

HUMA 5300 Chinese Literary History Spring 2026

Instructor: Prof. Huan Jin

Class Time: Friday 12:00 p.m.–2:50 p.m.

Classroom: LSK1026

Course description:

This course aims at familiarizing students with the history of Chinese literature from literary, historical and theoretical perspectives. Emphasis is on the recent scholarship of major genres in Chinese literary history and their interactions in the context of cultural tradition.

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify, explain and use cultural concepts and literary theories.
2. Analyze significant literary phenomena and texts.
3. Analyze Chinese literature and culture in a global and cross-cultural comparative perspective based on the knowledge and skills of the Humanities from the program.
4. Conduct original cultural research and participate effectively in project teams using an enhanced knowledge of Chinese literature gained from the course.

Course requirement:

1. Attendance (10%)
2. Class participation (20%)
3. Weekly response (20%)
4. Tutorial presentation (25%)
5. Final project (25%)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Feb 6 WEEK 1 – The Beginning of Modern Chinese Literature?

Introduction + Historical Context

Wu Jianren, *Sea of Regret*

Feb 13 WEEK 2—Enlightening China

Lu Xun, “Diary of a Madman,” “Preface” in *Call to Arm*, “Medicine”

Yu Dafu, “Sinking”

Suggested Readings:

- T. Hsia, “Obsession with China: The Moral Burden of Modern Chinese Literature” (Appendix One), *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 3rd Edition, pp. 533-554.
- Leo Ou-fan Lee, “The Loner and the Crowd” (CH4), *Voice From the Iron House: A Study of Lu Xun*
- Kirk Denton, “The distant Shore: Nationalism in Yu Dafu’s ‘Sinking’”

Feb 20 WEEK 3– The Woman Problem

Lu Xun, “What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?” (1923)

Ding Ling, "Miss Sophie's Diary" (1927)
Ling Shuhua, "Embroidered Pillows," "Intoxicated"
Xu Dishan, "Big Sister Liu"

Suggest Readings:

- Tani Barlow, "Introduction," *I Myself Am a Woman: Selected Writings of Ding Ling*, eds. Tani Barlow and Gary J. Bjorge (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 1-45.
- Rey Chow, "Virtuous Transactions: A Reading of Three Stories by Ling Shuhua," *Modern Chinese Literature* 4(1/2) (Spring & Fall, 1988), pp. 71-86.
- Kristine Harris, "The New Woman Incident: Cinema, Scandal, and Spectacle in 1935 Shanghai," *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, ed. Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), pp. 277-302.

Feb 27 WEEK 4– Shanghai Modern

Mao Dun, *Midnight*, chapter 1
Mu Shiying, "Five in a Nightclub"

Suggest Readings:

- Andrew David Field, "Mu Shiying: An Appreciation of His Life, Times, and Work," *Mu Shiying: China's Lost Modernist* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), pp. xv-liv.
- Nicole Huang, "Eileen Chang and Narratives of Cities and Worlds," *The Columbia Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Kirk Denton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 217-224.
- Perry Link, "From Nation-building to Time-killing to Profit: The Early Stage in Modern Entertainment Fiction" *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 125-155.

Mar 6 WEEK 5– An Unlikely Lyricism vs. Socialist Realism

Mao Dun, "Spring Silkworms," Xiao Hong, "Hands"
Eileen Chang, "The Golden Cangue," "Sealed Off"
Recommended Viewing: [New Woman](#), dir. Cai Chusheng (1935) (Film)

Suggest Readings:

- David Wang, "Critical Realism: The Boundary of the Real in the Fiction of Shen Congwen," *Fictional Realism in Twentieth-Century China: Mao Dun, Lao She, Shen Congwen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 201-246.
- T. Hsia, "Mao Tun [Mao Dun]", *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 3rd Edition, pp. 140-164.
- Katherine Hui-Ling Chou, "1942: In War She Writes" *A New Literary History of Modern China*, ed. David Wang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 484-489.

Mar 13 WEEK 6– A Representation of Ordinary Lives in Mao's China

Screening in class: *To Live*, dir. Zhang Yimou, 1994
Shen Congwen, *Border Town*, "Xiaoxiao" "The Husband"

Mar 20 WEEK 7 – A Literature for the People

Mao Zedong, “Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art”

Zhao Shuli, “Little Blackie Gets Married”

Ding Ling, “When I Was in Xia Village”

Suggested Readings:

- Qian Liqun, “The Cultural and Political Significance of Mao Zedong’s “Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art,” trans. Dylan Suher, *A New Literary History of Modern China*, ed. David Wang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 495-500.
- Hui Jiang, “The Genesis of Peasant Revolutionary Literature,” *A New Literary History of Modern China*, ed. David Wang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 500-506.
- Yi-tsi, Mei Feuerwerker, “Zhao Shuli: The ‘Making’ of a Model Peasant Writer,” *Ideology, Power, Text: Self-Representation and the Peasant “Other” in Modern Chinese Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 100-146.

Mar 27 WEEK 8 – Promises and Discontent in the Maoist Regime

Ding Ling, “Thoughts on March 8 (Women’s Day)”

Zong Pu, “Red Beans”

Suggested Readings:

- C. T. Hsia, “Residual Femininity: Women in Chinese Communist Fiction”
- Lai-fong Leung, “In Search of Love and Self: the Image of Young Female Intellectuals in post-Mao Women’s Fiction”
- Rudolf Wagner, “The Backdrop: Socialist Realism: ” *Inside a Service Trade: Studies in Contemporary Chinese Prose* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 11-16.

Apr 3– No Class Good Friday

Apr 10 WEEK 9– Revolutionary Melodrama

The Story of the Red Lantern (excerpts)

Theory of Three Prominences

Jiang Qing, “Revolutionary Opera”

Zhang Jie, “Love Must Not Be Forgotten”

Screening in class:

- Xie Jin, *Red Detachment of Women* (clips)
- Cheng Yin, *The Story of the Red Lantern* (clips)
- Michelangelo Antonioni, *Chung Kuo* (clips)

Suggested Readings:

- Di Bai, “The Cultural Revolution Model Theater,” *The Columbia Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Kirk Denton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 267-274.

- Barbara Mittler, “Eight Stage Works for 800 Million People*: The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in Music – A View from Revolutionary Opera,” *The Opera Quarterly* 26(2-3), 2010, pp. 377-401.
- Chris Berry, “Every Colour Red?: Colour in the Films of the Cultural Revolution Model Stage Works,” *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 6(3), 2012, 233-246.

Apr 17 WEEK 10–Cultural Revolution Nightmares

Acheng, *The King of Children*

Cui Jian, (music) “I have nothing,” “A Piece of Red Cloth” on YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8UPST1ZKSw&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYwsPt854Xo&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZnynRPYgYA&feature=related>

Yu Hua, “On the Road at Eighteen”, Mo Yan, “Iron Child”

Suggested Readings:

- Andrew Jones, “Avant-Garde Fiction in Post-Mao China,” *The Columbia Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Kirk Denton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 313-320.
- Andrew Jones, “Translator’s Postscript,” *The Past and the Punishments* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), pp. 263-273.
- Yomi Braester, “Mo Yan,” *The Columbia Companion to Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Kirk Denton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 307-313.

Apr 24 Week 11– Tutorial Presentation

May 1 WEEK 12 – No Class Labor Day

May 8 WEEK 13– Tutorial Presentation