

# CET Syllabus of Record



**Program:** CET Shanghai

**Course Code / Title:** (SH/FILM 370) Contemporary Chinese Cinema

**Total Hours:** 45

**Recommended Credits:** 3

**Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings:** Film Studies / East Asian Studies, Chinese Language, Chinese Literature, History

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Prerequisites/Requirements:** None

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## Description

This course offers insights into the political, social, and cultural changes in contemporary China--and the impact of modernization and globalization on its cultural redefinition and identity reforming—through film. Using a selection of films directed by internationally-acclaimed Chinese Fifth and Sixth Generation directors, the course invites students to exercise their critical thinking skills in appraising the cultural narratives of each selected film and the aesthetic presentation produced by each film director.

## Objectives

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

- demonstrate knowledge of the political, social, and cultural changes in reflected in Chinese film over the past four decades;
- identify key characteristics of Chinese cultural and aesthetic traditions;
- develop informed comparative approaches between Chinese and U.S. film traditions; and
- evaluate the representation and criticism of the cultural tradition and value in contemporary 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. Readings range between 50-80 pages per week. Regular class attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to participate during class lectures and in discussions, as this is a key to success in this course. The course includes a field study class at the Shanghai Film Museum.

Students are required to take a midterm exam, give a presentation in class, and prepare an end-of-term ten-page paper. Detailed instructions for each assignment will be distributed in class.

## Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

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Midterm exam	30%
In-class presentation	20%
Participation/contribution to class	10%
Final term paper	40%

### Readings

Bao, Yaming. "The Politics of Nostalgia: Old Shanghai Bar, Elite Narrative and Intellectual Discourse." *Shanghai: Its Urbanization and Culture*. Eds. Xuanmeng Yu & Xirong He. Washington D.C.: CRVP, 2004.

Berry, Chris. "Women Character, Women's Cinema and Neo-liberal Chinese Modernity: Doubled and Split." *Chinese Cinemas: International Perspectives*. Eds. Felicia Chan and Andy Willis. London: Routledge, 2016.

Cui, Shuqin. "Chapter Two: Reconstructing History: The(Im)possible Engagement between Feminism and Postmodernism in Stanley Kwan's *Center Stage*." *Women Through the Lens: Gender and Nation in a Century of Chinese Cinema*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003.

Gong, Haomin. "Commerce and the Critical Edge: Negotiating the Politics of Postsocialist Film, the Case of Feng Xiaogang." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 2009; 3 (3).

Gould, Stephen J. and Nancy Y. C. Wong. "The Intertextual Construction of Emerging Consumer Culture in China as Observed in the Movie *Ermo*: A Postmodern, Sinicization Reading." *Journal of Global Marketing* 14 (2000): 151-67.

Hageman, Andrew. "Floating Consciousness: The Cinematic Confluence of Ecological Aesthetics in *Suzhou River*." *Chinese Ecocinema: In the Age of Environmental Challenge*. Eds. Lu, Sheldon H. and Jiayan Mi. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011.

Huot, Claire. "Colorful Folk in the Landscape: Fifth-Generation Filmmakers and Roots-Searchers." *China's New Cultural Scene: A Handbook of Changes*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

Li, David Leiwei. "What Will Become of Us If We Don't Stop? *Ermo*'s China and the End of Globalization." *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Autumn, 2001): 442-461.

Liu, Tianhua. "Urbanization and the Image of a City: The Example of the City of Shanghai." *Shanghai: Its Urbanization and Culture*. Eds. Xuanmeng Yu & Xirong He. Washington D.C.: CRVP, 2004.

Lu, Tonglin, "Fantasy and Reality of a Virtual China in Jia Zhangke's Film *The World*." *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 2008; 2 (3): 163-179.

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McGrath, Jason. "Metacinema for the Masses: Three Films by Feng Xiaogang." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (FALL, 2005): 90-132.

Pan, Tianshu. "Historical Memory, Community-Building and Place-Making in Neighborhood Shanghai." *Restructuring the Chinese City: Changing Society, Economy, and Space*. Eds. Laurence J. C. Ma and Fulong Wu, London: Routledge 2005.

Silbergeld, Jerome. "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, 1999.

Tang, Xiaobing. "Rural Women and Social Change in New China Cinema: From Li Shuangshuang to *Ermo*." *positions: asia critique*, 11, 3 (Winter 2003): 647-74.

Voci, Paola and Luo Hui, eds. *Screening China's Soft Power*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Wang, Hui. "Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity." Trans. Rebecca E. Karl. In *Intellectual Politics in Post-Tiananmen China*. Zhang Xudong, ed. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998.

