



## **CIEE Global Institute – Shanghai**

<b>Course name:</b>	Chinese Film and Society
<b>Course number:</b>	EAST 3201 SCGC / CINE 3201 SCGC
<b>Programs offering course:</b>	Shanghai Accelerated Chinese Language, Shanghai Business, Language and Culture, Shanghai China in a Global Context
<b>Language of instruction:</b>	English
<b>U.S. Semester Credits:</b>	3 semester/4.5 quarter hours
<b>Contact Hours:</b>	45
<b>Term:</b>	Spring 2020

### **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**

1. Class Participation:	20%
2. Critical Response Papers	15%
3. Seminar Presentation	15%
4. Mid-term Paper:	25%
5. Final Paper:	25%

### **Course Requirements**

#### **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**

While expected to read and annotate the class reading *every* week, students will write three critical responses over the course of the semester. Assigned at random, the response (400 - 500 English words) 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.

#### **Seminar**

The first class activity each week will be a 15 minute seminar. Those leading the seminar are expected to warm the class up with a summary of the film, demonstrate knowledge of at least one film term we learn in the first week in a scene analysis, and design structured questions to engage class discussion. Questions may include topics such as how to interpret a scene, or how to apply critical concepts from the reading to an element of the film that we learn about in the first week. The seminar leaders will be evaluated on their ability to demonstrate their grasp of the concepts from the previous week's class discussion and the readings through vocally articulating three thoughtful questions. I will provide a specific rubric the first week of class.



I will go over highlights from the readings the class prior to the seminar. While your questions should pertain to the weekly film and the corresponding readings, students are welcome to deviate from the frameworks I provide in my highlights. Such reasons for doing so might include providing an alternate interpretation than given in class or in the readings, or focusing on a different part of the reading that we did not cover in class. If you have any questions, you can speak to me after class, or send me an e-mail at least 48 hours before the following class.

### **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.**

### **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.

### **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.

### **Strongly Suggested Background Reading / Watching:**

Sue Williams, *China: A Century of Revolution*. Winstar TV and Video, 2001, 1997 (3 videodiscs).

A brief and informative review of China's history since the founding of the republic. Can access on youtube (VPN needed).



Zhang, Yingjin. *Chinese National Cinema*. Routledge, 2004.

### Weekly Schedule

#### **Week 1**

#### **Orientation Week**

No Class

#### **Week 2**

#### **Introduction: Western Magic and Chinese Cinema**

Course Overview, Basic Terms of Film Analysis, Seminar Rubric; Course Goals

#### Screening:

*To Live* (dir. Zhang Yimou, 1994); excerpts from *Shadow Magic* (dir. Ann Hu, 2000)

#### Readings:

- Berry 2006, 1 – 16
- Corrigan 2003, Chapter 3

#### **Week 3**

#### **Early Chinese Cinema: Republican Era Cosmopolitanism 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 1997, Chapter 11
- Mulvey 1975, 6 - 18
- Hansen 2000, 332-350

#### **Week 4**

#### **Historical Thresholds: Wartime Cinema and a Second Golden Period?**

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

#### Readings:

- Lee 1999, 74 - 96
- Wang 2008, 65 - 72

#### **Week 5**

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



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

Readings:

- Berry 1992, 45-58
- Yingjin 1997, Chapter 3
- Mullaney 2004, 207-241.

**Week 6**

**Transnational Chinese Cinema, Utopia, and Entertainment**

Screening: *Air Hostess* (dir. Yi Wen, 1959); Excerpts from *The Love Eterne* (dir. Li Hanshiang, 1963)

Readings:

- Dyer 1981, 175-189
- Fu 2007
- Foucault 1986, 22-27

**Week 7**

**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 2001, 350 - 362
- Yan 2003, 17-41

**Midterm Paper Due April 17 (via Email)**

**Week 8**

Cultural Excursions (No Class)

**Week 9**

International Labor Day (No Class)

Make up Class

**The Fifth Generation: The Search for Roots**

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



Readings:

- Zhang 1997, 215 – 31
- Excerpts from Chow 1995

**Week 10**

Spring Break (No Class)

**Week 11**

**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 2007, 81-114
- Lee 2003.

**Week 12**

**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 2004, 11 - 46
- Zhang 2003, 1 - 45

**Week 13**

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

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

Readings:

- Carew 2015
- TBA

**Week 14**

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

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

Readings:

- Kracier (URL)
- TBA

## Week 15

### Musicals, Theatre, and Everything in Between in the Cinema

Screening: *The Love Eterne* (dir. Li Han-hsiang, 1965); *Street Angel* (d. Yuan Muzhi 1937) and *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land* (d. Stan Lai 1992) ; guest lecture with ex West End actor (Robert Vicencio) who has been working on Chinese musicals for 10+ years

#### Readings:

- Tan 2008, 137 - 148
- Qin 2016

### Final Paper due June 12 (via Email and Hard Copy)

#### Field Trips:

Guest Lecturer with Robert Vicencio, ex West End actor (*Miss Saigon*), who has opened a production company in Shanghai that works on both film, video, and theatre projects.

