**Hong Kong Shue Yan University**

**Department of English Language & Literature**

Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies

2018-2019

**Course Title** : Modern China Through Films

**Course Code** : ENG 507

**Number of Credits** : 3

**Duration in Weeks** : 15

**Contact Hours Per Week** :Lecture (2 Hours)

: Tutorial (1 Hour)

**Pre-requisite(s)** : NIL

**Updated by** : Dr. Benjamin Freudenberg

**Course Introduction**

This course aims at introducing aspects of the history, politics, society and culture of Modern China to students through films. The films chosen engage the major historical events in modern China, starting from the pre-1949 era, the Three-Anti and Five-Anti Movements, the Cultural Revolution, to the Open Door Policy in 1980s. In addition to considering the historical contexts, we will also critically analyse issues like environmental problems, sexuality, marriage, education, one-child policy, economic boom, modernization, etc. Films produced in Mongolia, the United States and Taiwan are also included as texts for discussion of issues such as diaspora, minority and nationalism. In some cases, movies are selected for their literary merit, such as *Red Sorghum* by Mo Yan and *To Live* by Yu Hua. Whenever applicable, students are expected to read the written texts together with seeing their film adaptations, and in these cases issues in adaptation such as theories on print and media cultures, modes of operation, aesthetics and representation will also be discussed.

**Course Outcomes, Teaching Activities and Assessment**

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| **Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)** | |
| Upon completion of this course students should be able to: | |
| **ILO1** | describe the major events in modern Chinese history |
| **ILO2** | identify the key issues in modern China |
| **ILO3** | analyse the key social, political and environmental issues in modern China |
| **ILO4** | discuss the mode of aesthetics and representation in films |
| **ILO5** | write critical analysis of key issues of modern China in films |
| **ILO6** | synthesize interdisciplinary knowledge through critical analysis of modern Chinese films |

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| **Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)** | |
| **TLA1** | Introduction to the major events in modern China |
| **TLA2** | Introduction to the key issues in modern China |
| **TLA3** | Close reading of articles |
| **TLA4** | Critical discussion of films |
| **TLA5** | In-class discussion |
| **TLA6** | Oral presentations by students |
| **TLA7** | Written works |

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| **Assessment Tasks (ATs)** | | |
| **AT1** | Oral presentation  *In a group of 3-4, students are to deliver an oral presentation on a specific topic which can demonstrate their understanding of the issue(s) and concepts(s) discussed in this course. Also, at the end of the presentation there will be time for class discussion.* | 25% |
| **AT2** | Film review  *Students are to write a review on a film listed in the course outline or any selected film which can demonstrate their understanding of the issue(s) discussed in this course. The Film Review is due in Week 7.* | 25% |
| **AT3** | Final written project  *Students are to write a research paper which can demonstrate a solid grasp of issue(s) and concept(s) taught in the course. The research paper has to be a critical analysis of specific topic and adopt a problem-solving approach which can demonstrate students’ ability of critical thinking and analysis. This Final Written Project is due a week after completion of the course.* | 50% |
|  | TOTAL | 100% |

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| **Alignment of Course Intended Learning Outcomes, Teaching and Learning Activities and Assessment Tasks** | | |
| **Course Intended Learning Outcomes** | **Teaching and Learning Activities** | **Assessment Tasks** |
| ILO1 | TLA1 | AT1 2, 3 |
| ILO2 | TLA2,4 | AT1,3 |
| ILO3 | TLA2,4,5 | AT1,3 |
| ILO4 | TLA3,4,5,6,7 | AT1,2,3 |
| ILO5 | TLA3,4,5,6,7 | AT2,3 |
| ILO6 | TAL4,5,6,7 | AT2 |

**Course Outline**

**Week 1 Introduction**

Benson, Linda. “Contemporary Chinese Society.” *China Since 1949*. 2nd edition. Harlow: Longman/ Pearson. pp. 82-99.

Clark, Paul. (2005) “The Cultural Revolution Generation,” “Children of Mao,” “The Start of the Cultural Revolution.” *Reinventing China: A Generation and Its Films*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press. pp. 7-28.