Yau, Esther C. M. "Yellow Earth: Western Analysis and a Non-Western Text." *Film Quarterly*: (1987-88) 41.2: 22-33.

Yu Keping. "The Developmental Logic of Chinese Culture under Modernization and Globalization." *Boundary 2*, Vol. 35 Issue 2 (Summer 2008): 157-182.

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

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

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

Zhou, Zuyan. "Gender Configurations in *Women from the Lake of Scented Souls*: Male Feminism and Its Limitation." *Tamkang Review*, 38:1 (2007): 171-211.

### Films

*A World without Thieves (Tianxia wu zei*, dir. Feng Xiaogang, 2004), 120 min.

*Beijing Bastards (Beijing zazhong*, dir. Zhang Yuan, 1993), 88 min.

*Centre Stage (Ruan Lingyu*, dir. Stanley Kwan, 1992), 126 min.

*Ermo (Ermo*, dir. Zhou Xiaowen, 1994), 95 min.

*I Wish I Knew (Hai shang chuan qi*, dir. Jia Zhangke, 2010), 125min.

*Raise the Red Lantern (Dahong denglong gaogao gua*, dir. Zhang Yimou, 1991), 125 min.

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*Shadow Magic* (*Xiyang jing*, dir. Ann Hu, 2000), 116 min.  
*Shower* (*Xizao*, dir. Zhang Yang, 1999), 92 min.  
*Suzhou River* (*Suzhou He*, dir. Lou Ye, 2000), 83 min.  
*The World* (*Shijie*, dir. Jia Zhangke, 2005), 110 min.  
*Tiny Times 1.0* (*Xiao shidai*, dir. Guo Jingming, 2013), 116 min.  
*Woman Sesame Oil Maker* (*Xianghunnü*, dir. Xie Fei, 1993), 105 min.  
*Yellow Earth* (*Huang tudi*; dir. Chen Kaige 1984), 89 min.

### Supplementary Texts

Brownem, Nick, and al. *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

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

Kuoshu, Harry H., ed. *Celluloid China: Cinematic Encounters with Culture and Society*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.

Lu, Sheldon Hsiao-peng, ed. *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

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

### Outline of Course Content

Topic 1: An Introduction to Mainland Chinese Cinema

- The Beginning (1896-1929).
  - Accompanying film is **Shadow Magic** (*Xiyang jing*, dir. Ann Hu, 2000), 116 min.
- The Two Golden Periods (1930-1949)
  - Accompanying film is **Centre Stage** (*Ruan Lingyu*, dir. Stanley Kwan, 1992), 126 min.
- Socialist cinema (1949-1978)
  - Accompanying film is **Raise the Red Lantern** (*Dahong denglong gaogao gua*, dir. Zhang Yimou, 1991), 125 min.

Topic 2: The Signs of “Chineseness” in *Raise the Red Lantern*  
**Yellow Earth** (*Huang tudi*; dir. Chen Kaige 1984), 89 min.

Topic 3: Cultural Introspection and Artistic Innovation  
**Woman Sesame Oil Maker** (*Xianghunnü*, dir. Xie Fei, 1993), 105 min.

Topic 4: Gender and Modernity in the Reform Era  
**Ermo** (*Ermo*, dir. Zhou Xiaowen, 1994), 95 min.

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Topic 5: Victims of Consumerism

**Beijing Bastards** (*Beijing zazhong*, dir. Zhang Yuan, 1993), 88 min.

Topic 6: A Distant Cry of Forsaken Children

**Suzhou River** (*Suzhou He*, dir. Lou Ye, 2000), 83 min.

Topic 7: A Contemporary Tale of the Strange: Emergence of Chinese Independent Art Cinema

**The World** (*Shijie*, dir. Jia Zhangke, 2005), 110 min.

Topic 8: Negotiating Local/Global Identities: China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Shower** (*Xizao*, dir. Zhang Yang, 1999), 92 min.

Topic 9: Changes of Urban Landscape in the Era of Globalization

**A World without Thieves** (*Tianxia wu zei*, dir. Feng Xiaogang, 2004), 120 min.

Topic 10: The Chinese-Style Blockbuster: Feng Xiaogang's New Year's Film (*He Sui Pian*)

**I Wish I Knew** (*Hai shang chuan qi*, dir. Jia Zhangke, 2010), 125min.

Topic 11: The Past and Present of Shanghai in Chinese Film

**Tiny Times 1.0** (*Xiao shidai*, dir. Guo Jingming, 2013), 116 min.

Topic 12: Rethinking Globalization and Chinese Youth Culture

Topic 13: The Future of Chinese Cinema