Guest Lecturer from Gete, assistant director to Jiayi Du on art-house film *Marathon* (2017)

Shanghai Film Museum Visit

## Course material

### Articles

- Berry, Chris, and Mary Farquhar. "Introduction: Cinema and the National." *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. 1 - 16.
- Corrigan, Timothy. "Film Terms and Topics for for Film Analysis and Writing." In *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. London: Longman Publishing, 2003. Chapter 3.
- Carew, Anthony. "Diao Yinan's Black Coal Thin Ice." *Metro Magazine (ATOM)* Issue 184, 2015
- Berry, Chris. "'Race' (*minzu*): Chinese Film and the Politics of Nationalism." *Cinema Journal*. Vol. 31, No. 2, 1992. 45-58.
- Braester, Yomi. "Memory at a Standstill: Street-Smart History in Jiang Wen's *In the Heat of the Sun*". *Screen*. Vol 42, No. 1, 2001. 350 - 362.
- Chow, Rey. *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia". *Genre, The Musical*. Edited by Rick Altman. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in Association with British Film Institute, 1981. 175-189.
- Foucault, Michel and Miscoweic, Jay. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics*. Vol 16, No. 1, 1986. 22-27.
- Fu, Poshek. "Modernity, Diasporic Capital, and 1950s' Hong Kong Mandarin cinema", *Jump Cut* 49, spring 2007, <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/Poshek/text.html>.
- Hansen, Miriam. "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular

- Modernism." *Reinventing Film Studies*. Edited by Linda Williams and Christine Gledhill. London: Edward Arnold, 2000. 332-350.
- Harris, Kristine. "The New Women Incident - Cinema, Scandal and Spectacle in 1935." In *Transnational Chinese Cinema*. Ed. by Sheldon Lu. Honolulu: U of Hawaii Press, 1997. Chapter 11.
- Lee, Kevin B. "Jia Zhangke" *Senses of Cinema*, No. 25, March, 2003.  
<http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/jia/>
- Lee, Leo Ou-fan. "The Urban Milieu of Shanghai Cinema, 1930-40: Some Explorations Of Film Audience, Film Culture, and Narrative Conventions." *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*. Edited by Yingjin Zhang. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999. 74 - 96.
- McGrath, Jason. "The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke: From Postsocialist Realism to a Transnational Aesthetic," In *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*. Edited by Zhang Zhen. Durham: Duke, 2007. 81-114.
- Mullaney, Thomas S. "Ethnic classification writ large: the 1954 Yunnan Province Ethnic Classification Project and its foundations in Republican-era taxonomic thoughts." *China Information*. Vol. 18, No. 2, 2004. 207-241.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". *Screen*. Vol. 16, No. 3, 1975. 6 - 18.
- Qin, Amy. "Theatre's Evolving Role in China and Taiwan." *New York Times*, 13 Sept 2016,  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/14/world/asia/china-taiwan-theater-stan-lai.html>.
- Silbergeld, Jerome. Suzhou River. *Hitchcock with a Chinese Face: Cinematic Doubles, Oedipal Triangles, and China's Moral Voice*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004. 11 - 46.
- Tan See Kam and Annette Aw. "The Love Eterne: Almost a (Heterosexual) Love Story" In *Chinese Films in Focus*. Edited by Chris Berry, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 137 - 148.
- Wang Yiman. "Crows and Sparrows: Allegory on a Historical Threshold." In *Chinese Films in Focus*. Edited by Chris Berry. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 65 - 72.
- Yan, Yunxiang. "The Changing Local World: Political Economy, Public Life, and Social Networks". *Private Life under Socialism*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003. 17-41.
- Yingjin, Zhang. "From Minority Film to Minority Discourse - Questions of Nationhood and Ethnicity in Chinese Cinema." In *Transnational Chinese Cinema*, Edited by Sheldon lu. Honolulu: U of Hawaii Press, 1997. Chapter 3.
- 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*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1997. 215 - 31.
- Zhang, Zhen. Introduction. *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema in the Era of Transformation*. Duke: UP, 2003. 1 - 45.

#### **Films**

- To Live*. Directed by Zhang Yimou, Shanghai Film Studio and ERA International, 1994.
- Laborer's Love*. Directed by Zhang Sichuan, Mingxing Studios, 1922.
- The Goddess*. Directed by Wu Yonggang, Lianhua Film Company, 1934.
- Crows and Sparrows*. Directed by Zheng Junli, Kunlun Studio, 1948.
- Five Golden Flowers*. Directed by Wang Jiayi, Changchun Studio, 1959.
- Air Hostess*. Directed by Yi Wen, Cathay Studios, 1959.





*In the Heat of the Sun.* Directed by Jiang Wen, China Film Co Production Corporation and Dragon Film, 1994.

*Yellow Earth.* Directed by Chen Kaige, Guangxi Film Studio, 1984.

*Suzhou River.* Directed by Lou Ye, Essential Films and Dream Factory, 2000.

*Black Coal Thin Ice.* Directed by Diao Yinan, Omnijoy Media, 2015.

*Kaili Blues.* Directed by Bi Gan. Grasshopper Film. 2016.

*The Love Eterne.* Dir. Li Han-hsiang, Shaw Brothers Studios, 1963.