

Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Taiwan

Course Code / Title: (TP/FILM 340) Sinophone Cinemas, 1980-2000

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Film / East Asian Studies, Chinese Literature, History, International Relations

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

This course examines the most internationally-renowned period of Sinophone cinemas, 1980-2000, and constellates the film productions of three related and yet distinguished cultures: China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. This era witnessed the meteoric rise of Sinophonic auteurs in international film festivals including Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Yang, Tsui Hark, Stanley Kwan, and Wong Kar-wai. Their diverse aesthetic achievements—long-take cinematography vs. postmodern montage—put Chinese film traditions and culture at large into the purview of world cinema. Their thematic concerns encapsulate the aftermath of large-scale political changes shared across the strait: the hurt of the Cultural Revolution in China, the shock of the reunification announcement in Hong Kong, and the tension leading to the end of martial law in Taiwan. The unresolved economic and political repercussions of these events are still being felt today in the Sinophonic world and beyond.

This course explores how regional circumstances shaped the films of these two decades and how the competition between two ideologies and regimes, Communist and Nationalist, came to determine Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China's shared political history and cultural lineage and how their respective struggles shaped political consciousness on the screen. Field classes that take place at the Taiwan Film & Audiovisual Institute and the coastal town of Jiufen will increase students' experiential learning and the diversity of voices in this course.

Objectives

At the end of the course students will be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of the political, social, and cultural changes reflected in the Hong Kong New Wave, Taiwanese New Cinema, and the works of the Fifth generation of Chinese directors;

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- identify key characteristics of Chinese cultural and aesthetic traditions;
- develop informed comparative approaches between Sinophone film traditions; and
- evaluate the representation and criticism of the cultural traditions and values in the history of Chinese cinema.

Course Requirements

Each week, students view a film outside of class and read assigned materials according to the weekly class topic and subject of the lecture and class discussion. Students are expected to participate during class lectures and in discussions, as this is key to success in this course. Readings range around 50 pages per week. Students are to attend each class as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy.

In addition to course participation, graded assignments include:

- A midterm exam answering short answer and essay questions using course content and their own analysis.
- A 10-minute class presentation with slides on a topic related to the course. Detailed instructions will be provided in class and via Canvas.
- Two in-class quizzes answering short answer and essay questions using course content and their own analysis.
- An end-of-term ten-page (2,500 word) paper. Detailed instructions for the paper will be distributed via Canvas and discussed in class.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

30%	Midterm exam
20%	In-class presentation
10%	Two in-class quizzes, at 5% each
10%	Preparation for and contribution to class discussions
30%	Final term paper

Readings

Abbas, Ackbar. "The New Hong Kong Cinema and the Déjà Disparu." *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Andrew, Dudley. "Time for Epic Cinema in an Age of Speed." *Cinema Journal* 55, no. 2 (2016): 135-146.

Berry, Chris. "Generational/Cultural Contradiction and Global Incorporation: Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman*." *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005.

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- Bordwell, David. "A Chinese Feast: Tsui Hark." *Planet Hong Kong*. Madison: Irvington Way Institute Press, 2010.
- Browne, Nick, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack, and Esther Yau, eds. *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Brunette, Peter. *Wong Kar-wai*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005.
- Chang, Ivy I-chu. *Taiwan Cinema, Memory, and Modernity*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Chang, Kai-man. "Gender Hierarchy and Environmental Crisis in Tsai Ming-liang's *The Hole*." *Film Criticism* 33, no. 1 (Fall, 2008): 25-44.
- Chow, Rey. *Primitive Passions: Visualizing Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- Cui, Shuqin. "Reconstructing History: The(Im)possible Engagement between Feminism and Postmodernism in Stanley Kwan's *Center Stage*." In *Women Through the Lens: Gender and Nation in a Century of Chinese Cinema*, 30-50. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003.
- Ho, Elaine Yee-lin. "Women on the Edge of Hong Kong Modernity: The Films of Ann Hui. In *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, edited by Esther C.M. Yau, 177-208. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- Huot, Marie Claire. "Colorful Folk in the Landscape: Fifth-Generation Filmmakers and Roots-Searchers." In *China's New Cultural Scene: A Handbook of Changes*, 91-125. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Remapping Taipei." In *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, edited by Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack, and Esther Yau, 117-150. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Khoo, Olivia. *Asian Cinema: A Regional View*. Edinburgh University Press, 2021.
- _____. "Love in Ruins: Spectral Bodies in Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love*." In *Embodied Modernities: Corporeality, Representation, and Chinese Cultures*, edited by Fran Martin and Ari Larissa Heinrich, 235-252. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006.
- Kuoshu, Harry H., ed. *Celluloid China: Cinematic Encounters with Culture and Society*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.

