

George Mason University – Fall 2008
Contemporary Chinese Cinema
CHIN 320-001, FAVS 399-002, ARTH 303-001

Meeting Time: Wednesday, 7:20PM-10:00PM **Place:** Thompson Hall 227
Instructor: Fan Yang **E-mail:** fyang@gmu.edu
Office: 212 East Building **Office hours:** Tue. 2-4 PM or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to Chinese cinema from its beginnings to the present, focusing on productions from Mainland China, with a section on films of Taiwan. No prior knowledge of Chinese history, culture, film, or language is required.

While not a comprehensive study of 20th century Chinese cinema (due to the limited availability of films with English subtitles of acceptable quality), this course will provide a broad historical overview combined with in-depth exploration of select topics, focusing on issues of national, cultural, and gender identities, the relationship between art and politics, and cross-cultural communication. Considerable emphasis will be given to the so-called Fifth Generation filmmakers, whose works constitute a key turning point in Chinese cinematic history.

After taking this course, students will be expected to:

1. have a preliminary understanding of the major issues confronted by China over the past century;
2. be better prepared to place Chinese films they encounter in the future both cinematically and within China's social and cultural context;
3. be more aware of their own assumptions and biases when approaching other cultures.

Class Format

The class meets once a week. Each class will begin with a discussion and analysis of a film (or sections of films) screened the previous week. Students are expected to participate in the discussion with prepared notes from the required readings as well as from any additional viewing assignments to be completed outside of class. Prior to the screening of the new film(s) during the remainder of the session, the instructor will give a brief lecture introducing the relevant background and context.

In addition, a number of classes will include student presentations; the class will be divided into **six** teams of four or five students, and each team will be responsible for one presentation on the previous week's film and for leading the class discussion and analysis on the date of presentation. (Please sign up on Blackboard, under "Presentation Team Sign-up Sheet".)

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend all classes and to be on time. Repeated unexcused absences will be reflected in the participation grade.

All reading assignments listed under a particular week must be completed *before* the *next* class meeting to ensure active classroom participation. Each student, as part of a small team, will also be required to present one film during the course. (See Class Format above and Presentation Sign-up Sheet on Blackboard.)

2. Screening Reports

Students will be required to submit a one-page screening report for films every other week. That is, half the class will submit screening reports one week, and the other half will submit reports the next week. (Students will be assigned to one of two groups, and should submit reports according to the due dates for their group given in the course schedule.) Every student is expected to write a total of six reports over the entire course. Reports are to be submitted electronically on Blackboard (courses.gmu.edu) and hard copies to be submitted in class. (See Screening Report Groups and Dates.)

3. Papers

A midterm and a final paper (6-8 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margin) are required. The papers are due on Oct. 22 and Dec. 3 (last class). Students should submit a hard copy in class and should also submit their papers on Blackboard. E-mailed papers will not be accepted. Detailed instructions for the papers will be given out in class.

4. Quizzes

There will be two short quizzes covering key names, terms, and dates related to Chinese history and film. See Course Schedule for dates.

Grading

Class participation/presentation - 20%
Screening reports (3 points X 6) - 18%
Midterm paper - 20%
Final paper - 26%
Quizzes (8 points X 2) – 16%

Grading Policy (%)

A: 96-100	A-: 90-95
B+: 87-89	B: 83-85
B: 83-85	B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79	C: 73-75
C: 73-75	C-: 70-72
D+: 67-79	D: 63-65
D: 63-65	D-: 60-62
	F: 0-59

Honor Code

This course will be conducted in accordance with the [GMU Honor Code](#), as stated in the University catalog. Students are expected to be familiar with the code and to abide by its stated principles.

Readings

The main body of required readings for this course is contained in the following books:

- Corrigan, Timothy. **A Short Guide to Writing About Film**. 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2005.
- Fairbank, John King, and Merle Goldman. **China: A New History**. 2nd enlarged ed. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

Additional readings will be on Blackboard under Course Schedule, or on the web. Also on reserve at the library is **Film Art: An Introduction**, by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. While there are no assigned or recommended readings from this book, it covers many aspects and issues of filmmaking and analysis that may be helpful for students who are new to film studies.

Course Schedule

Meeting 1, Wed., 8/27

Discussion: Introduction to the course

Screening: *Shadow Magic (Xi Yang Jing)*. Dir. Ann Hu, 2000, 115 min.

