21G046/192 Fall 2016

Modern Chinese Fiction and Cinema

Time: Tuesday 7–10 PM
Classroom: 14N-303
Instructor: Professor Jing Wang
Office Hours: by appointments
Office: 14N-311
Email: jing@mit.edu
Stellar site: http://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/21G/fa16/21G.046/

Course Description
This course examines modern and contemporary mainland Chinese creative culture with a focus on the post-1949 period. Short stories, novellas, and feature films will be examined against the backdrop of the Cultural Revolution, the Tiananmen Square massacre, the new wave cinema, the 1980s root-searching movement, and the emerging digital culture that rewrites the traditional concept of creativity and literacy. Representative works includes literary, cinematic, and digitally based works from mainland China.

*046 and 192 are the same course.* Minors in Chinese should sign up for 192 if you want to use this course to fulfill a minor’s requirement. Students who have had no background in Mandarin Chinese should sign up for 046.

This is a HASS CI course. The amount of writing required is 5,000 words or more. Two short papers (4 pages, approximately 1,200 words for one, and 5 pages, approximately 1,430 words for another), plus a final paper 12 pages minimum (approximately 2,370 words), are required. Students will have the opportunity to revise one paper. Students’ oral communications skills will also be developed through student presentations, class debates, and student-led discussions with feedback from the professor.

Required Texts  (Please go ahead and purchase the books!)
Articles and stories on e-reserve

Recommended Readings

Films
Chen Kaige, *Farewell my concubine* (1993)
*PBS, China in Revolution* Part I & II (1989)
Zhao Wei, *So Young* (2013)

Grade Distribution
1. Attendance and active participation in discussions: the level of your participation will be graded. *Students who do not like to speak up in class should NOT take this class.* Unexcused absences will affect your grade in this category.  
   **30%**

2. Weekly e-mail questions: 1 question on each reading/viewing assignment to be submitted by 10 AM every Tuesday  
   **30%**

   **Two points will be subtracted for each late submission (total points@ submission are 8).** You will be graded for the quality of your questions. These should be essay questions that demonstrate you have thought through the assignment critically and thoroughly.

3. Chinese Minors (who registered under 21F192) will be asked to complete a translation exercise which makes up 10% of the grade

   **Due: October 17 (Monday)**  
   **10%**

   Topic: Pick a feature film directed by a *mainland Chinese* director, analyze it in light of the historical context you learned about in class, and choose at least a frame and do a deep visual analysis of it.
   
   ● Please DO NOT pick a film on the class list.
   ● Please write and get permission from the instructor about your pick.
   ● Plot summary should not exceed one page.

   **The grade spread is as follows: your initial submission makes up 15% of your grade.**
Therefore, please do not hand in a very rough draft as it will affect the final grade of your paper.

5. Paper #2 1430 words approximately, double-spaced, font 12. This paper can be revised and resubmitted. Due Nov. 14 (Monday). You will be given a chance to rewrite this paper. 10%

Topic: The China that I Didn’t Knew (until I took this class)
Grading criteria: originality, a clear thesis, and thematic coherence
• Please do not reiterate the discussions we had in class. Please come up with your own unique observations about the topic.
• No laundry list: The approach you would want to avoid is to give me a list of things you learned. Please cohere your observations into a well-organized thesis.

6. Final term paper: 2,370 words minimum, double-spaced, due at 5 PM on December 14. 20%

Suggested topics:
• Study the generational logic of the 4th, 5th, and entertainment film directors and place it in the larger context of the materials covered in this class.
• Examine how each genre (fiction, or online video, or documentary, or feature film) examines the larger question of China’s quest for modernity/modernization. You can study a select group of works in each genre to examine the topic. The selections must include at least one work that has not been discussed in class.
• A comparative study of the spoof culture in the USA and that in China, include at least one case study in each culture. The spoof can be a video film production, songs, or photos and pictures. The case studies CANNOT be works that we already discussed in class.
• A study of a contemporary Chinese writer not covered in class. The discussion of the writer must be placed in the larger historical and cultural context of what we discussed in class. You have pick a thesis to defend your position. The paper cannot be a biographical sketch or simple description of the content of the works by the author.
• A study of China’s creative culture online. You must include at least three examples we have NOT covered in class.

Academic Integrity and Plagerism
http://web.mit.edu/academicintegrity/handbookprinting.html

CI Requirement
1. Communication intensive subjects in the humanities, arts, and social sciences require at least 20 pages of writing divided among a number of assignments, at least one of which is revised and resubmitted.
2. HASS-CI subjects offer students substantial opportunity for oral expression, through
presentations and class participation. This class requires all students to participate in a weekly discussion of the assigned reading. In addition, each student will make at least a formal two 10-minute individual presentations of the topics assigned in class during the term.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

**Where do you go to borrow films?**

**MIT HUMANITIES FILM OFFICE**
Go to the link below and access info on the collection through our online database:  
[http://mit.edu/filmoffice/library](http://mit.edu/filmoffice/library)
Bldg. 14N-428; Phone: 617-253-2873
Contact: Laura Ryan (ryanl@mit.edu)
Hours: Monday - Thursday: 10AM-5PM / Friday: 12PM-5PM

Please bring your MIT ID to the office. Videos being used for specific classes are placed on reserve during the semester. These videos can be borrowed only by persons in the class and MUST be returned the following day by 1PM. THE FINE FOR NOT RETURNING RESERVED VIDEOS IS $1 PER DAY, starting at 1PM the day the video is due.

