

HUMA 6001X: Socialist Film Culture

Instructor: Daisy Yan Du
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Division of Humanities
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Office hours: by appointment only

Time & Classroom:

Time: 3:00-5:50pm, Thursday, Fall 2021
Mixed Mode: in person (Room LTH) & Zoom
No video recordings will be provided.

Required Textbooks:

- All available online at “Modules,” Canvas

Course Description:

This graduate course concentrates on the film culture in socialist China (1949-1976). The major theoretical problematic of the course resides in the convoluted relationship between totalitarian politics and film as propaganda and art. Focusing on live-action feature films, model operas, animated films, and documentaries, this course will explore aspects of film industry, aesthetics, authorship, projection and viewing, soundscape, and internationalism. It will also discuss conceptual issues regarding national identity, ethnicity, gender, children, machines, and animals against the backdrop of an authoritarian regime. Following a chronological order, the course will begin with the socialist transition in 1949, and then move to the Seventeen Years (1949-1966) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). This course targets graduate students in the humanities. Students from other disciplines who are interested in the topic are equally welcome. All reading materials, lectures, classroom discussions, and writing assignments are in English.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester students should be able to:

- track the development of socialist cinema under Mao
- be familiar with major film directors, their representative work, and the socio-historical context in which they emerged
- analyze particular films (identify their directors, analyze their aesthetics, filming technology/techniques, visual and auditory styles, and socio-historical condition)
- understand related theories and concepts
- use a professional and theoretical vocabulary to discuss films
- sharpen critical thinking and enhance academic writing skills in film studies
- enter the field of socialist film studies, familiar with major debates and arguments,

identify a gap in existing scholarship, formulate an original research question, complete an innovative research paper that will make an intervention in the field

Assignments for MPhil and PhD Students:

- Watch all required films and finish all required readings every week
- At least one formal presentation (around 15 minutes)
- At least one leading discussion (around 15 minutes)
- Presentation of final research project (5 minutes)
- A research proposal (around 2 pages, double spaced)
- A final paper (around 15 pages, double spaced)

Assignments for MA Students:

- Watch one film (feature length) and read two self-selected articles every week
- One formal presentation (around 15 minutes)
- One leading discussion (around 15 minutes)
- Presentation of final research project (5 minutes)
- A research proposal (around 2 pages, double spaced)

Due Dates:

- 3-6pm, November 11, Research Proposal (mailbox, general office)
- 3-6pm, November 25 (last class), presentation of final research project
- 3-6pm, Dec 16, final paper due (mailbox, general office)

Grading Criteria:

- Attendance: 10% or F
- Participation: 10% (15% for MA students)
- Presentation: 10% (15% for MA students)
- Leading Discussion: 10% (15% for MA students)
- Research Proposal: 20% (45% for MA students)
- Final Paper: 40%

Technical Issues:

- **Reading Materials:** available online at “Modules,” Canvas.
- **Audiovisual Materials:** Films for this course are available at the Reserve counter in the library. You can also find some films online through youtube and youku.
- **Lecture Notes:** Lecture notes will NOT be uploaded online because graduate students are expected to attend classes and take notes. Other course materials, if any, will be uploaded to “Modules,” Canvas.
- **Discussion Forum:** Students can post questions/comments/concerns about this course for open discussion. The instructor will check the forum on a regular basis to address your postings if necessary. Your postings will be counted as classroom participation.
- **E-mail:** E-mail will be used frequently in this course. The instructor will use it to make announcements relevant to the course. You can also use it to ask questions or express your concerns to your instructor. The instructor will reply your emails within

48 hours. Please check your campus email account on a daily basis.

