

A&S 300 Section 3: Popular Culture in Modern China
Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures, and Cultures
University of Kentucky
Spring 2009

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Office: 971 Patterson Office Tower; phone: 859-257-9139
Class meetings: M W 4:30-5:45 pm @ 339 Whitehall Classroom Building
Office hours: Wednesday 2-2:50 pm and by appointment

Course description:

This course provides a critical examination of modern Chinese popular culture and its global cultural significance in the contemporary world. From film to literature, from music to theatre, this course will probe modern Chinese popular culture as it has manifested itself, and trace its sociopolitical, aesthetic, and affective impact on the contemporary world.

This course calls attention to the fact that “popular culture” is not a new notion in modern Chinese discourse but rather one that underwent continued contestations in definition and practice throughout the twentieth century. It encourages students to examine the amorphous configurations of popular culture in modern China: the indigenous and the foreign, the modern and the conventional, the hegemonic and the subversive can all be brought into play.

Designed as an upper level undergraduate course for interested students, this course aims at making the best use of class participation to stimulate the research zeal of each student. It allows students to take on his/her own research topic early on in the semester (through writing their midterm paper) and encourages them to keep working on their project (if they so desire) towards their final paper or creative project. Interdisciplinary approaches involving literary, historical, anthropological, and sociological investigations are indispensable and greatly encouraged in conducting research for the final project.

Required readings:

All required readings and A/V materials should be available through Blackboard and/or be on reserve in the Young Library (and the Young Media Library)

Important due dates:

Web response due: every Wednesday at 12 noon on Blackboard starting January 28

Midterm paper due: Wednesday March 11 at 4:30 pm before class

Final presentation: Monday April 20 and Wednesday April 22 during class time

Final paper/project due: Monday April 27 at 4:30 pm before class

Take-home final exam due: Wednesday April 29 at 4:30 pm before class

Course requirements and grading components:

Value critical thinking, class participation, and originality in conducting research: class attendance 10%; class participation 10%; weekly web response 15%; midterm paper 15%; final presentation 10%; final paper/project 20%; take-home final exam 20%.

10% Attendance to class meeting is mandatory. For the second and each subsequent unexcused absence, the attendance grade will be lowered by 2 points (out of 10). More than five unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. An excused absence requires a written note from your doctor or the equivalent.

10% I deeply value the quality of class participation. You must finish readings before coming to class. You must write down notes when reading and bring notes to each class meeting to facilitate class discussion. You may be requested to submit/circulate your notes in class. 2 extra credits will be given out for active participation in class discussion.

15% Write a 1-2 paragraph response based on your reading notes and post it on the Discussion Board on Blackboard by every **Wednesday at 12 noon starting January 28**. You need to present a coherent idea in the paragraph(s). It can range from your response to a quote in the reading, your remark on lecture or class discussion, or your comment on current affairs in relation to the topic we are studying. Always cite source materials if you are quoting from others. A sample student post can be found on the Blackboard site.

15% Midterm 4-5 page paper will be due on **Wednesday March 11 at 4:30 pm before class**. All papers must be handed in as hard copies to the instructor in person. No electronic submission will be accepted. There will be no deadline extensions. Papers received after the deadline will lose 1 point (out of 15) every hour they are late. Your paper should be neatly formatted and double-spaced. Make sure the following information is on the front page of your paper: the title of the course, your name, and the title of your paper. Also, please number your pages. A sample student paper can be found on the Blackboard site. Your paper must have a central argument, which should be summarized at or near the beginning of the essay. It is important that you do a close reading of the text you choose to analyze in your paper. Do not just repeat or summarize lectures and readings. Instead, present textual evidence that support your point of view based on critical thinking. Pay attention to academic style and document your sources. Use footnotes. Be consistent. Finally, remember that originality counts!

10% You will have the opportunity to present your final paper/project in a mini-conference format on **Monday April 20 and Wednesday April 22** during class time. You can then gather feedback to your paper/project and revise it for final submission. Refreshments will be served, and parents and friends welcome. A sample student conference program can be found on the Blackboard site.

20% Final 8-10 page paper or creative project due on **Monday April 27 at 4:30 pm before class**. The above instructions for the midterm paper also apply to the final paper. However, if you are developing an idea in your first paper, you must have substantial improvement in the final paper, such as adding in-depth analysis of texts, adding texts for comparison, and utilizing at least 5 outside bibliographical sources. You are encouraged

to develop your ideas into a creative project such as an MTV or a short film. A sample student film can be found on the Blackboard site.

