

**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](mailto: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! )

Lu Xun, *Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, Penguin, 2010.

Wang Shuo, *Please don't call me human*, Cheng and Tsui, 2003.

Richard King, ed. *Heroes of china's great leap forward: two stories*, University of Hawaii Press, 2009.

Mo Yan, *Red Sorghum*. Penguin, 1994.

Ah Cheng, *The King of Trees: Three Novellas: The King of Trees, The King of Chess, The King of Children*, New Directions, 2010.

Wang Anyi, *Love in a Small Town*, Renditions Paperback, 1990.

Articles and stories on e-reserve

Recommended Readings

Richard Barsam, *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*, Norton Co., 2004.

Chris Berry, ed., *Chinese Films in Focus*, British Film Institute, 2003.  
 Chris Berry and Xinyu Lu, *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record*, Hong Kong University Press, 2011.  
 Tom Doctoroff, *What Chinese Want*, Palgrave, 2012.  
 Jing Wang, *China's Avant-garde Fiction*, Duke University Press, 1998.  
 Jing Wang, *High Culture Fever*, University of California Press, 1996.  
 Ellen Widmer and David Der-wei Wang, eds., *From May Fourth to June Fourth: Fiction and Film in Twentieth-Century China*, Harvard Contemporary China Series, 1993.

## Films

Chen Kaige, *Farewell my concubine* (1993)  
 Chen Kaige, *The Promise* (2005)  
 Han Sanping, *Beginning of the Great Revival* (2011)  
 Carma Hinton, *Tiananmen Square* (documentary) (1995)  
 Jia Zhangke, *A Touch of Sin* (2006)  
 Jiang Wen, *Devils on the Doorstep* (2002)  
 PBS, *China in Revolution Part I & II* (1989)  
 Xie Jin, *Hibiscus Town* (1986)  
 Zhao Wei, *So Young* (2013)  
 Zhang Yimou, *Hero* (2002); *Ju Dou* (1990)  
 Zhang Yuan, *East Palace, West Palace* (1996)

## 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

4. Paper #1 1200 words, double-spaced, font 12, regular margins, delivered *electronically* in Word Document. **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 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 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.

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## **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>

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

## 21F.046/192 Syllabus

- 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](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) 1<sup>st</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> Generation vs. the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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  
[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2012/yan-lecture\\_en.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2012/yan-lecture_en.html)  
 Perry Link, "Why Should We Criticize Mo Yan"  
<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2012/dec/24/why-criticize-mo-yan/>  
Screening in Class  
 Carman Hinton's *Tiananmen Square I*:
- 11/14 M      2<sup>nd</sup> paper due
- 11/15 T      **Topic: June 4<sup>th</sup> 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