

CET Syllabus of Record



Program: CET Shanghai

Course Code / Title: (SH/LITR 380) Chinese Literature Today

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

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

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites/Requirements: None

Description

This is a survey of contemporary Chinese literature introducing important works of fiction by authors writing during the last three decades. It also examines the contemporary relevance of works by several early twentieth-century authors who remain influential in Chinese literature and culture today. Motifs of cannibals, consumption, and global capitalism connect the writings. The course also explores the role of popular genres such as science fiction and martial arts fiction in contemporary Chinese culture and in comparison to the mainstream authors we read. Other themes include ideas about what constitutes popular versus high literature and how authors closely associated with Shanghai portray their city.

Objectives

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

- demonstrate knowledge about the major works, authors, and trends of contemporary Chinese literature;
- evaluate different ways to read, analyze, and appreciate fiction; and
- understand and identify key characteristics in twentieth-century and contemporary Chinese history, culture, and society and how they impact literature.

Course Requirements

Class participation is graded day-by-day. To earn full credit for each class day, students are expected to come to class having completed the day's reading assignment and prepared to discuss it. Classroom discussion is key to success in this course. Students must participate in class activities in a way that demonstrates they have done the reading and are paying attention in class.

Students read between 50 and 250 pages of fiction per week (e.g., several short stories or half a novel), and supplement this with short pieces of nonfiction that provide context and critical insights (e.g., the introduction to the work of fiction). Because many of the readings are printed with relatively few words per page, a 200-page reading assignment is perhaps equivalent to only 100 pages of nonfiction.

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Students each write six short papers of 500-700 words reflecting on the readings and the class lectures and discussions. Details and prompts for writing assignments are given in class. The primary grading criterion is the extent to which the paper demonstrates that the student has read carefully, considered the relevant reading(s) from their own perspective and in greater context, and learned from participating in class.

Students each write a final essay of 2,000-2,500 words. The instructor suggests topics, and students have the option to design their own topic as well. Topics must be approved in advance by the instructor.

Grading

- 30% Class participation
- 36% Short essays (6 short essays worth 6 points each)
- 34% Final paper

Readings

- Chang, Eileen. *Love in a Fallen City*. Translated by Karen S. Kingsbury. New York: NYRB Classics, 2007.
- Lao She. *Cat Country*. Translated by William A. Lyell. New York: Penguin Books, 2013.
- Liu, Ken, ed. *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese SF in Translation*. New York: Tor, 2016.
- Lu Hsun. *Selected Stories*. Translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang. New York: Norton, 2003.
- Mo Yan. *The Republic of Wine*. Translated by Howard Goldblatt. New York: Arcade, 2012.
- Wang Anyi. *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*. Translated by Michael Berry and Susan Chan Egan. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Yan Lianke. *Lenin's Kisses*. Translated by Carlos Rojas. New York: Grove Press, 2013.
- Yu Hua. *To Live*. Translated by Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

Additional critical and contextual readings will supplement the primary literature.

Outline of Course Content

Topic 1: Lu Xun and His Legacy
Focus: Lu Xun, Lao She

Topic 2: Shanghai in Literature
Focus: Eileen Chang, Wang Anyi

Topic 3: Chinese Literature in the World: "High" Literature
Focus: Yu Hua, Yan Lianke, Mo Yan

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Topic 4: Chinese Literature in the World: "Popular" Literature
Focus: Liu Cixin, Hao Jingfang, Xia Jia, Jin Yong