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- Kyong-McClain, Jeff, Russell Meeuf, and Jing Chang. *Chinese Cinema: Identity, Power, and Globalization*. Hong Kong University Press, 2023.
- Larson, Wendy. "The Invisible Sovereign: To Live." In *Zhang Yimou: Globalization and the Subject of Culture*, 167-196. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2017.
- Law Kar. "An Overview of Hong Kong's New Wave Cinema." In *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, edited by Esther C.M. Yau, 31-52. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- Lim, Song Hwee. *Taiwan Cinema as Soft Power: Authorship, Transnationality, Historiography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Lim, Song Hwee Lim, and Julian Ward, eds. *The Chinese Cinema Book*, 2nd Edition. British Film Institute, 2020.
- Liu, Catherine. "Taiwan's Cold War Geopolitics in Edward Yang's *The Terrorizers*." *Surveillance in Asian Cinema: Under Eastern Eyes*, edited by Karen Fang, 113-127. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Lo, Dennis. *The Authorship of Place: A Cultural Geography of the New Chinese Cinemas*. Hong Kong University Press, 2021.
- Lu, Sheldon H. *Contemporary Chinese Cinema and Visual Culture: Envisioning the Nation*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2023.
- Lu, Sheldon Hsiao-peng, ed. *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.
- Lupke, Christopher. "The Muted Interstices of Testimony: A City of Sadness and the Predicament of Multiculturalism." In *The Sinophone Cinema of Hou Hsiao-hsien: Culture, Style, Voice, and Motion*, Chapter 4. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2016.
- Ma, Jean. "Delayed voices: Intertextuality, music and gender in *The Hole*." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 5, no. 2 (2001): 123-139.
- Miao, Hui. *The Sentimental in Chinese Cinema*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Nguyen, Vinh. "Ann Hui's Boat People: Documenting Vietnamese Refugees in Hong Kong." In *Looking Back on the Vietnam War: Twenty-first-Century Perspectives*, edited by Brenda M. Boyle and Jeehyun Lim, 94-109. Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2016.
- Rawnsley, Ming-Yeh T. "Food for Thought: Cultural Representation of Taste in Ang Lee's *Eat Drink, Man, Woman*." In *Food Eating and Culture*, edited by Lawrence C. Rubin, 225-236. North Carolina: McFarland, 2008.

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Silbergeld, Jerome. "Body and the Beast: *Devils on the Doorstep*." In *Body in Question: Image and Illusion in Two Chinese Films by Jiang Wen*, 69-136. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

_____. *China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000.

_____. "Drowning on Dry Land: *Yellow Earth* and the Traditionalism of the 'Avantgarde'." In *China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, Chapter 1. London: Reaktion Books, 1999.

Teo, Stephen. "Tsui Hark: National Style and Polemic." In *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, edited by Esther C.M. Yau, 143-158. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Tsai, Beth. *Taiwan New Cinema at Film Festivals*. Edinburgh University Press, 2023.

Tweedie, James. *The Age of New Waves: Art Cinema and the Staging of Globalization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Udden, James. "History in Its Place: City of Sadness (1989) and The Puppetmaster (1993)." In *No Man an Island: The Cinema of Hou Hsiao-hsien*, 87-131. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017.

