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**CHIN 320: Contemporary Chinese Film**

电影

中国

## **George Mason University Department of Modern & Classical Languages**

## Spring 2018: Transcultural Chinese Cinema

## Thursdays 4:30 – 7:10pm, AQ 347

## Instructor: Prof. Hongmei Sun (shongmei@gmu.edu)

## Office Hours: AQ 310, T 6-7pm, R 3-4pm, or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is an introduction to contemporary Chinese cinema and a survey of China that is represented via the cinema. We will examine the works of a number of key contemporary directors, which reflect China’s history, culture, politics, and aesthetic conventions over the past decades. We will pay particular attention to issues of national, cultural, and gender identities, the relationship between art and politics, tradition and modernity, and cross-cultural communication. Class meetings combine lecture, discussion, presentation, and guest speaking when applicable.

The majority of homework in this class is watching the assigned films, reading selected scholarly works, preparing presentations (which involves conducting extensive research on chosen directors and possibly watching additional films), and writing short essays. Each student has a varied deadline regarding individual presentation, clip presentation, bibliographic research.

**READINGS:**

**Recommended Readings:**

Berry, Chris and Mary Farquhar. *China On Screen: Cinema and Nation.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Chow, Rey. *Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Zhang, Yingjin. *Chinese National Cinema.* New York: Routledge, 2004.

1. Lim, Song Hwee and Julian Ward (eds). *The Chinese Cinema Book,* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
2. Yu Hua. *To Live*. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.
3. Corrigan, Timothy. *A Short Guide to Writing About Film.* New York: Longman, 2014.
4.
5. Mo Yan. *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China.* New York : Viking, 1993.
6. Proulx, Annie. *Brokeback Mountain.* New York: Scribner.

**Required Readings:**

Readings selected from a variety of texts will be posted on Blackboard. Click on "Course Schedule" to find links to each week's reading assignments.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

**Attendance and Participation 35%**

Students are expected to attend all classes and to be on time. Attendance will be taken at the start of class. Excused absences will be granted provided students can show a valid reason for being absent from class, such as: doctor’s note, proof of personal emergency, college-required commitment, etc. Repeated unexcused absences will be reflected in the participation grade; if there is a good reason why you cannot make a class, please talk to me in advance.

Participation includes being an active contributor in class discussions and activities, showing respect for other members of the class, and being prepared by completing the required viewing and reading assignments before class.

Students’ class participation and performance will be evaluated for each class and a performance score will be given on the following scale:

9-10 = excellent preparation and participation

7-8 = good preparation and participation

5-6 = some preparation and participation; arriving late or leaving early

3-4 = inadequate preparation and participation

1-2 = no preparation and participation

0 = absent

**Journals 35%**

A weekly journal of the films and the reading is required. Questions regarding the content of each film and/or of the readings will be posted after the screening. Your journals should respond to the questions, due on Blackboard in one week, before the next meeting. In addition, a hard copy should be submitted in class. Detailed instructions will be posted on Blackboard.

**Presentation 10%**

You are required to do a small group presentation on given topics about one of the selected films. The presentation needs to be well-structured, informative, and integrated to class discussion. You must discuss with the instructor about what is expected of your presentation (after class, via email, or during office hours). Your PowerPoint must be submitted before class (by 9am) on the day of your presentation.

**Research paper 10%**

A 5-6 page research paper based on your paper outline and annotated bibliography. Due 12/8.

**Paper outline and Annotated bibliography 5%**

You can choose to base your research paper on your presentation. Conduct an annotated bibliographical research and draft an outline (including a thesis statement) for your paper. Due in class a week after your presentation. If you choose to write your paper on a different film, the outline and bibliography is due by 11/29.

**Peer Evaluation 5%**

You are required to submit Peer Evaluation forms for 5 individual presentations of your choice throughout the semester. Due in class the week after each presentation.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Honor Code**

The George Mason University Honor Code is in effect throughout the entire duration of the course and applies to all course work carried out inside and outside the classroom. It is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with the GMU Honor System and Code as laid out in the Student Handbook.
Please refer to <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/> for detailed information.

**Policy On Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. Please see [www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

**Office Hours**

Office hours are an important part of this course. You are strongly encouraged to attend office hours to talk with the instructor about the class and to gain one-on-one feedback on your work. If you cannot attend office hours at the scheduled time, please email the instructor to schedule an appointment outside the regular times.

**E-mail**

Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. It is your responsibility to check your email accounts regularly to stay updated.

Be advised that even though I try to check my emails frequently, it may take up to one workday for your e-mail to reach me.

**Caveat**

The syllabus is a working draft of our intellectual topics and texts during the semester. I may change the syllabus and adjust the readings given certain situations, including strong interests expressed by students.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

8/30 Introduction

Screen: Zhang Yimou, *Red Sorghum* (1988)

**Past, Present, and Fiction**

9/6 Discuss: Zhang Yimou, *Red Sorghum* (1988)
Screen:Zhang Yimou, *To Live* (1994)

9/13 Discuss: Zhang Yimou, *To Live* (1994)

Screen:Wang Xiaoshuai, *Beijing Bicycle* (2002)

**Centers vs. Corners**

9/20 Discuss: Wang Xiaoshuai, *Beijing Bicycle* (2002)
 Screen: Jia Zhangke, *A Touch of Sin* (2014)

9/27 Discuss: Jia Zhangke, *A Touch of Sin* (2014)

Screen: Lu Chun, *Mountain Patrol* (2006)
 Recommended: Zhang Yang, *Paths of the Soul* (2015)

**Nature and the Spiritual**

10/4 Discuss: *Mountain Patrol* (& *Paths of the Soul*)

 Screen: Feng Xiaogang, *A World Without Thieves* (2007)

**Recreation, Consumption, and Social reality**

10/11 Discuss: Feng Xiaogang, *A World Without Thieves* (2007)

Screen:Xue Xiaolu, *Finding Mr. Right* (2013)

**Global China**

10/18 Discuss: Xue Xiaolu, *Finding Mr. Right* (2013)
 Screen: Jia Zhangke, *Mountains May Depart* (2015)

10/25 Discuss: Jia Zhangke, *Mountains May Depart* (2015)

Screen: Ann Hui, *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* (2006)

 Recommended: Feng Xiaogang: *I Am Not Madame Bovary* (2016)

**Gender and Violence**

11/1 Discuss: Ann Hui, *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* (2006)

Screen: Zhang Meng, *The* *Piano in a Factory* (2010)

**Tradition and Transformation**

11/8 Discuss: Zhang Meng, *The* *Piano in a Factory* (2010)

Screen: Tian Xiaopeng: *Monkey King: Hero is Back* (2015)
 Assignment: Wan Laiming: *Uproar in Heaven* (1964)

**Beyond Borders: Journey to the West as a Case Study**

~~11/15 Discuss:~~ *~~Monkey King: Hero is Back~~* ~~&~~ *~~Uproar in Heaven~~* ~~Screen: Ang Lee,~~ *~~Eat, Drink, Man, Woman~~* ~~(1994)
Assignment: Ang Lee,~~ *~~Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon~~* ~~(2000)~~

Snow Day No Class

**[11/22 Thanksgiving Recess – No Class]**

**Beyond Borders: Ang Lee as a Case Study**

11/29 Discuss: *Monkey King: Hero is Back* & *Uproar in Heaven*
Screen: Ang Lee, *Pushing Hands* (1992)
Assignment: Ang Lee, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000)

12/6 Discuss: *Pushing Hands* & *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*
Recommended: Ang Lee, *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)

Semester Review