



CIEE in Shanghai, China

Course name:	Chinese Film and Society
Course number:	EAST 3201 SCGC / CINE 3201 SCGC
Programs offering course:	Shanghai Accelerated Chinese Language, Shanghai Business, Language and Culture, Shanghai China in a Global Context
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3 semester/4.5 quarter hours
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Fall 2018

Course Description

What can Chinese films reveal about Chinese history, society, and culture? What is the relationship between cinematic representations and social realities? How can images and sounds teach us things that go beyond the power of words?

This course will present an introduction to the history of Chinese cinema within its specific social, historical, and cultural contexts of production. By watching films from a broad range of genres and directors, the course will demonstrate the diversity and complexity of Chinese cinema in the twentieth and twenty-first century. From Chinese cinema's early beginnings in the silent era of the 1920s and 1930s, through China's turbulent and transformative periods of war and revolution from the 1940s through the 1970s, as well as following China's Reform and Opening era in the late-1970s, the course situates Chinese films within the lived social/historical/cultural experiences of their spaces and places of production.

The selected films consist of canonical classics as well as lesser-known gems. Topics raised in the films include issues of modernity, nationalism, and gender; urban space, the politics of everyday life, and social change; ethnicity, representation, and nation-building; transnationalism, diaspora, consumerism, and more. After building a strong foundation and understanding of the overarching movements and trends in twentieth-century Chinese cinema, we will conclude the course by looking at a number of innovative and provocative contemporary works by Chinese directors that span the fields of commercial, independent, and experimental film.

Learning Objectives

The purpose of this course is for students to learn—through films—the crucial historical moments of social change and cultural transformation in modern and contemporary China, and to learn how to analyze films closely and critically in terms of their respective social, historical, and cultural contexts. Students will learn to interpret, discuss, and write critically about films. We will work to build a technical, professional analytical toolkit of cinematic language, in order to get a better grasp of the relationships between form, content, and context.



Course Prerequisites

No prior knowledge of Chinese cinema, language, culture, or history is required. All films have English subtitles. All works are read in English.

Methods of Instruction

This course is structured around introductory lectures and focused discussions of the assigned readings and in-class film screenings. Lectures serve to place each film in a broad historical and theoretical framework, as well as in a specific cultural context that is defined by, or linked to, the spaces and places of a film's production and representation. Discussions focus on careful analysis of the assigned readings and screened films, and allow for the students to work through and develop the major themes, theories, and debates about Chinese film and its relationship to society.

Assessment and Final Grade

List three or more methods of assessment in addition to attendance and participation, indicating the percent of final grade below totaling 100%:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Attendance and Class Participation: | 20% |
| 2. Weekly Critical Response Papers: | 20% |
| 3. Mid-term Paper: | 20% |
| 4. Final Paper: | 40% |

Course Requirements

Class Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. Because the class meets only once a week, CIEE has a strict policy about course attendance that allows no unexcused absences. All absences due to illness require a signed doctor's note from a local facility as proof that you have been ill and have sought treatment for that illness. Other absences must be discussed prior to the date(s) in question. If your absence is not excusable, missing a class will be detrimental to your grade.

Students are expected to arrive to class promptly both at the start of class and after breaks. Arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will be considered an unexcused absence. Unexcused absences from exams are not permitted and will result in failure of the exam. Please note that the attendance policy also applies for classes involving a field trip or other off-campus visit. It is the student's responsibility to arrive at the agreed meeting point on time.

Reading and Participation



Students are expected to come to class having *carefully read* all of the readings for the week, and having prepared thorough notes and detailed questions about the texts. It is crucial for every student to participate in class discussion, and for the discussion environment to be open to, and respectful of, each student's unique perspectives, opinions, and reflections on the course readings and films.

Weekly Critical Responses

Each week, students will be required to submit a written response (400-500 English words), which should be a close analysis of one scene or important concept from the film for that week. In your analysis, you should demonstrate the ability to use the technical terms that we study during the first week (related to mise-en-scène, cinematography, sound, and editing), as well as analyze the scene in relation to the larger themes and concepts of the entire film. Your response should also make reference to at least one important concept or relevant passage from the readings for that week. These weekly critical responses will be graded, and must be submitted via email before **11:59PM on Monday** each week.

Submission of Late Work

Written work due in class must be submitted by or before the submission deadline. Work submitted more than five days after the due date will be given a zero.

Please note that the final paper must be submitted on time. CIEE policy stipulates that all assignments must be submitted on or before the last day of class. Therefore, **no late assignment will be accepted after the last day of the course.**

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism: the presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. Students must retain an electronic copy of their work until final grades are posted. They must be prepared to supply an electronic copy if requested. Not submitting a copy of their work upon request will result in automatic failure in the assignment and possible failure in the class.

Film Screening Etiquette

Cell phones, tablets, and laptops must be turned off for the duration of film screenings. The use of these or any similar devices during class screenings will negatively affect your grade.



Weekly Schedule

Class 1

Introduction to Chinese Cinema: Form, Content, Context

Course Overview, Basic Terms of Film Analysis, Course Goals

Screening: *To Live* (dir. Zhang Yimou, 1994)

Readings:

- “Introduction: Cinema and the National,” in *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation*, ed. Berry, Chris and Mary Farquhar, (Columbia University Press: New York), 2006, pp. 1-16.
- Read two film reviews or articles online about Zhang Yimou’s film *To Live*, and cite them in your written critical response for the week.