Sign out procedures:

After showing an MIT ID, you'll print the following info on the sign-out list:  
1. Title  
2. Version (Film Office personnel will tell you the version)  
3. Class #  
4. Your Name  
5. Your Email Address  
6. Date Borrowed
9/13  T  Introduction
“Beginning of the Great Revival,” a film by Han Sanping screened in class;
Students: Watch “Mao’s Revolution Part I” and bring a question before you come to class
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7C40M9GM3k)

9/20  T  Topic: The Old Society Before Mao
Lu Xun, “Medicine”, “The Story of Ah Q,” “The Diary of a Mad Man”
(Required text)
Mao Zedong, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions” (excerpt) (e-reserve)

9/27  T  Topic: Socialist Realism
Mao Zedong, Excerpts from “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art,
https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm
Heroes of China’s great leap forward: two stories (required text)
Mao’s Revolution Part II: 1949-1976

10/4  T  Topic: Root-Searching Literature
Li Hangyu, “The Last Fisherman” (e-reserve)
Han Shaogong, “Homecoming” (e-reserve)
Ah Cheng, “The King of Trees” “The King of Children,” in The King of Trees, Three Novellas (Required Text)
The Avant-garde: Can Xue, “The Hut on the Mountain” (e-reserve)

10/6  Th  Can Xue Talk  5:30-7 PM, venue TBA

10/11  T  Columbus Day, no class.  Oct. 17 (Monday)  1st paper due

10/18  T  Topic: Root-Searching Literature continued & the avant-garde
Ah Cheng, “The King of Chess” (Required text)
Yu Hua, “The Noon of the Howling Wind” (e-reserve)
Yu Hua, “Excerpt from Autobiography (e-reserve)
Jing Wang, “On Root-Searching Literature” (e-reserve)

10/25  T  No class (Humanities Visiting Committee)
Watch Xie Jin’s “Hibiscus Town”
Watch Chen Kaige’s “Farewell My Concubine” at home
Watch Jia Zhangke, “A Touch of Sin” at home

11/1  T  Topic: The 4th Generation vs. the 5th & 6th Generation Filmmakers
1. Discuss Xie Jin’s “Hibiscus Town”; discuss Chen Kaige’s “Farewell My Concubine”; discuss Jia Zhangke, “A Touch of Sin”
2. Watch Zhang Yimou, “Hero” at home;
3. Helen Leung, “Yellow Earth: Hesitant Apprenticeship and Bitter Agency” (e-reserve)
4. Jia Zhangke, On 6th generation cinema (e-reserve)
If you have time, watch Zhang Yimou’s “Judou”

11/8 T Topic: Nobel Prize Winner Mo Yan, Red Sorghum (Required Text)
Mo Yan, “My American Books” (e-reserve)
Mo Yan, Nobel Literature Prize Acceptance Speech
Perry Link, “Why Should We Criticize Mo Yan”
Screening in Class
Carman Hinton’s Tiananmen Square I:

11/14 M 2nd paper due

11/15 T Topic: June 4th Tiananmen Square Crackdown
1. Albert Chang, “Revisiting the Tiananmen Square Incident: A Distorted Image from Both Sides of the Lens”
   http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjeaa/journal51/china1.pdf
2. Michel Oksenberg, Lawrence R. Sullivan, excerpts from Beijing Spring 1989 (e-reserve)
3. Watch Carman Hinton’s Tiananmen Square II at home

11/22 T Topic: post-1989 Pop Culture and Fiction
Wang Shuo, Please Don’t Call Me Human
Watch Jiang Wen’s “Devils on the Doorstep” at home

11/29 T Topic: Modern Love & the Modern Girl
Ding Ling, “Miss Sophie’s Diary” (e-reserve)
Chi Li, “Willow Waist” (Chairman Mao e-reserve)
Zhang Jie, “Love Cannot Be Forgotten” (e-reserve)
Watch Zhao Wei’s “So Young” at home

12/6 T Tibetan writer, “Amerika”
Watch Peter Chan’s “American Dream in China”
Tom Doctoroff, What Chinese Want, excerpts (e-reserve)

12/13 T Topic: User Generated Content and Spoofs
Watch Chen Kaige, “The Promise” at home
David Talbot, “China’s Internet Paradox,”
http://www.technologyreview.com/web/25032/page4/

Screened in Class
Hu Ge, “The Bloody Case of a Steamed Bun”

12/14   W    Final Paper due