- **Contact:**

Canvas: cei@ust.hk

Hotline: 2358-6318

Library Reserve: lbreserv@ust.hk

Hotline: 2358-6776

Classroom Facility: Hotline: 2358-6815

Classroom Etiquette

- **Attendance** is mandatory. It is your responsibility to sign up and track attendance. If you forget to sign up an attendance, the instructor will not make up for it. If you have to miss a class for a legitimate reason, please inform your instructor at least one day in advance and present relevant documents to the instructor within one week after the absence. Being 5 minutes late for class three times will be counted as one unexcused absence.
- **No Late or Incomplete Assignments** are allowed. The instructor will grant an extension or incomplete only for absolute necessities (e.g., medical reason, family crisis) and not because you have too much work and have run out of time. Please inform the instructor in advance if you believe you have a legitimate reason for late or incomplete assignments. You are expected to present convincing documents to the instructor.
- **Preparation:** You are expected to be well prepared before each class begins. Please read all assigned course materials and watch the required films of the week before you come to class. In this way, you can better follow the instructor's lectures and make the most of classroom discussions with your classmates. Your diligent preparation is crucial for the success of this course.
- **Electronic Devices:** Please turn off your cell phones in class. Laptops and other electronic devices are allowed only for learning purposes.
- **Notification in Advance:** Always inform the instructor at least one day in advance for absences and other issues that need special attention and accommodation.
- **Religious Holiday Accommodation:** If you wish to claim accommodation for a religious holiday, you should talk to your instructor within the first two weeks of the semester. Supporting documents are needed.
- **Learning Disability Accommodation:** If you wish to claim accommodation for any kind of learning disability, you should talk to your instructor within the first two weeks of the semester. Supporting documents are needed.
- **Academic Integrity:** Any academic dishonesty of any kind will be officially processed in accordance with the policies of the university.

Week 1 (September 2): Introduction: Socialist Cinema as Propaganda and Art

Film Screening in Class:

- *China: A Century of Revolution 1949-1976, Part II* (Sue Williams, 1994)
- *Birth of New China* (Li Qiankuan and Xiao Guiyun, 1989) Recommended

Required Readings:

- Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art (1943)." In Kirk A. Denton ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996.

Recommended Readings:

- Daniel Vukovich, "Chapter 3: Maoist Discourse and Its Demonization," in *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.*, 47-65.
- David Bordwell and Kristine Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (10th edition), Part III Film Style 112-306 & Glossary 500-505

Week 2 (September 9): Socialist Cinema at the Threshold of 1949

Film Screening in Class:

- *Crows and Sparrows* (Zheng Junli, 1949)
- *The Wandering Life of Sanmao* (Zhao Ming and Yan Gong, 1949)

Required Readings:

- Paul Pickowicz, "Zheng Junli, Complicity, and the Cultural History of Socialist China, 1949-1976." *The China Quarterly* 188 (December 2006): 1048-1069.
- Yiman Wang, "Crows and Sparrows: Allegory on a Historical Threshold," in Chris Berry, *Chinese Films in Focus*, 65-72.

Week 3 (September 16): The Collectivization of Film Industry in the Early 1950s

Film Screening in Class:

- *This Life of Mine* (Shi Hui, 1950)

Required Readings:

- Paul Pickowicz, "Acting like Revolutionaries: Shi Hui, the Wenhua Studio, and Private-Sector Filmmaking, 1949-1952," in Jeremy Brown and Paul Pickowicz, eds., *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China*, 256-287.
- Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 189-224.

Week 4 (September 23): Ethnic Minorities and Socialist Comedy

Film Screening in Class:

- *Five Golden Flowers* (Wang Jiayi, 1959)

Required Readings:

- Ling Zhang, "Navigating Gender, Ethnicity and Space: *Five Golden Flowers* as a Socialist Road Movie," in *The Global Road Movie*, 150-171.
- Paul Clark, "Ethnic Minorities in Chinese Films: Cinema and the Exotic," *East-West Film Journal* 1:2 (1987): 15-32.
- Yingjin Zhang, "From 'Minority Film' to 'Minority Discourse' Questions of Nationhood and Ethnicity in Chinese Cinema," *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, 81-104.
- Chris Berry, "Race: Chinese Film and the Politics of Nationalism," *Cinema Journal* 31: 2 (1992): 45-58.

Recommended Readings:

- Dru C. Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 1994.
- Louisa Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China," *Modern China*, 1997.

Week 5 (Sept 30): Female Tractor Drivers and Socialist Modernity

Film Screening in Class:

- *The Spark of Life* (Dong Fang, 1962)
- *Female Train Drivers* (Xian Qun, 1950)

Required Readings:

- Daisy Yan Du, "Socialist Modernity in the Wasteland: Changing Representations of the Female Tractor Driver in China, 1949-1964," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* (Spring 2017): 55-94.
- Tina Mai Chen, "The Human-Machine Continuum in Maoism: The Intersection of Soviet Socialist Realism, Japanese Theoretical Physics, and Chinese Revolutionary Theory," *Cultural Critique* 80 (Winter 2012): 151-181.
- Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), 149-181.

