

Space, Memory, and the Social Mirror:
Discovering China through Movies

Course number:

Term: Spring, 2010

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Course Description

The course will give an overview of major films produced in mainland China, especially since 1949. We will examine the genres of Chinese film better known in contemporary China, and consider them a major source of reflection upon, and critique of contemporary Chinese society. The focus will be on films made in mainland cinema by Generation 2, 3, 4 and 5, and most important of all, some classics directed by the new generation of filmmakers of the 1990s to the present day, normally grouped under the rubric of the sixth-generation directors and directors of the most recent generation.

All films chosen for the course will enhance our understanding of a transitional China in terms of its material conditions and ideology. Furthermore, the narrative structures and cinematic images celebrate the changes and also convey the anxieties associated with it.

2 trips are to be arranged with the course.

(1) Trip to Beijing Film Academy, where students will meet BFA professor, students as well as film artists and discuss issues of one's concern.

(2) Trip to Huairou Film Production Base, a big new film production studio to have a genial feeling of how Chinese film is made. You might be able to make your own piece there too.

Method of Presentation:

Three-hour classes once a week (Meeting every Thursday at 1:30-4:15pm). Lectures with discussion; film clips will be shown in class.

Course Requirements and Form of Assessment

Students must attend all classes and screenings and read all of the mandatory reading material. One presentation will be required from each student, basing on the films screened and the reading material. Each student will write one term paper (length and topics to be announced), which should be well-written, well-researched, use supplementary reading material, and show originality. Final paper will make up 60 of the final mark, midterm 10%, presentation 20%, class participation 10%, including presentation, joining post-screening discussions and preparing and sharing questions on the film of assignment. The assessment will be done according to the following scale:

A	93-100	A-	89-92	B+	85-88
B	81-84	B-	78-80	C+	75-77
C	71-74	C-	68-70	D+	65-67
D	60-64	F	below 60		

Attendance Policy

Absences will only be permitted for health-related reasons, and require a note from a doctor. Grades will be reduced for anyone with two unapproved absences. Three or more unapproved absences will result in a failing grade. All other absences are considered to be unexcused. Unexcused absences will affect your grade. 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.

Intellectual Honesty

Please see the following link, and read the text carefully:

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

Cheating on exams and plagiarism in papers is not tolerated. A student who is caught cheating will get an “F” for the paper, assignment, or the exam. The student will be dismissed from the class. All cases of cheating will be reported to the TBC office.

Required texts (Reserved at TBC Library)

Zhang Yingjin. *Chinese National Cinema* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004)

Zhang Yingjin. *Screening China* (University of Michigan Press, 2004)

A Tentative Schedule

Week One

T 01/14:

Chinese Cinemas as Social Mirror: An Introduction

Film Clips shown in class: 1. *From Silent Films to Modern Films*

2. *Goddess* (1930's) An interesting look at the 1930's Shanghai film industry and legendary Ruan Lingyu, film as mirror of Chinese old society, history and culture; A

Spring River Flows East China's first epic film and one of the last films made before the switch to communism. A beautifully made tragedy that also shows the terror of war y actress.

Reading:

Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* pp. 100-112

Additional Reading to be announced in class

Week Two

T 01/21:

Movies made by the 3rd Generation

In-class screening: Xie Jin, Hibiscus Town/The Legend of Tienyun Mountain (clips)

Issue: The Anti-Rightist Movement and the Control of Ideology during Cultural Revolution; Legacy of the Cultural Revolution and “Scar Literature”

Reading:

Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* pp.205-224; 229-230

Supplementary reading:

Chris Berry, “Enter the Forbidden Zones and Exposing Wounds”
Postsocialist Cinema pp.77-100

Week Three

T 01/28: **Movies made by the 3rd Generation**

In-class screening: Xie Jin, Hibiscus Town/The Legend of Tienyun Mountain (clips)

Issue: The Anti-Rightist Movement and the Control of Ideology during Cultural Revolution; Legacy of the Cultural Revolution and “Scar Literature”

Reading:

Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* pp.205-224; 229-230

Supplementary reading:

Chris Berry, “Enter the Forbidden Zones and Exposing Wounds”
Postsocialist Cinema pp.77-100

Week Four

T 02/04: **Movies made by the 4th Generation**

In-class screening: Xie Fei, Hunan Girl Xiao Xiao (clips)

Issues: Camera Switching back to Life and the Female Consciousness

Reading:

Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* pp.230-235

Week Five

T 02/25: **Films made by the Fifth Generation directors**

**In-class screening: Tian Zhuang-zhuang, Blue Kite (clips) ;
Chen Kaige, Yellow Earth**

Issues: Shaping a New and Awesome Generation

Reading:

Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* pp. 235-238

Wang, “Trauma and History in Chinese Cinema”

Yau, *Yellow Earth: Western Analysis and a Non-Western Text* (Christ Berry pp.62-80)

Zhang and Lee, “The Modernization of Film Language”

Week Six

T 03/04

Film made by the 5th Generation Directors to be continued

In-class screening: Chen Kaige, Raise the Red Lantern (clips)

Zhang Yimou, Red Sorghum (clips)

Issue: The Rise of Commercialism and Nationalism in the late 1980s

Reading: Zhang, Chinese National Cinema pp. 238-240 , 286-288

Issue: The Making of the Fifth Generation; Sexuality and Ethnicity.

