

Chinese Literature and Society

Syllabus, Spring 2010

Instructor: Hua R. Lan 蓝华;

Lecture and discussion: Wednesday (1:30—3:20)

Classroom: Rm. B105 History Department

Course description:

Born as part of an iconoclastic revolt against traditional culture, modern Chinese literature was bestowed a dual mission: enlightenment and national salvation. It is commonly acknowledged that 20th century Chinese literature has played a unique role in the formation of a new society and creation of a new man. By reading discerning representations of literary works and related articles and examining the minds of major Chinese writers, students are expected to savor the ingenuity of modern Chinese literature, to conjure up pictures of modern Chinese history and to understand the Chinese conception of the evolving relationship between literature, politics, and society.

Assignments: 1) Close reading and active class participation (20% of the grade)
2) Mid-term paper (30%)
3) Oral presentation and book report: (10%)
4) Final project: (40%)

(Detailed guidelines for each assignment will be provided later)

Reading Requirements:

1) Xeroxed materials which include 18 stories and novellas and selected poems.

These are required intensive reading materials **available at the Main Office.**

2) *My Country and My People* a book by Lin Yutang

(English version, **available in the Bookstore in the Wumei-mart on campus**)

3) Extensive readings for background information and class discussion. Topics: Confucianism, the May Fourth Movement (1919), the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), elements of literature and introduction to literary theories (New Criticism, Readers Response Theory, Feminism, Marxism, Psychoanalysis, New Historicism, etc.) **Available online.**

4) Readings for comparison: James Joyce's "The Dead" in his short story collection *Dubliners* (1914) and Johann W. Goethe's "The Sorrows of Young Werther" (1774)

Available online

Schedule:

Week 1 (January 20): Introduction:

The Chinese mind, language and thought, literary tradition and aesthetics

Week 2 (January 27): The New Literature

Readings on Confucianism, May Fourth Movement and Lu Xun's *Preface*

Week 3 (Feb. 3): Lu Xun: **Madman's Diary** and **Kong Yiji**

Week 4 (Feb. 10) Lu Xun: **In the Tavern;** **New Year's Sacrifice**

Further reading: James Joyce's *The Dead*

Week 5 Happy Spring Festival!

Week 6 (Feb. 24): Ding Ling: **Miss Sophia's Diary** and **Yu Dafu: Sinking**

Further reading: a) What Happens after Nora Leaves Home? (by LU Xun)

b) *The Sorrows of the Young Werther* by Goethe

Week 7 (March 3): "Peasant" Writers and *Root Literature* :

Shao Zhenguo: **Travelling Harvesters**, Mo Yan: **Autumn Nights**

Week 8 (March 10): Discussions on films: *Red Sorghum* and *Raise the Red Lantern*

Week 9 (March 17): Taiwanese writers:

Bai Xianyong: **Winter Nights**; Li Ang: **Curvaceous Doll**

Further reading on the Taiwan issue and Freudian psychoanalysis.

Week 10 (March 24) Modernist Literature:

Cai Xue: A Hut on the Mountain, Yu Hua: On the Road, and Su Tong: Escape

Further reading on literary schools and trends, such as Romanticism, Realism,

Week 11 (March 31) Overseas Chinese writers

Ha Jin's **Broad Daylight** and **Man To Be**

Further reading: a) the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)

b) Trans-cultural writers like Han Suyin, Anchee Min.

Week 12 (April 7) Veteran Writers:

Zhang Ailing: Sealed Off and Lao She 's The Crescent Moon

Further reading: Chapter on Eileen Chang in *History of Modern Chinese Fiction* by C.T. Hsia

Week 13 (April 14): General review and oral presentation

Final project: Due by April 15

"Contemporary China, itself a huge book filled with sound and fury, abounds in extraordinary happenings and is stained with blood and tears. This constitutes a boon for Chinese writers: calling upon little imagination, they can tear any page from this book and turn it into a work of art. The line between fact and fiction, after all, is blurred---history has been read as fiction and fiction regarded as an extension of history."

----Bei Dao