Week 6 (October 7): Women Directors and Female/Feminist Perspective

Film Screening in Class:

- *The Story of Liubao Village* (Wang Ping, 1957)
- *Small Grass Grows on the Kunlun Mountain* (Dong Kena, 1962)

- *Dreaming to be Emperor* (Chen Bo'er, 1947)

Required Readings:

- Lingzhen Wang, "Wang Ping and Women's Cinema in Socialist China: Institutional Practice, Feminist Cultures, and Embedded Authorship," *Signs* 40, no. 3 (2015): 589-622.
- Lingzhen Wang, "Socialist Cinema and Female Authorship: Overdetermination and Subjective Revisions in Dong Kena's *Small Grass Grows on the Kunlun Mountain*," *Chinese Women's Cinema*, 47-65.
- Zheng Wang, "Chen Bo'er and the Feminist Paradigm of Socialist Film," *Finding Women in the State*, 143-169.
- Lucy Fischer, "Pre/Texts: An Introduction," *Shot/Countershot: Film Tradition and Women's Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 3-31.

Recommended Readings:

- Louisa Wei, "Women's Trajectories in Chinese and Japanese Cinemas: A Chronological Overview," in *Dekalog: On East Asian Filmmakers*, ed., Kate Taylor (London and New York: Wallflower, 2011), 13-44.
- Dai Jinhua, "Invisible Women: Contemporary Chinese Cinema and Women's Film," *positions* 3.1 (1995): 255-280.
- Shuqin Cui, *Women through the Lens: Gender and Nation in a Century of Chinese Cinema* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003).
- Chris Berry, "China's New Women's Cinema," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 3.18 (September 1988): 8-19, here 14-15.
- Toril Moi, "I am not a Woman Writer: About Women, Literature and Feminist Theory Today," *Feminist Theory* 9, 3 (2008): 259-271.

Week 7 (October 14): No Class (Chung Yeung Festival)

Week 8 (October 21): Film Projection and Viewing

Film Screening in Class:

- *Li Shuangshuang* (1962)

Required Readings:

- Tina Mai Chen, "Propagating the Propaganda Film: The Meaning of Film in CCP Writings, 1949-1965," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 15.2 (Fall, 2003): 154-193.
- Tina Mai Chen, "[Mobile Film Projection in Socialist and Post-Socialist China](#)," China Policy Institute Blog, 8 May 2015.
- Chenshu Zhou, "The Versatile Film Projectionist: How to Show Films and Serve the People in the 17 Years Period, 1949-1966," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 10 no. 3

(2016): 228-246.

- Chenshu Zhou: *Cinema Off Screen: Moviegoing in Socialist China*, 2021.
- Jie Li, “Cinematic Guerrillas in Mao’s China,” *Screen* (Summer 2020).

Week 9 (October 28): The National Style of Animation in the Early 1960s

Film Screening in Class:

- *The Conceited General* (1956)
- *Little Tadpoles Look for Mama* (1960)
- *The Herd Boy’s Flute* (1963)
- *Uproar in Heaven* (1960-1964)

Required Readings:

- Daisy Yan Du, “Chapter 3: Inter/National Style and National Identity,” *Animated Encounters: Transnational Movements of Chinese Animation*, 114-151.
- Mary Ann Farquhar, “Monks and Monkey: A Study of National Style in Chinese Animation,” *Animation Journal* (Spring 1993): 4-27.
- Julia Andrews, “Traditional Painting in New China: Guohua and the Anti-Rightist Campaign,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49 (August 1990): 555-585.
- Susan Napier, “Anime and Local/Global Identity,” *Anime: From Akira to Howl’s Moving Castle*, 15-34.
- Koichi Iwabuchi, “Chapter 1: Taking Japanization Seriously,” in *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, 23-50.

Week 10 (November 4): On the Eve of the Cultural Revolution

Film Screening in Class:

- *Early Spring in February* (Xie Tieli, 1964)

Required Readings:

- Paul Clark, “Beyond Shanghai” and “Film Genres, 1956-1964” in *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*
- Yang Lan, “‘Socialist Realism’ versus ‘Revolutionary Realism Plus Revolutionary Romanticism’,” in *In the Party Spirit: Socialist Realism and Literary Practice in the Soviet Union, East Germany and China*, ed. Hilary Chung (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 88-105.
- Ban Wang, “Desire and Pleasure in Revolutionary Cinema,” *The Sublime Figure of History*, 123-154.