Chen, Ming-May Jessie & Haque, Mazharul. (2007) “The intersections of film and history.” *Representation of the Cultural Revolution in Chiense Films by the Fifth Generation Filmmakers” Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, and Tian Zhuangzhuang*. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press. pp. 87-120.

**Week 2 *Yellow Earth***

Leung, Hok-Sze Helen. (2003) “Yellow Earth: Hesitant Apprenticeship and Bitter Agency.” *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*. Edited by Chris Berry. London: British Film Institute. pp. 191-197.

Silbergeld, Jerome. (1999) “Drowning on Dry Land: Yellow Earth and the Traditionalism of the “Avant-garde.” *China Into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. London: Reaktion Books. pp. 15-52.

**Week 3 *Red Sorghum***

Mo, Yan. (1993) *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China*. Trans. Howard Goldblatt. New York: Viking.

Silbergeld, Jerome. (1999) “Ruins of a Sorghum Field, Eclipse of a Nation: Red Sorghum on Page and Screen.” *China Into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. Edited by Jerome Silbergeld. London: Reaktion Books. pp. 53-95.

**Week 4 *King of the Children***

Zhang, Xudong. (1997) “A Critical Account of Chen Kaige’s *King of the Children*.” *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms: Cultural Fever, Avant-garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. pp. 282-306.

Chow, Rey. (1995) “Male Narcissism and National Culture: Subjectivity in Chen Kaige’s *King of the Children*.” *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press. pp. 108-141.

**Week 5 *To Live***

Yu, Hua. (2003) *To Live: A Novel*. Trans. Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books.

Chow, Rey. (1996) "We Endure, Therefore We Are: Survival, Governance, and Zhang Yimou's *To Live*." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 95, 4 (Fall 1996). pp. 1039-64.

**Week 6 *Farewell to My Concubine***

Li Bihua. (1993) *Farewell to My Concubine*: *A Novel*. Trans. Andrea Lingenfelter. New York: W. Morrow.

Lim, Song Hwee. (2002) “Celluloid Comrades: Male Homosexuality in Chinese Cinema in the 1990s.” *China Information* 16, 4: 68-88.

**Week 7 *Blind Mountain***

Naughton, Barry. (2007) “Population Growth and the One-Child Family.” *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*. Cambridge: MIT Press. pp. 161-178.

**Week 8 *Still Life* (108 mins)**

Lu, Sheldon H. “Tear down the City: Reconstructing Urban Space in Contemporary Chinese Popular Cinema and Avant-Garde Art. *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-First. Century*. Zhang, Zhen. pp. 137-160.

**Week 9 *The World***

McGarath, Jason. (2007) “The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke: From Postsocialist Realism to a Transnational Aesthetic.” *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-First. Century*. Ed. Zhang, Zhen. pp. 81-114.

**Week 10 *Cell Phone***

Zhang, Yingjin. (2004) “Cinema and the Transnational Imaginary, 1990-2002.” *Chinese National Cinema*. New York: Routledge. pp. 259-296.

Cornelius, Sheila. (2002) “The Sixth Generation.” *New Chinese Cinema: Challenging Representations*. London & New York: Wallflower. pp. 118-128.

**Week 11 *Wedding Banquet***

Fran, Martin. (2003) “Globally Chinese at The Wedding Banquet.” *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film and Public Culture*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. pp. 163-184.

Berry, Chris. “Wedding Banquet: A Family (Melodrama) Affair.” *Chinese films in focus: 25 new takes*. Edited by Chris Berry. London: British Film Institute. pp. 183-190.

**Week 12 *Good Men, Good Women***

Tay, William. (1994) “The Ideology of Initiation: The Films of Hou Hsiao-hsien.” *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*. Edited by Nick Browne et al. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 151-159.

Liao, Ping-hui. (1993) “Rewriting Taiwanese National History: The February 28 Incident as Spectacle.” *Public Culture* 5: 281-296.

**Week 13 *Mongolian Ping Pong***

Webb, Jen & Schirato, Tony. (2003) *Understanding Globalization*. London: Sage. pp. 1-20.