20% A take-home final exam will be handed out after the final review session on Monday April 27 and it will be due on **Wednesday April 29 at 4:30 pm before class.**

Grading scales:

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

E: under 60 (failing grades)

Academic Resources:

There are many wonderful resources on campus including a free peer tutoring program at The Study; The Hub @ WT's which provides library research assistance and IT help in one convenient location; a writing center at <http://www.uky.edu/AS/English/wc/> where you can get excellent help with academic writing; and the web portal to 15 libraries throughout campus at <http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/>. Academic honesty is the key to the success of any serious study and plagiarism is absolutely unacceptable in this course.

Here is a helpful link on plagiarism:

<http://webz.uky.edu/html/tutorial/research/plagiarism.shtml>.

Any student with a disability who is taking this course and needs classroom or other academic accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center, (859) 257-2754, room 2 Alumni Gym, jkarnes@uky.edu.

Website and audio-visual components:

A Blackboard site for this course has been set up. The website includes the syllabus, PowerPoint presentations (after lecture), handouts, my contact information, online discussion forum, and other A/V and web materials. A/V facilities are crucial to the success of this course, and PowerPoint presentations will be used on a regular basis in the classroom.

Schedule of class meetings

1: Introduction and organization

W 1/14 Understanding the popular in modern China

Part One: New Media and Old Stories: Three Case Studies

2. The White Snake (*Baishe Zhuan*)

M 1/19 MLK Day, no class

W 1/21 The Metamorphosis of the White Snake (Multiple TV Series, Shaw Brothers Film, Folk Arts, and Various Opera Versions)

Readings for Monday and Wednesday:

(1) Whalen Lai, "From Folklore to Literate Theater: Unpacking 'Madame White Snake,'" *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (1992), 51-66.

(2) Liang Luo, "The Metamorphosis of the White Snake," excerpts from "The Theatrics of Revolution: Tian Han and the Cultural Politics of Performance in Modern China," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2006.

3. The Butterfly Lovers (*Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*)

M 1/26 The Eternal Butterfly Lovers in New Media (Martial Arts Style Film 2008, Animation, and Shaw Brothers Film) (**Chinese New Year**)

W 1/28 Pre-Twentieth-Century Stories of the Butterfly Lovers (**first web post due on Wednesday 1/28 at 12 noon**)

Reading for Monday and Wednesday:

(1) Ronal Altenburger, "Is it Clothes that Make the Man? Cross-Dressing, Gender, and Sex in Pre-Twentieth-Century Zhu Yingtai Lore," *Asian Folklore Studies* 64 (2005), 165-205.

4. Painted Skin (*Huapi*)

M 2/2 "The First Eastern New Magic Film" (*Painted Skin*, 2008) and earlier cinematic adaptations (*Painted Skin*, 1993; *Painted Skin*, 1965)

W 2/4 Reading strange Stories from a Chinese studio (*Liaozhai Zhiyi*)

Reading for Monday:

(1) *Painted Skin* (2008) official website

Reading for Wednesday:

(2) Pu Songlin, "Painted Skin" in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, translated by John Minford, Penguin Classics, 2006.

Part Two: Reading the Past from the Present: A Literary Approach

5. Popular Romance as National Pastime

M 2/9: Guo Jingming and the Post-80s Phenomenon

W 2/11: Stories as Urban Entertainment in 1920s Shanghai

Readings for Monday:

(1) New York Times article on Guo Jingming

(2) The National Article on Guo Jingming (United Arab Emirates)

Reading for Wednesday:

(3) Timothy Wong: *Stories for Saturday, 20th Century Chinese Popular Fiction* (selections)

6. The Comical Trauma in Popular Culture

M 2/16: Devils at the Door Step (*Guizi Laile*)

W 2/18: The Marriage of Little Blackie (*Xiao erhei Jiehun*)

Reading for Monday:

(1): Julian War, "Filming the Anti-Japanese War: the Devils and Buffoons of Jiang Wen's *Guizi Laile*," *New Cinemas*, Volume 2 Number 2, 2004, 107-117.

For Wednesday:

(2): Zhao Shuli: "The Marriage of Young Blacky," in *Masterpieces of Modern Chinese Fiction, 1919-1949*, by Lu Xun and Others. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1983, 507-528.