Yeh, Emilie Yueh-yu, Darrell William Davis, and Wenchi Lin, eds. *Thirty-two New Takes on Taiwan Cinema*. University of Michigan Press, 2022.

Films

Chen, Kaige, director. *Yellow Earth* 黃土地. China, Guangxi Film Studio, 1984.

Hou, Hsiao-hsien, director. *A City of Sadness* 悲情城市. Taiwan, 3-H Films, 1989.

Hui, Ann On-Wah, director. *Boat People* 投奔怒海. Hong Kong and China, Xia Meng and Bluebird Film Company, 1982.

Jiang, Wen, director. *Devils on the Doorstep* 鬼子來了. China, Jiang Wen, Fortissimo Films, China Film Co-Production Corp., 2000.

Kwan, Stanley, director. *Center Stage* 阮玲玉. Hong Kong, Golden Way Films Ltd., 1991.

Lee, Ang, director. *Eat Drink Men Women* 飲食男女. Taiwan, Ang Lee Pictures, Central Motion Pictures, Good Machine, and Xiongfa Film Company, 1994.

Tsai, Ming-Liang, director. *The Hole* 洞. Taiwan, Haut et Court, 1998.

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Tsui, Hark, director. *The Blade* 刀. Hong Kong, Film Workshop and Paragon Films, 1995.

Wong, Kar-wai, director. *In the Mood for Love* 花樣年華. Hong Kong and France. Jet Tone Production and Paradis Films, 1995.

Yang, Edward, director. *The Terrorizers* 恐怖份子. Taiwan, Central Motion Pictures, 1986.

Zhang, Yimou, director. *To Live* 活著. China and Taiwan, Shanghai Film Studio and ERA International, 1994.

Outline of Course Content

Topic 1: Introduction: Before, After, and Beyond Sinophone New Waves

- The definition of the word “sinophone”
- An introduction to the history of Sinophone cinemas

Topic 2: The Primitive Projection

- The projection of spectacular primitiveness on the international stage
- Ethnic unity in the imagination of Chinese history
- “Chinese film aesthetics” vs. Hollywood storytelling

Topic 3: Revisiting the Cultural Revolution

- The melodramatic treatment of the Cultural Revolution
- Suffering women and their affective emplacement in history

Topic 4: The Censored History of Japanese Colonization

- The sensitive historicization of Japanese colonization
- Masculinity and the “history of pain”

Topic 5: The End of an Era: Hong Kong in the 1980s

- The shocking, yet expected, announcement of the reunification
- Mainstream HK genres and their reactions to the uncertain future

Topic 6: Spectral Urbanization in a Culture of Disappearance

- The rootless history of Hong Kong as reflected by cinema
- The crowded urbanization and the elusiveness of belonging

Topic 7: Postmodern Wuxia

- Wuxia: a transmedial narrative formula in the pan-Chinese culture
- Modernity, martial arts, and its kaleidoscopic narrativization

Topic 8: Nostalgic for the Impossible Past

- Wong Kai-wai and the international style of art cinema
- The sensual aesthetics of touching and feeling

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Topic 9: Postmodern People in a Modernized Plot

- The history of Asian New Waves
- The distinction between modernist and postmodernist aesthetics

Topic 10: Pathetic Ordinariness

- Political trauma and Taiwan's national(ist) myth
- Epic form, the capitalized History, and folk histories

Topic 11: To Imagine a Better Life Elsewhere

- Ang Lee: the Americanized Taiwanese cinema
- Taiwanese people's Asian American imagination

Topic 12: In the Taipei Ruins of Love

- The destiny of romance in the aftermath of modernization
- The becoming-cinema of postmodern experiences

Topic 13: Film Restoration and Film Archives as a Research Source

Topic 14: Film as a Transforming Prism of Reality