Contemporary Chinese Urban Film and Fiction in Translation

Like it or not, we live in an age where global cities have become the major locations for economic, political and cultural activities. While witnessing the recent tremendous changes in the Chinese-speaking world, especially in big cities, are you interested in:

- How does a historic city like Beijing embrace/celebrate/endure the intensified impact of global consumerism, the unprecedented number of construction projects, and a rapidly increasing floating population?
- Why do contemporary stories about Shanghai so often and so tightly hold onto its colonial past? What are the cultural connotations of being the commercial and financial center of China, and how do they affect the ways in which the city’s residents cope with their own lives and identities?
- What has changed and not changed in Hong Kong since its return to China in 1997? How are the city’s past, present, and future defined in literary and cinematic texts? What does “Hong Kong-ese” mean today?
- How is loneliness experienced and perceived in a busy and crowded metropolis like Taipei, and how does the arrival of the new millennium add to the dramatic paradox here? How can people find balance between the traditional and the modern in this highly hybrid cultural setting?
- While people, money and resources all congregate in major cities, what happens to those urban areas that have been awkwardly “left out” during the restructuring of industry and economy?

This course looks at a selection of Chinese cinematic and literary texts by contemporary filmmakers and writers from Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Through the study of film and fiction, we will examine how urban spaces and subjects have been delineated and imagined within the context of recent social and economic transformation and globalization. In particular, we will examine the different ways in which cinematic images and narrative structures celebrate the metropolis and convey the anxieties associated with it. We will explore a wide range of urban subjects as represented in film and fiction, and the ways in which they are shaped by and at the same time are shaping society and culture.

No knowledge of Chinese is required.

Each student will be expected to give an individual presentation based on the course materials, plus three reflections on Blackboard. Pop-up reading quizzes will be given from time to time to check on the preparation work. Both the midterm and the final exams will be composed of an essay section and a series of identification/short-answer questions drawn from the lectures and required readings/viewings. The recommended readings/films (marked with *) will not be included in any quiz, test, or exam. A 5-7 page paper will be due the last day of class.
Objectives:

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Obtain a familiarity with contemporary Chinese urban culture;
- Enhance their multicultural awareness;
- Improve their skills to critically understand and analytically write about literature, film and cultural issues.

Grading & Evaluation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation (10 minutes)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackboard Reflections (250-300 Words x 5)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pop-Up Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam (In Class, Close Book, Close Note)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (In Class, Close Book, Close Note)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Paper (5-7 Pages)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Grades will be assigned as follows:

- 92.5% and above:  A  90-92.49%:  A-
- 87.5-89.99%:  B+  82.5-87.49%:  B
- 80-82.49%:  B-  77.5-79.99%:  C+
- 72.5-77.49%:  C  70-72.49%:  C-
- 67.5-69.99%:  D+  62.5-67.49%:  D
- 60-62.49%:  D-  Below 60%:  F

Disabilities Statement:

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should both contact Disability Resources and Services (http://www.temple.edu/studentaffairs/disability/index.html) and meet the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible.
Honor Code

Students are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity and should avoid any form of dishonesty, including plagiarism (from books, internet sources, or other people’s works). Please refer to “Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities” at http://policies.temple.edu/PDF/99.pdf for information, and the university statement on plagiarism and cheating can be accessed at http://ww2.cis.temple.edu/cis166/plagiarism.htm. Please note that according to the statement “The penalty for plagiarism or cheating as a first offense is normally an "F" in the course in which the offense is committed and a report to the Dean. A subsequent offense may, in addition, be referred to the university disciplinary committee.”

Policy on Attendance and Participation:

Much emphasis will be placed upon class participation, which includes timely attendance and active as well as constructive participation in class.

Excused Absences: The only excused absences are either those for which a student arranged for an absence three days or more in advance in order to observe a religious holiday or those for documented university-authorized absences.

Unexcused Absences: You will be allowed four unexcused absences. If you are sick or have a family emergency or have to attend to some other matter that keeps you from class, that absence will count as one of the four. If you have more than four unexcused absences, your grade will be automatically lowered half a grade. For example, a B+ under this policy would be lowered to a B.

