assignments are carefully chosen to accompany discussions and assignments. You are expected to have completed the assigned weekly readings before attending class.
2. Your papers should be typed (double-spaced, with proper margin on each side).
3. All work should reflect your own ideas. If you borrow other's ideas, you may either express the idea in your own words or use quotation marks to cite the exact words of the source; in either case, a note is necessary to acknowledge the borrowing.
4. Grading system: Each paper is graded as A, B, C or D if turned in on time, or C, D, or F if turned in late. Your grade for the course will be based on the grades of your class attendance and participation (10%), term project (20%), mid-term examination (30%), and final paper (40%).

Attendance Policy:

An excused absence requires a written medical excuse or written approval from the school's administration office. All other absences are considered to be unexcused. Unexcused absences will affect your grade (see below).

Arriving more than 10 minutes late for any three classes will cumulatively count as one unexcused absence, while arriving 30 minutes late for any class will count as an unexcused absence.

Penalties for unexcused absences:

- 1 absence—class participation grade drops one full letter grade (example: A- to B-).
- 2 absences—class participation grade drops two full letter grades.
- 3 absences—class participation grade drops three full letter grades.
- 4 or more absences—class participation grade is a failing grade.

Any absence, whether excused or not, will require catch-up reading.

Academic Honesty:

Please refer to the following web link for policies on academic honesty:

http://www.luc.edu/cas/pdfs/CAS_Academic_Integrity_Statement_December_07.pdf

Required Texts:

1. *Selected Stories of Lu Hsun* by Lu Hsun. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press. 1-215.
2. *The Border Town* by Shen Congwen. Beijing: Panda Books. 1-101.
3. *Rickshaw: The Novel Lo'T'o Hsiang Tzu* by Lao She. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
4. *The Family* by Ba Jin. *Selected Works of Ba Jin*. Vol. 1. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press. 1-295.
5. "A Flower in the Rainy Night" by Hwang Chun-Ming. *Chinese Stories from Taiwan: 1960-1970*. Ed. Joseph S. M. Lau. New York: Columbia University Press. 194-241.
6. "The Two Signpainters" by Hwang Chun-ming. *The Drowning of an Old Cat and Other Stories*. Trans. Howard Goldblatt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 185-216.
7. "Sayonara • Tsai-chien" by Hwang Chun-ming. *Ibid.* 217-271.
8. *Red Sorghum* by Mo Yan. New York: Penguin Books.

9. *Playing for Thrills* by Wang Shuo. New York: Penguin Books.
10. *A Dictionary of Ma Qiao* by Han Shaogong. New York: Columbia University Press.

Class Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction:

Topics for critical study:

1. What is literature?
2. What do you know about China and Chinese literature?
3. "The May Fourth Movement"
4. The modernization movement: Literary and social reform
5. The Social, political and cultural elements in modern Chinese literature.
6. Lu Xun's role in modern Chinese literature
7. Chinese scholars under the imperial examination system
8. *Call to Arms*

Required reading:

- "Preface to *Call to the Arms*"
- "A Madman's Diary"
- "Kong Yiji"

Week 2: Lu Xun (I)

Topics for critical study:

1. The traditional Chinese social system
2. Lu Xun's hard-core realist style
3. Human portrayal and social satire
4. "Ah Q-ism" and other "national traits"

Required reading:

- "Medicine"
- "My Old Home"
- "The True Story of Ah Q"

Week 3: Lu Xun (II)

Topics for critical study:

1. Nostalgia expressed in Lu Xun's works
2. Women in traditional Chinese society
3. Chinese intellectuals in and after "The May Fourth Movement"
4. *Wandering*

Required reading:

- "Village Opera"
- "The New Year's Sacrifice"
- "In the Wine Shop"
- "Regret for the Past"

Hand in topics for presentation

Week 4: Shen Congwen

Topics for critical study:

1. Lu Xun's initiation of the "native soil literature"
2. Shen Congwen's contribution to the "native soil literature"
3. Shen Congwen: A writer unwilling to write anything against his conscience

Required reading:

The Border Town

Hand in topics for the term paper

Week 5: Lao She (I)

Topics for critical study:

1. Social criticism as an inheritance from Lu Xun
2. Lao She's social background and creative energy
3. Lao She and his hero in *Rickshaw*

Required reading:

Rickshaw (Chapters 1-12)

Hand in outlines for the term paper

Oral presentation #1

Week 6: Lao She (II)

Topics for critical study:

1. The plot in *Rickshaw*
2. The characterization in *Rickshaw*
3. The symbolism in *Rickshaw*

Required reading:

Rickshaw (Chapters 13-24)

Hand in bibliographies for the term paper

Oral presentation #2

Week 7: Mid-term Examination

Mid-term Examination takes place on Monday of Week 7.

Week 8: Ba Jin (I)

Topics for critical study:

1. Ba Jin and the new generation's soul searching
2. Confucianism and humanism
3. Family: A shelter or an institution of repression?

Required reading:

Family (Chapters 1-20)

Oral presentation #3

Week 9: Ba Jin (II)

Topics for critical study:

1. Moral dilemma: Tradition or progression
2. The generation gap and the gap in a generation
3. Ba Jin's survival in the "Cultural Revolution"

Required reading:

Family (Chapters 21-33)

Oral presentation #4

Week 10: Hwang Chun-ming

Topics for critical study:

1. New development of “native soil literature” in Taiwan
2. Hwang Chun-ming: A spokesman for the culturally disadvantaged people
3. The complicated social circumstances depicted by a native Taiwanese writer

Required reading:

“A Flower in the Rainy Night”

“The Two Signpainters”

“Sayonara • Tsai-chien”

Oral presentation #5

Week 11: Mo Yan (I)

Topics for critical study:

1. Mo Yan: The representative of a new generation of nativists
2. The reversal of the value system
3. *Red Sorghum*: A historical novel with a new creative vista

Required reading:

Red Sorghum (Chapters 1-2)

Oral presentation #6

Week 12: Mo Yan (II)

Topics for critical study:

1. Perspectives of the Nationalist troops, Communist forces, and the “bandit” forces
2. The significance of symbolic elements in the narrative
3. The function of the setting of the novel

Required reading:

Red Sorghum (Chapters 3-5)

Oral presentation #7

Week 13: Wang Shuo

Topics for critical study:

1. Wang Shuo: a satirical writer or a “spiritual pollutant”?
2. Identity crisis and hooligan literature
3. Marginal writers and the muffled voices

Required reading:

Playing for Thrills

Oral presentation #8

Week 14: Han Shaogon

Topics for critical study:

1. Han Shaogong and a new generation of nativists' quest for the root
2. *A Dictionary of Ma Qiao*: Society viewed from a lexicological perspective
3. Value system and semiotized life

Required reading:

A Dictionary of Ma Qiao

Oral presentation #9

Week 15: Wrap-up

Final paper is due