Week Seven

T 03/11:

Trip to Beijing Film Academy

Visit Departments of Directing, Sound Recording, Animation and Acting;

Interview students and famous film artists with issues of your concerns

Week Eight

T 03/18:

Midterm Exam

Pre-class Screening: Beijing Bastards/Suzhou River

"MTV" directors, whose films use modern, trendy techniques and reference Western films

Week Nine

T 04/01:

Film made by the 6th Generation Directors

Zhang Yuan, Beijing Bastards,

Lou Ye, Suzhou River (clips)

Issue: Chinese cityscape: Rock music and the revolution that rages against the state machine

Reading:

Zhang, Chinese National Cinema pp .289-290

Andrew Jones, The Politics of Popular Music in Post-Tiananmen China

Supplementary reading:

Harry Kuoshu, Beijing Bastards, the Sixth Generation Directors, and 'Generation-X' in China."

Marie, "Zhang Yuan, the Enfant Terrible of Chinese Cinema"

Carrel, Beijing: New Face for the Ancient Capital.

Kaiser Kuo, I Know, It's Only Rock 'n'Roll

Week Ten

T 04/08: **Post-modern Mode**

In-class screening: Zhang Yang: *Shower*.(clips)

Issue: Tracing the City's Scars and pain in post-modernization: Demolition and Notalgia in New Urban Cinema

Reading:

Zhang: "*Building on the Ruins: The Exploration of the New Urban Cinema of the 1990s*

Supplementary reading:

Zha, "Beijing: A City without Walls"

Week Eleven

T 04/15: **In-class screening:** Feng Xiao Gang, **Sorry Babay**

Crazy Stone (clips)

Issues: Urban Cinema, post-modern Farce and the New Trend of Commercialism in Co-production

Reading:

Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* pp .288-289

Week Twelve

T 04/22: **Post-Mao film: the Cinematic Revolution of the Fifth Generation**

In-class screening: **Zhang Yimou**, *Keep Cool/Hero/The House of Flying Dagger* and **Feng Xiaogang** 's films *A World Without Thieves/A Night Banquet* etc. (clips)

Issue: Impact of Hollywood International films and the rising desire to get into the Mainframe

Readings:

Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* pp .288-289

Additional reading to be announced.

Week Thirteen

T 04/29: **Last class**

In-class screening: **Blind Shaft**

Lu Chuan, **Kekexili** (clips)

Issue: Cinema as a Social Institution, existing problems in modernization

Reading: To be announced

Week Fourteen

T 05/13: **Final week**

Course Summary
Last day to hand in term paper

Supplementary Reading:

Berry, Chris. ed. *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, enlarged and rev. ed. (London: British Film Institute, 1991) Chow, Ray. *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995)***

Browne, Nick; Paul G. Pickowicz, eds. *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.***

Chen, Kaige, and Tony Rayns. *King of the Children and New Chinese Cinema*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1989)***

Clark, Paul. *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987)

Chow, Rey. *Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films: Attachments in the Age of Global Visibility*. 2007

Lee, Gregory B., *Troubadours, Trumpeters, Troubled Makers*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996)

Lu, Sheldon Hsiao-peng. ed. *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997)

Monaco, James. *How to Read a Film: The Art, technology, Language, History, and Theory of Film and Media*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981)***

Rayns, Tony. "Nights at The Opera" *Sight and Sound* 2, no. 8 (1993): 10-13.

Semsel, George S., Chen Xihe, and Xia Hong, eds. *Film in Contemporary China: Critical Debates, 1979-1989*. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993)***

Tan, Ye. *From the Fifth to the Sixth Generation: An Interview with Zhang Yimou*. *Film Quarterly* Vol. 53, no. 2, Winter 1999-2000. Pp.2-13.

Teng, Jimeng. *Foreign Literatures and Films: An Interview with Cheng Kaige*. *Foreign Literatures*. No. 2 (1996): 52-57.

Tyler, Patrick E. "In China, Letting a Hundred Films Wither." *New York Times*, December 1, 1996, H1, H26

Wang, Ban. *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997)

Wang, Jing. *High Culture Fever: Politics, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Deng's China*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1996)***

Wu Hung, Wang Huangsheng and Feng Boyi, eds. "*Building on the Ruins: The Exploration of the New Urban Cinema of the 1990s*," in *The First Triennial/Reinterpretation: A Decade of Experimental Chinese Art (1990-2000)* (Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China, 2002). Bilingual editions. (Available in Beijing's Timezone 8, located inside 798 Factory in Dashanzi, No 4 Jiuxianqiao Rd, Tel: 8456 0336.)

Yang, Mayfair. "*Of Gender, State Censorship, and Overseas Capital: An Interview with Director Zhang Yimou*." *Public Culture* 5, no. 2 (1993)

Zhang, Zhen. *Urban Generation Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*. 2007

Zhang, Xudong. *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reform: Cultural Fever, Avant-Garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997)