Readings:

- Zhang Yingjin, "Introduction: Early Cinema," "Cinema as Attractions" (excerpt on Early Exhibition only), and "Genre Considerations: Opera Movies and Comedies" (excerpt on Ding Junshan only), from **Chinese National Cinema**, pp. 13-18 and p. 34.
- Berry, Chris and Mary Ann Farquhar, "Shadow Opera: A Chinese Cinema of Attractions," and "Early Opera Film: Making the Cinema Chinese," from **China on Screen: Cinema and Nation**, pp. 49-58.
- Wright, Elizabeth, "Shadow Magic – Imperial Peking's Cinematic Initiation," **Senses of Cinema** website (http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/17/shadow_magic.html).
- Grady, Pam, "Weaving a Spell - an interview with Ann Hu," on Reel.com website (<http://www.reel.com/reel.asp?node=features/interviews/hu>).
- Lu Xun, "Preface to 'Call to Arms'" – read both translations: 1) **Diary of a Madman and Other Stories**, translated by William A. Lyell (also available in GMU's [NetLibrary](#)); 2) **Selected Stories of Lu Xun**, translated by Yang Hsien-yi (Xianyi) and Gladys Yang (also available online at <http://www.coldbacon.com/writing/luxun-calltoarms.html>).
- Fairbank, Chapter 11, *Early Modernization and the Decline of Qing Power*, pp. 217-234, and Chapter 12, *The Republican Revolution*, pp. 235-253.
- Corrigan, Timothy, **A Short Guide to Writing About Film**, Chapter 1, pp. 1-17.

Meeting 2, Wed., 9/3

Discussion: *Shadow Magic*

Screening: *Raise the Red Lantern (Da hong denglong gaogao gua)*. Dir. Zhang Yimou, 1991, 125 min.

Readings:

- Cui Shuqin, "Raise the Red Lantern: The Cinematic Orient and Female Conflict," in Geiger, Jeffrey, **Film Analysis, A Norton Reader**, pp. 830-849.
- Dai Qing, "Raised Eyebrows for *Raise the Red Lantern*," *Public Culture*, 1993, 5: 333-337.
- Zha, Jane Ying (Jianying), "Excerpts from 'Lore Segal, Red Lantern, and Exoticism,'" *Public Culture*, 1993, 5: 329-332.
- Yang, Mayfair, "Of Gender, State, Censorship, and Overseas Capital: An Interview with Director Zhang Yimou" (excerpt, pp. 38-40), in Gateward, Frances, ed., **Zhang Yimou Interviews**.
- Fairbank, Introduction to Part Three, pp. 255-256; Chapter 13, *The Quest for a Chinese Civil Society*, pp. 257-278; Chapter 14, *The Nationalist Revolution and the Nanjing Government*, pp. 279-293.
- Corrigan, Chapter 2, pp. 18-35.
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Assignment (GROUP A): screening report on *Raise the Red Lantern* – due Mon., 9/8 by 10 PM.

Last day to add classes: Sept. 9

Meeting 3, Wed., 9/10

Discussion: *Raise the Red Lantern*

Screening: *The Goddess (Shennü)*, silent, dir. Wu Yonggang, 1934, 77 min. Note: For your reference, the intertitles transcript for *The Goddess* is available online at <http://faculty.washington.edu/yomi/goddess.html>.

Readings:

- Harris, Kristine, "The Goddess: Fallen Women of Shanghai," in Berry, **Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes**, pp. 111-119.
- Meyer, Richard, **Ruan Ling-yu: The Goddess of Shanghai**.
- Fairbank, Chapter 15, The Second Coming of the Chinese Communist Party, pp. 294-311; Chapter 16, China's War of Resistance, 1937-1945, pp. 312-330.
- Corrigan, Chapter 3 (first half), pp. 36-57.

Assignment (GROUP B): screening report on *The Goddess* – due Mon., 9/15 by 10 PM.

Meeting 4, Wed., 9/17

Discussion – Student Presentation 1: *The Goddess*

Screening: *New Woman (Xin Nüxing)*, silent. Dir. Cai Chusheng, 1934, 106 min. [Note: the *New Woman* transcript is available online at: <http://mclc.osu.edu/rc/pubs/nw.htm>.]

Readings:

- Harris, Kristine, "The *New Woman* Incident: Cinema, Scandal, and Spectacle in 1935 Shanghai," in Lu, **Transnational Chinese Cinemas**, pp. 277-302.
- Lu Xun, "Gossip is a Fearful Thing," **Selected Works of Lu Hsun, Vol. 4**, pp. 186-190.
- Lu Xun, "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?" in **Silent China: Selected Writings of Lu Xun**, pp. 148-154. (In this piece, Lu Xun refers to Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which can be found online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2542> for those who are interested.)
- Fairbank, excerpts from Chapter 17, "Why the Nationalists Failed," and "Nationalist Attack and Communist Counterattack," pp. 331-337; Introduction to Part Four, pp. 343-344; Chapter 18, *Establishing Control of State and Countryside*, pp. 345-367.
- Corrigan, Chapter 3 (second half), pp. 57-81.