Class 2

Early Chinese Cinema: Republican Era China on Screen

Screening: *Laborer’s Love* (dir. Zhang Shichuan, 1922); *The Goddess* (dir. Wu Yonggang, 1934); excerpts from *Center Stage* (dir. Stanley Kwan, 1992)

Readings:

- Harris, Kristine. “The Goddess: Fallen Woman of Shanghai” in Berry, Chris, *Chinese Films in Focus*, 111-128.
- Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”
- Hansen, Miriam. “The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism.” Linda Williams and Christine Gledhill, eds., *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Edward Arnold, 2000). 332-350.

Class 3

Historical Thresholds: Wartime Cinema and the Founding of the PRC

Screening: *Crows and Sparrows* (dir. Zheng Junli, 1949) 108 mins; Excerpts from *Spring in a Small Town* (dir. Fei Mu, 1948).

Readings:



- Lee, Leo Ou-fan. "The Urban Milieu of Shanghai Cinema, 1930-40: Some Explorations Of Film Audience, Film Culture, and Narrative Conventions." In *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*, ed. Zhang Yingjin. Stanford University Press, 1999, 74-96.
- Wang Yiman, "Crows and Sparrows: Allegory on a Historical Threshold" in Berry, Chris, *Chinese Films in Focus*, 65-72.

Class 4

Cinematic Borderlands: Socialist Nation-Building on China's Multiethnic Frontiers

Screening: Excerpts from *Five Golden Flowers* (dir. Wang Jiayi, 1959), *Anaerhan* (dir. Li Enjie, 1962), *Serfs* (dir. Li Jun, 1963), *Ashima* (dir. Liu Qiong, 1964)

Readings:

- Berry, Chris. "'Race' (*minzu*): Chinese Film and the Politics of Nationalism." *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 2. (Winter, 1992): 45-58.
- Mullaney, Thomas S. "Ethnic classification writ large: the 1954 Yunnan Province Ethnic Classification Project and its foundations in Republican-era taxonomic thoughts." *China Information* (Thousand Oaks, CA; London), Vol. 18, No. 2. (July, 2004): 207-241.

Class 5

Transnational Chinese Cinema, Utopia, and Entertainment

Screening: *Air Hostess* (dir. Yi Wen, 1959)

Readings:

- Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia" in *Genre, The Musical*, 175-189.
- Fu, Poshek. "Modernity, Diasporic Capital, and 1950s' Hong Kong Mandarin cinema" in *Jump Cut*, No. 49, spring 2007.
- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics*, 16.1 (Spring, 1986): 22-27.

Class 6

Revolutionary Cinema: Memories and Documents of the Mao Era

Screening: *In the Heat of the Sun* (dir. Jiang Wen, 1995)

Excerpts from documentary newsreels, *Chung Kuo, Cina* (dir. Michelangelo Antonioni, 1972), *Sunday in Peking* (dir. Chris Marker, 1956)



Readings:

- Braester, Yomi. "Memory at a Standstill: Street-Smart History in Jiang Wen's *In the Heat of the Sun*"
- Yan, Yunxiang. *Private Life under Socialism*. Chapter One "The Changing Local World: Political Economy, Public Life, and Social Networks." Pp. 17-41.

Midterm Paper Due (via Email)

Class 7

The Fifth Generation: The Search for Roots

Screening: *Yellow Earth* (dir. Chen Kaige, 1984); excerpts from *The Horse Thief* (dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang, 1986), *Red Sorghum* (dir. Zhang Yimou, 1987)

Readings:

- Zhang, Xudong. "Generational Politics: What is the Fifth Generation?" In *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms: Cultural Fever, Avant-garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema* (Duke University Press, 1997): pp 215 – 31.
- Excerpts from Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

Class 8

Hometown Art House: The Films of Jia Zhangke

Screening: *Xiao Wu* (dir. Jia Zhangke, 1997), excerpts from *Platform* (dir. Jia Zhangke, 2000) and *Unknown Pleasures* (dir. Jia Zhangke, 2002)

Readings:

- McGrath, Jason. "The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke: From Postsocialist Realism to a Transnational Aesthetic." In Zhang Zhen, ed., *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007, 81-114.
- Lee, Kevin B. "Jia Zhangke" in *Senses of Cinema*, No. 25, March 2003.

Class 9

The Sixth Generation and The New Documentary Movement: Facing Social Realities



Screening: *Suzhou River* (Lou Ye, 2000)

Excerpts from *Bumming in Beijing* (dir. Wu Wenguang, 1990), *There's a Strong Wind in Beijing* (dir. Ju Anqi, 1999), *Disorder* (dir. Huang Weikai, 2009) and other independent documentaries

Readings:

- Silbergeld, Jerome. "Hitchcock with a Chinese Face: Lou Ye's *Suzhou River*." *Persimmon* 3, 2 (Summer 2002): 70-73.
- Zhang Zhen, Introduction, *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema in the Era of Transformation* (Duke UP, 2003), pp. 1-45.

Class 10

Postindustrial Chinese Noir: Diao Yanan's *Black Coal Thin Ice*

Screening: *Black Coal Thin Ice* (dir. Diao Yanan, 2014)

Excerpts from *West of the Tracks* (dir. Wang Bing, 2003), *Crime and Punishment* (dir. Zhao Liang, 2007)

Readings: **TBA**

Class 11

The Indie Blockbuster: Bi Gan's *Kaili Blues*

Screening: *Kaili Blues* (dir. Bi Gan, 2016)

Readings: **TBA**

Class 12

Expanded Chinese Cinema: Cinema, Gallery, Field

Screening: *I Have What* (dir. Mao Chenyu, 2013), visiting artist Mao Chenyu in Person

Readings: **TBA**

Final Paper due (via Email and Hard Copy)

Field Trips:

- Private Film Collection Visit with Liu Debao



- Shanghai Film Museum Visit
- Screening Event at a Local Cinema (TBA)