7. The Fantasy World of Chivalric Romance: Martial Arts Fiction and Cinema

M 2/23/09: Martial Arts Film

M 2/25/09: The Jin Yong Phenomenon

Reading for Monday:

(1): Christian Klein, "'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon': A Diasporic Reading," *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Summer, 2004), 18-42.

Reading for Wednesday:

(2): Jin Yong, *Fox Volant of the Snowy Mountain*, translated by Olivia Mok. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1993. (excerpts)

Part Three: Popular Music, Experimental Theater, and "New Year Film"

8. The Polyphonic Stage of the Pop Music Industry

M 3/2 From "Yellow Music" to Fahrenheit and SHE

W 3/4 Rocking China from Mao to Now

Readings for Monday:

(1) Andrew Jones, "Introduction: Listening to the Chinese Jazz Age," in *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2001, 1-20.

(2) Fahrenheit official website (English)

Reading for Wednesday:

(3) Claire Huot, "Rock Music from Mao to Nirvana: The West is the Best," in *China's New Cultural Scene*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2000, 154-181.

9. Experimental Theater as Popular Entertainment

M 3/9: Revolutionary Model Opera of the Cultural Revolution

W 3/11: Contemporary Experimental Theaters (**Midterm paper due on Wednesday 3/11 by 4:30 pm**)

Reading for Monday:

(1) Xiaomei Chen, "Family, Village, Nation/State, and the Third World: The Imagined Communities in Model Theater," in *Acting the Righter Part: political theater and popular drama in contemporary China*, University of Hawaii Press, 2002, 123-158.

Reading for Wednesday:

(2) Colin Mackerras, "Tradition, Change, and Continuity in Chinese Theatre in the Last Hundred Years: In Commemoration of the Spoken Drama Centenary," *Asian Theater Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Spring 2008, 1-23.

Spring Vacation

M 3/16: No class

W 3/18: No class

10. "New Year Film"

M 3/23 Representative "New Year Films"

W 3/25 From Wang Shuo to Feng Xiaogang

Reading for Monday:

(1) "Big Shot's Funeral: China, Sony, and the WTO," *Asian Cinema*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2003), pp. 145-154.

Reading for Wednesday:

(2) Yomi Braester, "Chinese Cinema in the Age of Advertisement: The Filmmaker as a Cultural Broker," *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 183, September 2005, 549-564.

Part Four: The Myriad Sites of Popular Culture

11. Popular Cultural Sites

M 3/30 From Bar Streets to New Cultural Villages

W 4/1 From "New Heaven and Earth" to 2010 World Expo Site

Readings for Monday:

- (1) Li Zhenhua, "Media Art in Beijing," in *Leonardo*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2007, 222-223.
- (2) Daniel Aloi, "Ai Weiwei," in *World Literature Today*, Vol. 81, Issue 4 (Jul/Aug 2007), 42-43.

Reading for Wednesday:

- (3) Bao Yaming, "Shanghai Weekly: Globalization, Consumerism, and Shanghai Popular Culture," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume 9, Number 4, December 2008, 557-567.

12. Popular Cultural Icons

M 4/6 Yao Ming and the Chinese Craze over NBA

W 4/8 The Yu Dan Phenomenon: Marketing Confucius?

Reading for Monday:

- (1) Chih-ming Wang, "Capitalizing the big man: Yao Ming, Asian America, and the China Global," in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Volume 5, Issue 3, August 2004, 263-278.

Reading for Wednesday:

- (2) Daniel A. Bell, "Being Confucian: Why Confucians Needn't Be Old, Serious and Conservative," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 2008, 111-129.

13. The Rise of Hunan Satellite TV

M 4/13 The "Happy China" Strategy ("The Headquarters of Happiness," "Super Girl" and "Happy Boy")

W 4/15 Mao Zedong as a Youth Idol

Reading for Monday:

- (1) Ruoyun Bai, "Media Commercialization, Entertainment, and the Party-State: The Political Economy of Contemporary Chinese Television Entertainment Culture," *Global Media Journal*, Volume 4, Issue 6, Spring 2005.

Reading for Wednesday:

- (2) Francesca Dal Lago, "Personal Mao: Reshaping an Icon in Contemporary Chinese Art," *Art Journal*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), 47-59.

14 Mini-conference of final project presentations

M 4/20: Final presentations

W 4/22: Final presentations (**Final project due at 4:30 pm**)

15. Popular Culture in a Transnational World

M 4/27: Final review and take-home final exam handed out

W 4/29: In-class screening (**Take-home final exam due at 4:30 pm**)

