

Division of Humanities
Tentative Course Syllabus

Course Code: HUMA 5350
Course Title: Socialist Film Culture
Course Offered in: Spring 2024
Course Instructor: Professor Daisy Du

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:

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

1.	Track the development of socialist cinema under Mao
2.	Be familiar with major film directors, their representative work, and the socio-historical context in which they emerged
3.	Analyze particular films (identify their directors, analyze their aesthetics, filming technology/techniques, visual and auditory styles, and socio-historical condition)
4.	Understand related theories and concepts
5.	Use a professional and theoretical vocabulary to discuss films
6.	Sharpen critical thinking and enhance academic writing skills in film studies
7.	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

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Course Outline:

Week 1: Introduction: Socialist Cinema as Propaganda and Art

Week 2: Entering Socialist Cinema

Week 3: The Collectivization of Film Industry in the Early 1950s

Week 4: Ethnic Minorities and Socialist Comedy

Week 5: Female Tractor Drivers and Socialist Modernity

Week 6: Women Directors and Female/Feminist Perspective

Week 7: Film Projection and Viewing

Week 8: The National Style of Animation in the Early 1960s

Week 9: At the Threshold of the Cultural Revolution

Week 10: Model Opera Works during the Cultural Revolution

Week 11: Animals and Animation during the Cultural Revolution

Week 12: The Soundscape of Socialist Cinema

Week 13: Film Internationalism & Final Project Presentations

Planned Assessment Tasks:

- Attendance: 5%
- Participation: 10%
- Reading Reports: 10%
- Presentation: 10%
- Leading Discussion: 10%
- Paper Proposal: 5%
- Final Paper: 50%

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Three Samples of 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.

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.