

## SYLLABUS

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**LIT 3382.501**

**China in Fiction and Film**

Tuesday and Thursday 5:30—6:45pm      Room FO 1.502

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**Professor:**

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Office Hours:      Tu/Th 4: 30-5: 30 or by appointment

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### Course Description

This course combines film viewing and fiction reading as a way to introduce contemporary Chinese culture and society. Many Chinese films produced in the period from the 1980s to the beginning of the twenty-first century are based on fictional works. The adaptation for the screen does not simply entail a change in media; it reveals an array of cultural and aesthetic issues that range from producers' motives and the tastes of cinema-goers to the changes in Chinese society and the geopolitical changes in the larger context of globalization. By viewing a series of Chinese films in relation to the fictional works from which films were adapted, the course aims to provide a window for students to glimpse the gigantic scale of transformations in contemporary Chinese culture and society and to contemplate the interrelations of such issues as tradition and modernity, high culture and popular art, individual passions and social constraints, gender and sexuality, identity and ethnicity, censorship and freedom of expression, national cinematic style and transnational capitalism, and last but not least, the shift in perception and its effects due to media change. All the Chinese films have English sub-titles and all readings are in English. No prior knowledge of Chinese language and culture is required. Oral and written communication skills are emphasized.

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### Student Learning Objectives/Outcome

Students are required to view ten Chinese films and read chosen fictional works from which the films are adapted. In addition, they will read some selected theoretical and critical materials on Chinese cinema. At the end of the course, each student should have an overview of the historical and aesthetic development of contemporary Chinese cinema and acquire a substantial knowledge of contemporary Chinese culture and society in the context of globalization. Last but not least, they should learn about basic differences between film and fiction and the intricacies involved in cross-media adaptations.

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### Required Reading and Viewing Materials

1. Mo Yan, *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China* (Penguin, 1994).

2. Yu Hua, *To Live: A Novel* (Anchor, 2003).
3. Su Tong, *Raise the Red Lantern* (Penguin, 1996).
4. Eileen Chang, *Lust, Caution: The Story* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007).
5. Dai Sijie, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002).
6. Lilian Lee, *Farewell My Concubine* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994).
7. A course pack containing handouts of shorter fictional works and critical writings
8. 10 Chinese films (provided by the instructor and to be shown in class).

#### Recommended readings:

1. Christopher J. Berry and Mary Ann Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
2. Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).
3. Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (Routledge; illustrated edition, 2004)
4. Chris Berry, ed., *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing, 1991).
5. Hsiu-Chuang Deppman, *Adapted for the Screen: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Fiction and Film* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2010).
6. Xudong Zhang, *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms: Cultural Fever, Avant-garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997).
7. Yingjin Zhang, *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film: Configurations of Space, Time, and Gender* (Stanford University Press, 1996).
8. Ni Zhen, *Memoirs from the Beijing Film Academy: The Genesis of China's Fifth Generation*, translated by Chris Berry (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).

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#### **Course Activities and Grading**

The course will be conducted through a mixture of lectures, instructor-led discussions, and film viewing. We will try to watch all the selected films in class, but as one or two films are too long to be shown in class, we will designate no more than two film-viewing times out of class. Regular attendance and participation in the classroom activities are required of all students. Students are expected to read the assigned materials before coming to class, because there will be a series of brief in-class quizzes (5-6 minutes) which cover general information on the reading assignments. You are also required to turn in a mid-term paper and have a final examination. The grading is based on the following:

1. 7 brief in-class quizzes (one low score quiz can be dropped)	30%
2. One mid-term paper	25%
3. One final exam	25%
4. Two 1-page report on designated events	5%
5. Two in-class presentation	5%
6. Attendance and Participation	10%
Total: 100%	

**Note:** Three absences without documented reasons will lower the final grade.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1:

- 1/13 Introduction: A Historical Overview of Contemporary Chinese Cinema
- 1/15 Read Handouts: Historical Introduction of Chinese Cinema: 1949-2000

Film Viewing: Cheng Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (1984)

### Week 2:

- 1/20 Read Mo Yan, *Red Sorghum*, pp. 1-112
- 1/22 Film Viewing: Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* (1987)

### Week 3:

- 1/27 Continue Film Viewing
- 1/29 Read Mo Yan, *Red Sorghum*, pp. 112-236

### Week 4:

- 2/3 Read Mo Yan, *Red Sorghum*, pp. 237-359.
- 2/5 Read Su Tong's novella *Raise the Red Lantern*, pp. 11-99.

### Week 5:

- 2/10 Film Viewing: Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991)
- 2/12 Read handout: Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,"  
Continue film viewing

### Week 6:

- 2/17 Read Lilian Lee, *Farewell My Concubine*, pp. 1-141.
- 2/19 Read Lilian Lee, *Farewell My Concubine*, pp.142-255.

### Week 7:

- 2/24 Film Viewing: Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993)  
As this film is more than three hours, we'll watch part of it out of class.
- 2/26 Discussing Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993)

### Week 8:

- 3/3 Read Yu Hua's Novel *To Live*, pp. 3-125.
- 3/5 Read Yu Hua's novel *To Live*, pp. 126-250

### **Mid-term paper due**

### Week 9:

- 3/10 Film Viewing: Zhang Yimou's *To Live* (1994)
- 3/12 Continue Film Viewing: Zhang Yimou's *To Live* (1994)

### Week 10: 3/16-3/21: Spring Break

### Week 11:

- 3/24 Film Viewing: Zhang Yimou's film *Judou* (1990)  
3/26 Film Viewing: Zhang Yimou's film *Judou* (1990)

**Week 12:**

- 3/31 Read Handout "The Prince Tan of Yen"  
Film Viewing: Chen Kaige's *The Emperor and the Assassin*  
Part of this film will also be shown out of class.  
4/2 Discussing Chen Kaige's *The Emperor and the Assassin*

**Week 13:**

- 4/7 Read Dai Sijie, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*, pp. 3-105  
4/9 Read Dai Sijie, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*, pp. 106-184

**Week 14:**

- 4/14 Film Viewing: *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*  
4/16 Continue film viewing and discussion

**Week 15:**

- 4/21 Read Eileen Chang, *Lust, Caution: The Story*  
4/23 Film Viewing: Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*

**Week 16:**

- 4/28 Continue Film Viewing: Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*  
4/30 **Final Exam**
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**Course Policies**

A student cannot pass this class without attending each session and completing all of the required work. Absences are excused ONLY with appropriate documentation from a doctor or other health professional, by an authorized UTD official for school events, or by official policy as disclosed below.

This course will be conducted according to strict codes of academic honesty. All cases of plagiarism will be investigated and the deliberate instances reported to the Dean of Students. Penalties for deliberate cheating may include failing the assignment in question, failing the course, or suspension and expulsion from the University. Students are expected to know the University's policies and procedures on such matters, as well as those governing student services, conduct, and obligations.

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**Note: With regard to the university's policies on Student Conduct & Discipline, Academic Integrity, Email Use, Withdrawal from Class, Student Grievance Procedure, Incomplete Grade Policy, Disability Services, Religious Holy Days, etc. please see the e-version of the syllabus on WebCT.**

*These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.*