

Course Title: Contemporary Chinese Novels and Society

Course Description:

This course surveys contemporary Chinese fictions from the 1980s to the present in terms of historical background, ideological content, artistic development and achievement, as well as foreign influences. It aims at familiarizing students with modern Chinese history and culture through reading some of the major Chinese writers, such as Su Tong, Yu Hua, Wang Shuo, Mo yan, Wang Anyi, Wang Xiaobo, etc.

Grading

1. Readings and Class Participation (30%)

- Readings
- Keep regular journal of your reactions to readings as basis for class discussion
- Class participation, discussion, and presentation.

2. Final Paper (40%)

Your final paper, a close reading and interpretation of one or more contemporary Chinese writers' works, should be 6-10 pages in length. Due

3. Final Exam (30%)

Will consist of short answer questions which will focus on the time of writing (cultural-historical background wherein certain texts were produced) and the time the writing is about (i.e. cultural-historical significance of the texts), the literary characteristics of specific works, how specific works are representative of literary trends (e.g. root-seeking literature; new historical novel; neo-realism) etc. You might, for example, be asked to explain how certain texts are ironic, satirical, or parodic; how certain texts exemplify postmodern ways of writing (ie. metafictional skills, time-space compression, subversion of grand narrative, etc.).

Required readings:

Han Shaogong. *A Dictionary of Maqiao*, trans. Julia Lovell. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Jiang Rong. *Wolf Totem: A Novel*, trans. Howard Goldblatt. New York: Penguin Press, 2008.

Liao Yiwu. *The Corpse Walker: Real Life Stories, China from the Bottom Up*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2008.

Mo Yan. *Red Sorghum*, trans. Howard Goldblatt. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

- Su Tong. *Raise the Red Lantern*, trans. Michael S. Duke. New York: Harper Perennial, 2004.
- . *My Life as Emperor*, trans. Howard Goldblatt. Hyperion Press, 2005.
- . *Raise the Red Lantern*, a film adapted after Su Tong's *Wives and Concubines*, dir. Zhang Yimou.
- Wang Anyi, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, trans, Michale Berry & Chan Egan, New York" Columbia University Press, 2008
- Wang Shuo. *Playing for Thrills*, trans. Howard Goldblatt. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
- . *In the Heat of the Sun*, a film adapted after Wang Shuo's *Wild Beast*, dir. Jiang Wen.
- Wang Xiaobo. *The Golden Age*.
- Yang Xianhui. *Woman from Shanghai: Tales of Survival from a Chinese Labor Camp*, trans. Wen Huang. New York: Anchor Books, 2010.
- Yu Hua. *To Live*, trans. Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

Suggested references:

- Berry, Michael. *Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Chang, Iris. *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Lin Qingxin. *Brushing History against the Grain: Reading the Chinese New Historical Fiction (1986-1999)*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005.
- McGrath, Jason. *Postsocialist Modernity: Chinese Cinema, Literature, and Criticism in the Market Age*. Stanford University Press, 2010.
- Wang, David Der-wei. *The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China* (Philip E. Lilienthal Book in Asian Studies). University of California Press, 2004.
- Zhang, Xudong. *Era of Reforms: Culture Fever, Avant-Garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Zhang, Xudong. *Postsocialism and Cultural Politics: China in the Last Decade of the Twentieth Century* (Post-Contemporary Interventions). Duke University Press, 2008.

Course Schedule

Week 1:

Introduction. Readings: Liao Yiwu: "The Mourners;" "Corpse Walker"; "Human Trafficker."

Week 2:

Readings: Yu Hua, "On the Road at Eighteen" (1987); *To Live*, 1992. Film viewing: *To Live*.

Week 3:

Readings: Su Tong, *Raise the Red Lantern* (a novella, originally *Wives and Concubines*, 1989); “Nineteen Thirty-four Escapes;” “Opium Family” (1988). Film viewing: *Raise the Red Lantern*.

Week 4:

Reading: Su Tong, *My Life as Emperor* (1993).

Week 5:

Readings: Mo Yan, “Iron child;” *Red Sorghum* (part I, 1986). Film viewing: *Red Sorghum*.

Week 6:

Reading: Han Shaogong, *A Dictionary of Maqiao*, (excerpts, photocopied packet, 1996).

Week 7:

Reading: Wang Xiaobo, *The Golden Age*.

Week 8:

Reading: Wang Anyi, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*

Week 9:

Reading: Wang Shuo, *Playing for Thrills*, 1989. Film viewing: *In the Heat of the Sun*.

Week 10:

Reading: Yang Xianhui, *Woman from Shanghai*, 2003. (excerpts, photocopied packet).

Week 11:

Reading: Jiang Rong, *Wolf Totem*, 2004 (excerpts, photocopied packet)

Week 12

Final exam.