Recommended Reading:

- Lee, Leo Ou-fan, "The Urban Milieu of Shanghai Cinema, 1930-40: Some Explorations of Film Audience, Film Culture, and Narrative Conventions," in Zhang, **Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai**, Chapter 4, pp. 74-96.

Assignment (GROUP A): screening report on *New Woman* – due Mon., 9/22 by 10 PM.

Meeting 5, Wed., 9/24

Discussion – Student Presentation 2: *New Woman*

Screening: *Two Stage Sisters (Wutai jiemei)*. Dir. Xie Jin, 1965, 112 min.

Readings:

- Marchetti, Gina, "Two Stage Sisters: The Blossoming of a Revolutionary Aesthetic," in Lu, **Transnational Chinese Cinemas**, pp. 59-80. (Also available online: <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/index3.html#34>.)

- Da Huo'er, "An Interview with Xie Jin," *Jump Cut*, No. 34 (1989), pp. 107-109. (Available online: <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/index3.html#34>.)
- Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art." (Available online: http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/classics/mao/sw3/mswv3_08.html.)
- Fairbank, Chapter 19, *The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960*, pp. 368-382; Chapter 20, *The Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976*, pp. 406-451.
- Corrigan, Chapter 4, pp. 82-108.

Recommended Reading

- Semsel, George, Interview with Xie Jin, **Chinese Film: The State of the Art in the People's Republic**, pp. 107-115.
- Tung, Timothy, "The Work of Xie Jin: A Personal Letter to the Editor" in Downing, John, **Film and Politics in the Third World**, pp. 199-207.

Assignment (GROUP B): screening report on *Two Stage Sisters* – due Mon., 9/29 by 10 PM.

Last day to drop classes: Sept. 26

Meeting 6, Wed., 10/1

Discussion – Student Presentation 3: *Two Stage Sisters*

Screening: *Hibiscus Town (Furong zhen)*. Dir. Xie Jin, 1986, 126 min.

Readings:

- Hayford, Charles W., "*Hibiscus Town: Revolution, Love and Bean Curd*," in Berry, **Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes**, pp. 120-127.
- Fairbank, Chapter 21, *The Post-Mao Reform Era*, pp. 406-451.
- Corrigan, Chapter 5, pp. 109-120.

Assignment (GROUP A): screening report on *Hibiscus Town* – due Mon., 10/6 by 10 PM.

Meeting 7, Wed., 10/8

Discussion – Student Presentation 4: *Hibiscus Town*

Screening: *Yellow Earth (Huang tudi)*. Dir. Chen Kaige, 1984, 89 min.

Readings:

- Farquhar, Mary Ann, "The 'Hidden' Gender in *Yellow Earth*," in Kuoshu, **Celluloid China**, Chapter 11, pp. 220-232.
- Leung, Helen Hok-Sze, "*Yellow Earth: Hesitant Apprenticeship and Bitter Agency*," in Berry, **Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes**, pp. 191-197.
- Barmé, Geremie, "VIII: *Yellow Earth*," in **Seeds of Fire**, pp. 251-269.
- Semsel, George, Interview with Chen Kaige, **Chinese Film: The State of the Art in the People's Republic**, pp. 134-141.
- Zhu Dake, "The Drawback of Xie Jin's Model," in Semsel, George, **Chinese Film Theory: A Guide to the New Era**, pp. 144-146.
- Li Jie, "Xie Jin's Era Should End," in Semsel, **Chinese Film Theory: A Guide to the New Era**, pp. 147-148.
- Corrigan, Chapter 6, pp. 127-156.

Recommended Reading:

- Yau, Esther C.M., "Yellow Earth: Western Analysis and a Non-Western Text," in Berry, Chris, **Perspectives on Chinese Cinema**, pp. 62-79.

Assignment (GROUP B): screening report on *Yellow Earth* – due Tues., 10/14 by 10 PM [*note change in due date because of Columbus Day holiday*].

Meeting 8, Wed., 10/15

Quiz 1

Discussion: *Yellow Earth*

Screening: *Farewell My Concubine (Bawang bie ji)*. Dir. Chen Kaige, 1993, 172 min.

Readings:

- Kaplan, E. Ann, "Reading Formations and Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine*," in Lu, **Transnational Chinese Cinemas**, Chapter 10, pp. 265-275. (Available in GMU's [NetLibrary](#).)
- Braester, Yomi, "*Farewell My Concubine*: National Myth and City Memories," in Berry, **Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes**, pp. 89-96.
- Zha Jianying, Chapter 4, "Shadows on the Screen," **China Pop**, pp. 79-104.
- Corrigan, Chapter 7, pp. 157-174.

