

HUMA 5360

History and Theory of Comparative Literature

Fall 2025

Time: Monday 12:00 - 14:50 pm
Venue: 3494
Instructor: Xiaolu Ma Rm.3377; hmxlma@ust.hk
Office hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to the field of Comparative Literature through a variety of readings. It examines the development of the discipline by looking into the major theories and methodologies. Through readings and in-class discussions, we explore the significance of reading literature from comparative perspectives, crossing geographical, temporal, and linguistic boundaries. We also encourage students to examine the key concepts, themes, and debates that have shaped the evolving field of comparative literature.

For this semester, a special attention is given to three specific topics: the global white snake, Lu Xun and Eileen Chang.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. have a clear idea of the emergence and development of Comparative Literature as a discipline
2. analyze critically the issues of comparative literature related to issues such as space and narration
3. formulate their own comparative perspective in a research project on literary texts from different cultural traditions
4. read and talk about dense theoretical texts
5. write about a range of cultural texts using the theories examined in this course

Week 1 Introduction (Sept 1)

Comparative Literature

Week 2 (Sept 8)

Domínguez, César. *Introducing Comparative Literature: New Trends and Applications*. (Chapter 1,2)

Week 3 (Sept 15)

The [Levin Report](#) (1965)

The [Greene Report](#) (1975)

The [Bernheimer Report](#) (1993)

Week 4 (Sept 22)

Haun Saussy, ed., *Comparative literature in an age of globalization* (selected)

David Damrosch, "World Literature as Figure and as Ground"

<https://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/entry/world-literature-figure-and-ground-0>

Haun Saussy, "Comparative Literature: The Next Ten Years"

<https://stateofthediscipline.acla.org/list-view>

The Global White Snake

Week 5 (Sept 29)

Guest lecture

An announcement will be made close to the date of lecture.

Please read: Liang Luo, *The Global White Snake* (Selected)

Week 6-7 (Oct 6, Oct 13)

Please watch:

Green Snake (1993)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBjycaw5ulk>

Madame White Snake (Baeksabu-in 백사부인) (1960)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69DhzDrHVeI&ab_channel=%ED%95%9C%EA%B5%AD%EA%B3%A0%EC%A0%84%EC%98%81%ED%99%94KoreanClassicFilm

The Legend of the White Serpent (Byaku fujin no yoren 白夫人の妖恋) 1956

<https://archive.org/details/1956-1080p-mkv-2-gb>

or

https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1CQ4y197eK/?vd_source=0b01f0529c1bbff01f0b7e86a7346a67

Lu Xun

Week 8 (Oct 20)

Please read: Xiaolu Ma, "Introduction: Lu Xun, China, and the World,"

Week 9 (Oct 27)

Guest lecture

Week 10 (Nov 3)

Guest lecture

Eileen Chang

Week 11-12 (Nov 3, 10)

Please watch: *Lust, Caution* (Ang Lee, 2007)

<https://fullxcinema.com/lust-caution-2007/>

Please read:

Leung Ping-kwan, "Two discourses on colonialism: Huang Guliou and Eileen Chang on Hong Kong of the forties"

Jessica Tsui-yan Li, *Eileen Chang: The Performativity of Self-Translation* (Selected)

Week 12 Final presentation (Nov 17)

Week 13 Final presentation (Nov 24)

Course Assessment

Attendance	10%
In-class Presentations	20%
Class Participation	20%
Final Presentation	25%
Final Paper	25%

Course Requirements

Class participation

This is a seminar course. You are expected to attend all classes and stay for the entire class. You are allowed one absence without penalty. However, you can make up your absences by submitting a one-page analysis of the readings of that week. Any student with 4 absences or more will fail this course. There will be close reading of selected passages and thorough analysis of critical issues related to the texts. Students should read the assigned materials before class. I measure class participation based on the following criteria: arriving to class on time,

completing required reading, engaging in class discussion, and respectfully listening when your classmates speak. Each student needs to speak up five times to earn points for class participation. This includes the Q&A session during the final presentation.

Final Presentation

Prepare a presentation focusing on either Lu Xun or Eileen Chang. The topic should involve comparative literature. Originality is key to your presentation. Please carefully consider how to engage the theories we have studied. Each presentation will be followed by a Q&A session.

Final paper

7 pp in length (10 pp for Mphil students). Times New Roman size 12 font, double line spacing, 1-inch margins, and half-inch indentations at the beginning of each paragraph. If you are a native Chinese speaker and write in Chinese, please use single line spacing instead. Your paper should make a complex, well-defined argument in which you carefully use the theoretical material we have covered in exploring the cultural object or phenomenon of your choosing (Lu Xun or Eileen Chang). It is acceptable to use the same topic for both your presentation and final paper. However, please be mindful of the different formats and approaches required for each. Please submit it by 8pm of the due date. Please submit it in Word format and make sure that the file is readable. Unreadable files will not be counted as successful submission. Late submission will be accepted as late as two days after the due date but will receive half credit unless permission from the instructor is obtained before the due date.

Incomplete policy

Should you need to apply for “incomplete,” please contact the instructor before the final paper’s deadline. Otherwise, such extension application will not be considered. Any student that fails to turn in the final paper with no notification in advance will fail this course. No class withdrawal will be granted after the final paper’s deadline.

Academic Honesty

Acts of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Please go to our university webpage on academic dishonesty policy (<http://ugadmin.ust.hk/integrity/index.html>), and read definitions of plagiarism and acts of dishonesty. Acts of dishonesty will lead to a failing grade in this course.