Week 11 (November 11): Model Opera Works during the Cultural Revolution

Film Screening in Class:

- *Red Detachment of Women* (1971)
- *Red Detachment of Women* (Xie Jin, 1961)
- *Morning Sun* (Carma Hinton, 2003)

Required Readings:

- Kristine Harris, "Re-makes/Re-models: The Red Detachment of Women between Stage and Screen," *The Opera Quarterly* 26 no. 2 (September 2010): 316-342.
- Xiaomei Chen, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theater and Popular Drama in Contemporary China*, 73-121.
- Jason McGrath, "Cultural Revolution Model Opera Films and the Realist Tradition in Chinese Cinema," *The Opera Quarterly* 26 (2010): 343-76.
- Pang Lai-kwan, "Art and the Culture of Models and Copies," *The Art of Cloning*, 83-106.
- Rosemary Roberts, "Positive Women Characters in the Revolutionary Model Works of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: An Argument against the Theory of Erasure of Gender and Sexuality," *Asian Studies Review* 28, no. 4 (Dec 2004): 407-422.

Recommended Readings:

- Yue Meng, "Female Image and National Myth," in Tani Barlow, ed., *Gender Politics in Modern China, Writing and Feminism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 118-136.
- Emily Wilcox, "Chapter 4: A Revolt from Within: Contextualizing Revolutionary Ballet," *Revolutionary Bodies: Chinese Dance and the Socialist Legacy*, 119-155.

Week 12 (November 18): Animals and Animation during the Cultural Revolution

Film Screening in Class:

- *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* (1965)
- *The Little Trumpeter* (1973)
- *Little Sentinels of the East Sea* (1973)
- *The Golden Wild Goose* (1976)
- *One Night at the Art Studio* (1978)
- *The Fox Hunts the Hunter* (1978)

Required Readings:

- Daisy Yan Du, "Chapter 4: Animals, Ethnic Minorities, and Villains," *Animated Encounters: Transnational Movements of Chinese Animation*, 114-151.
- Haiyan Lee, "Animals Are Us," *The Strangers and the Chinese Moral Imagination*, 71-116.
- Andrew Jones, "Chapter 3: The Child as History in Republican China: A Discourse on Development," *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture*, 99-125.
- Ann Anagnost, "Children and National Transcendence in China," *Constructing China:*

The Interaction of Culture and Economics, 195-222.

- Stephanie Donald, “Children as Political Messengers: Art, Childhood, and Continuity,” *Picturing Power in the People’s Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution*, 79-100.

Week 13 (November 25): The Soundscape of Socialist Cinema & Final Project Presentations

Film Screening in Class:

- *Nie’er* (Zheng Junli, 1959)
- *Sparkling Red Stars* (*Shanshan de hongxing*, 1974)

Required Readings:

- Robert Chi, “‘The March of the Volunteers’: From Movie Theme Song to National Anthem,” in *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China*, pp. 239 ff. Woodrow Wilson Center Press (Washington), 2007.
- Nicole Huang, “Listening to Films: Politics of the Auditory in 1970s China,” *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 7 no. 3 (2013): 187-206.
- Paul Clark, “Introduction,” & “Singing in the Dark: Film and Cultural Revolution Musical Culture,” in *Listening to China’s Cultural Revolution: Music, Politics, and Cultural Continuities*, 1-8 & 107-126.

Week 14 (December 2): Self-Study: Film Internationalism

Film Screening in Class:

- [*Tractor Drivers* \(Soviet, 1939\)](#)
- [*The Cranes are Flying* \(Soviet, 1957\)](#)
- [*The Red Shoes* \(UK, 1948\)](#) (internal reference & passerby films, 1970)

Required Readings:

- Jie Li, “Gained in Translation: The Reception of Foreign Cinema in Mao’s China,” *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 13 no. 1 (2019): 61-75.
- Tina Mai Chen, “Socialism, Aestheticized Bodies and International Circuits of Gender: Soviet Female Film Stars in the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1969,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 18.2 (2007): 53-80.
- Tina Mai Chen, “International Film Circuits and Global Imaginaries in the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1957,” *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 3.2 (2009): 149-161.