Assignment (GROUP A): screening report on *Farewell My Concubine* – due Mon., 10/20 by 10 PM.

Meeting 9, Wed., 10/22

Midterm Paper due

Discussion: *Farewell My Concubine*

Screening: *To Live (Huozhe)*. Dir. Zhang Yimou, 1994, 125 min.

Readings:

- Chow, Rey, "We Endure, Therefore We Are: Survival, Governance, and Zhang Yimou's *To Live*," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 95, No. 4 (Fall 1996), pp. 1039-1064.
- Niogret, Hubert, "Interview with Zhang Yimou," in Gateward, **Zhang Yimou Interviews**, pp. 57-62.

Assignment (GROUP B): screening report on *To Live* – due Mon., 10/27 by 10 PM.

Meeting 10, Wed., 10/29

Discussion – Student Presentation 5: *To Live*

Screening: *Platform (Zhantai)*. Dir. Jia Zhangke, 2000, 154 min.

Readings:

- Berry, Michael, **Speaking in Images**, "Jia Zhangke: Capturing a Transforming Reality," - the introduction to the interview, pp. 183-184, and the section on *Platform*, pp. 194-196, are required; the remainder of the chapter (consisting of the interview) is recommended reading only.
- Li Jie, "From Auto-ethnography to Autobiography: Representations of the Past in Contemporary Chinese Cinema," *Senses of Cinema*.

Screening Report

Groups and Dates

Contemporary Chinese Cinema
(CHIN 320-001, FAVS 399-002, ARTH 303-001)

<i>Films</i>	Screening Dates (Meeting No.s)	Report Due Dates (10pm, Mon. Except Noted)	Screening Report Groups
<i>Raise the Red Lantern</i>	9/3 (M2)	9/8	Group A Vivath Bounthong Jessica Charter Sebastian Cornejo Jennifer Fang LeighAnn Gardner John Hagelin Fred Jones Smita Madhur Jennifer Mockler Kiel Pollitt Robert Segaar Lucy Wang
<i>New Woman</i>	9/17 (M4)	9/22	
<i>Hibiscus Town</i>	10/1 (M6)	10/6	
<i>Farewell My Concubine</i>	10/15 (M8)	10/20	
<i>Platform</i>	10/29 (M10)	11/3	
<i>The Puppetmaster</i>	11/12 (M12)	11/17	
<i>The Goddess</i>	9/10 (M3)	9/15	
<i>Two Stage Sisters</i>	9/24 (M5)	9/29	
<i>Yellow Earth</i>	10/8 (M7)	10/14 (Tue)	
<i>To Live</i>	10/22 (M9)	10/27	
<i>Still Life</i>	11/5 (M11)	11/10	
<i>Good Men, Good Women</i>	11/19 (M13)	12/1	

Team Presentation

(Please sign up for One presentation on Blackboard by Meeting 2, Wed, 9/3)

Films and Dates

Contemporary Chinese Cinema
(CHIN 320-001, FAVS 399-002, ARTH 303-001)

Films	Screening Dates (Meeting Numbers)	Report Due Dates (10pm, Mondays Except Noted)	Presentation Numbers/Quiz Dates
<i>Shadow Magic</i>	8/27 (M1)	N/A	N/A
<i>Raise the Red Lantern</i>	9/3 (M2)	9/8 Group A	N/A
<i>The Goddess</i>	9/10 (M3)	9/15 Group B	1 9/17
<i>New Woman</i>	9/17 (M4)	9/22 Group A	2 9/24
<i>Two Stage Sisters</i>	9/24 (M5)	9/29 Group B	3 10/1
<i>Hibiscus Town</i>	10/1 (M6)	10/6 Group A	4 10/8
<i>Yellow Earth</i>	10/8 (M7)	10/14 (Tue) Group B	Quiz 1 10/15
<i>Farewell My Concubine</i>	10/15 (M8)	10/20 Group A	Midterm Paper Due 10/22
<i>To Live</i>	10/22 (M9)	10/27 Group B	5 10/29
<i>Platform</i>	10/29 (M10)	11/3 Group A	6 11/5
<i>Still Life</i>	11/5 (M11)	11/10 Group B	N/A
<i>The Puppetmaster</i>	11/12 (M12)	11/17 Group A	N/A
<i>Good Men, Good Women</i>	11/19 (M13)	12/1 Group B	Quiz 2 11/19
<i>The Hole</i>	12/3 (M14)	N/A	Final Paper Due 12/3