**Week 14 Reading Week**

**Week 15 Recapitulation**

**Academic Honesty**

You are expected to do your own work. Dishonesty in fulfilling any assignment undermines the learning process and the integrity of your college degree. Engaging in dishonest or unethical behavior is forbidden and will result in disciplinary action, specifically a failing grade on the assignment with no opportunity for resubmission. A second infraction will result in an F for the course and a report to College officials. Examples of prohibited behavior are:

* Cheating – an act of deception by which a student misleadingly demonstrates that s/he has mastered information on an academic exercise. Examples include:
* Copying or allowing another to copy a test, quiz, paper, or project
* Submitting a paper or major portions of a paper that has been previously submitted for another class without permission of the current instructor
* Turning in written assignments that are not your own work (including homework)
* Plagiarism – the act of representing the work of another as one’s own without giving credit.
  + Failing to give credit for ideas and material taken from others
  + Representing another’s artistic or scholarly work as one’s own
* Fabrication – the intentional use of invented information or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive

**To comply with the University’s policy, all written assignments have to be submitted to VeriGuide.**

**Resources**

**Primary Texts**

Benson, Linda. (2011) *China Since 1949*. 2nd edition. Harlow: Longman/ Pearson.

Berry, Chris, ed. (2003) *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*. London: British Film Institute.

Berry, Chris, ed. (2008) *Chinese Films in Focus II*. London: British Film Institute.

Browne, Nick et al, eds. (1994) *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Chen, Kaige & Wan, Zhi. (1989) *King of the Children*. Edited and translated by Bonnie S. McDougall. London, Faber & Faber.

Chow, Rey. (1995) *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Clark, Paul. (2005) *Reinventing China: A Generation and Its Films*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Cornelius, Sheila. (2002) *New Chinese Cinema: Challenging Representations*. London & New York: Wallflower.

Fran, Martin. (2003) *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film and Public Culture*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Li Bihua. (1993) *Farewell to My Concubine*: *A Novel*. Trans. Andrea Lingenfelter. New York: W. Morrow.

Naughton, Barry. (2007) *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Silbergeld, Jerome. (1999) *China Into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. London: Reaktion Books.

Webb, Jen & Schirato, Tony. (2003) *Understanding Globalization*. London: Sage.

Yu, Hua. (2003) *To Live: A Novel*. Trans. Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books.

Zhang, Yingjin. (2004) *Chinese National Cinema.* New York: Routledge.

Zhang Zhen, ed. (2007) *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Zhang, Xudong. (1997) *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms: Cultural Fever, Avant-garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

**Supplementary Texts**

Berry, Chris & Lu Feii, eds. (2005) *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*. HK: Hong Kong University Press.

Berry, Chris, ed. (2008) *Chinese Films in Focus II*. London: British Film Institute.

Chen, Ming-May Jessie & Haque, Mazharul. (2007) *Representation of the Cultural Revolution in Chiense Films by the Fifth Generation Filmmakers” Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, and Tian Zhuangzhuang*. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press.

Choa, Carolyn & Su, David Li-qun, eds. (2001) *The Vintage Book of Contemporary Chinese Fiction.* New York: Vintage.

Davis, Darrell William & Chen, Ru-shou Robert eds. (2007) *Cinema Taiwan : Politics, Popularity and State of the Arts*. London: Routledge.

Gamer, Robert. E., ed. (2003) *Understanding Contemporary China*. 2nd edition. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Hayward, Susan. (2000) *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd edition. London & New York: Routledge.

Morris, Meaghan et al, eds. (2005) *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema*. Durham and New York: Duke University Press.

Semsel, George S., Chen, Xihe, and Xia, Hong. (1993) *Film in Contemporary China: Critical Debates*. Westport: Praeger.

Yau, Esther C.M., ed. (2001) *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*. Edited by Esther C.M. Yau. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

Yeh, Emilie Yuen-yu & Davis, Darrell William. (2005) *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Yu, Hua. (2011) *China in Ten Words*. Trans. Allan H. Barr. New York: Pantheon Books.