Tardiness: Class begins on the hour. If you are not present and seated at the start of class, you will be counted as absent. Please also be informed that most pop-up quizzes will be given at the beginning of class, and no makeup quizzes will be given except for prearranged absences to observe a religious holiday.

Make-Up Exams: Normally no makeup tests/exams will be allowed, unless with proper documentation and timely notice.

Preparation for Class:

Students are expected to come to class prepared. For this purpose, it is likely that most students will have to spend 4.5-6 hours a week outside of class studying the required materials and working on the assignments. Please bring the required readings with you (hard copy) to class. The recommended materials are only for those looking for extra information. They are not required and will not be tested on.

Presentation:

Each student will give a 10 minute presentation based on the materials they have signed up for. The presentations are expected to provide contextual information, provoke critical thoughts,
raise questions, and trigger class discussions. You are welcome to talk to the instructor (for suggested readings, etc.) when you prepare for your presentation.

**Blackboard Reflections:**

Students will be assigned five 250-300 word reflections on the course materials to submit through Blackboard. The deadlines have been highlighted in the schedule. You are highly encouraged to write and post your reflections ahead of the deadlines to help with class discussions. Also, you are welcome to write “reflections upon reflections,” i.e., responses to others’ reflections, but these will not be counted or credited. We will discuss all the postings in class.

**Term Paper:**

A 5-7 page term paper will be due in class on Wednesday, December 5, 2012. In the process of developing your argument and writing your paper, you are required to meet the instructor at least twice (see the suggested timeline in the schedule) to discuss your paper project. A **written** paper proposal and an outline will be due respectively at these meetings. You are welcome to discuss early drafts with the instructor before final submission.

**Policy on Late Assignments:**

Late assignments (including papers) will be read and commented on, but every day of lateness will be penalized with a deduction of 20% from the points gained for the assignment.

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* This syllabus is a guideline for the course and is subject to change with advance notice. Please check your email/Blackboard for updates.

** All the required texts and films have been put on reserve at the library. For the required reading assignments, please print out and bring them with you to class. For the required films, you are highly encouraged, but not required, to attend screenings arranged outside of class. You can access the films via the library or, when possible, with Netflix, etc. The recommended films are not on reserve, but you are welcome to contact the instructor to arrange a viewing.
**Schedule**

**Mon. 8/27**  
Introduction

**Wed. 8/29**  
In-Class Viewing: Clips from *China Revealed* (2006, *Discovery Atlas*)

**Fri. 8/31**  
*China Revealed*: Continued Discussion

**Mon. 9/3**  
NO CLASS – Labor Day Holiday

**Wed. 9/5**  
Beijing: The Traditional and the Modern  

**Fri. 9/7**  
“The Stubborn Porridge”: Continued Discussion

**Mon. 9/10**  
Delineating “Pizi” [hooligan] Culture  
In-Class Viewing & Discussion: Clips from *The Trouble-Shooters* (1988, dir. Mi Jiashan) & *Black Snow* (1990, dir. Xie Fei)  

**Wed. 9/12**  
Danwei [work unit] and the *Jianghu* of Everyday Life  
Required Reading: Liu Zhenyun, “Ground Covered with Chicken Feathers”, pp. 206-280 (Only the English Part)

**Fri. 9/14**  
“Ground Covered with Chicken Feathers”, pp. 282-354 (Only the English Part)

**Mon. 9/17**  
“Ground Covered with Chicken Feathers”: Continued Discussion

**Wed. 9/19**  
Embracing Aging  
Required Reading: Liu Xinwu, “The Beat”  
**First Blackboard Reflection Due 12 Noon**

**Fri. 9/21**  
The Transforming Space of the *Siheyuan* [Chinese courtyard house]  

**Mon. 9/24**  
The Transforming Space of the *Siheyuan*: Continued Discussion

**Wed. 9/26**  
Gender, *Hukou* [residence permit], and Floating Population  
Required Viewing: *Lost in Beijing* (2007, dir. Li Yu) [Also Available on Netflix]

**Fri. 9/28**  
*Lost in Beijing*: Continued Discussion
Mon. 10/1  The Age of Global Consumerism: A Hollywood Ending?
In-Class Viewing: Clips from Big Shot’s Funeral (2001, dir. Feng Xiaogang)

Wed. 10/3  Big Shot’s Funeral: Continued Discussion

Fri. 10/5  Shanghai Modern: “A Paradise for Adventurers”
In-Class Viewing: Clips from I Wish I Knew (2010, dir. Jia Zhangke)
Second Blackboard Reflection Due 12 Noon

Mon. 10/8  Remembering “Old Shanghai Flavor”
Cheng Naishan, “Hong Taitai”

Wed. 10/10 Re-Inventing “Old Shanghai”
Required Reading: Excerpt from Wang Anyi, The Song of Everlasting Sorrow, pp. 3-26
* Recommended Viewing: Everlasting Regret (2005, dir. Stanley Kwan) [CLA ED Tech Center]

Fri. 10/12 Required Reading: Excerpt from The Song of Everlasting Sorrow, pp. 27-77

Mon. 10/15 The Song of Everlasting Sorrow: Continued Discussion
* Recommended Reading: Wang Anyi, The Song of Everlasting Sorrow, pp. 393-429

Wed. 10/17 Idealism and/or Materialism?
In-Class Viewing: Clips from A Beautiful New World (1999, dir. Shi Runjiu)
Third Blackboard Reflection Due 12 Noon

Fri. 10/19 A Beautiful New World: Continued Discussion

Mon. 10/22 Midterm Exam

Wed. 10/24  Growing Pains

Fri. 10/26 Leave Me Alone: Continued Discussion

Mon. 10/29 Personal Narratives, Collective Memories
Wed. 10/31  24 City: Continued Discussion
* Recommended Reading: Kevin B. Lee, “24 City,” Cineaste 34.4 (Fall 2009), p. 44 [weblink: http://go.galegroup.com.libproxy.temple.edu/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=RELEVANCE&inPS=true&prodId=ITOF&userGroupName=temple_main&tabID=T003&searchId=R1&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=9&contentSet=GALE%7CA207643784&&docId=GALE|A207643784&docType=GALE&role=]

Fri. 11/2  Hong Kong: Looking Through the Ashes of Time
In-Class Viewing: Clips from Once Upon a Time in China and Others
By this day, you should have met with the instructor and discussed your paper proposal.

Mon. 11/5  The Difficulty of Taking Roots
Required Reading: Xi Xi, “Marvels of A Floating City” (pp. 1-27)

Wed. 11/7  “Marvels of A Floating City”: Continued Discussion
* Recommended Viewing: My Life as McDull (2001, dir. Toe Yuen)

Fri. 11/9  1997
Required Viewing: Chungking Express (1994, dir. Wong Kar-wai)

Mon. 11/12  Chungking Express: Continued Discussion

Wed. 11/14  Plurality: Narratives and Identities
In-Class Viewing: Clips from Infernal Affairs (2002, dirs. Andrew Lau and Alan Mak)

Fri. 11/16  Experiencing Modern Taiwan History
In-Class Viewing: Clips from The Puppet Master (1993, dir. Hsiao-hsien Hou)
[CLA ED Tech Center]
By this day, you should have met with the instructor for a second time and discussed your paper outline.
Mon. 11/19  Envisioning the Turn of the Century  
Required Reading: Tien-wen Chu (aka Zhu Tianwen), “Fin-de-Siècle Grandeur”

Wed. 11/21  “Fin-de-Siècle Grandeur”: Continued Discussion  

Fri. 11/23  NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

Mon. 11/26  Reworking Everyday Ethics  
Required Viewing: *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994, dir. Ang Lee)  
[CLA ED Tech Center]  
**Fifth Blackboard Reflection Due 12 Noon**

Wed. 11/28  *Eat Drink Man Woman*: Continued Discussion  

Fri. 11/30  Returning to Innocence  
In-Class Viewing: *A One and a Two* (2000, dir. Edward Yang)  

Mon. 12/3  *A One and a Two*: Continued Discussion

Wed. 12/5  **Term Paper Due in Class**  
Wrap-Up

Mon. 12/10  **Final Exam** @ 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm