

# HUMA 1210: Chinese Women on Screen

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**Teaching Assistant:** TBA  
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Office hours: by appointment only

**Time & Classroom:**  
Time: 1:30-4:20pm, Friday, Fall 2022  
Mixed Mode: in person (Room: LTH) & Zoom  
Video-recordings will be provided after class

**Required Readings:**

- All available online at “Modules,” Canvas

## Course Description:

This course examines Chinese women as both historical and fictional figures to unravel the convoluted relationship between history and visual representations. It follows a chronological order, beginning with women in Republican China and ending with contemporary female immigrants in the age of globalization. The changing images of women on screen go hand in hand with major cinematic movements in history, including the leftist turn in the 1930s, the rise of “Solitary Island” cinema in wartime Shanghai, socialist realism during the Seventeen Years (1949-1966), model opera film during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), post-1989 underground/independent filmmaking, and the globalization of cinema in contemporary China. Approaches of film analyses and gender/sexuality theories will be introduced throughout the course. All reading materials, lectures, classroom discussions, and exams are in English.

## Course Objectives:

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

- track the changing images of women in history
- track the changing images of women on screen
- summarize major cinematic movements in film history
- explore the nuanced relationship between women on and off screen (women as representations on film and women as real people in socio-historical context)
- sharpen critical thinking and use gender/sexuality theories to analyze women on screen

- analyze films with a professional film vocabulary

### **Assignments:**

- Watch all required films every week
- Read all required articles and/or book chapters every week
- Quiz about required films every week
- Film review
- Final paper

### **Grading Criteria:**

- Attendance: 15% or F
- Participation: 15%
- Weekly quiz: 15%
- A film review (200 words): 15%
- Final paper (800 words): 40%

### **Requirements for Papers:**

- Word file
- Use your name for the file name, capitalize your family name (MUI Ka Yee)
- Double spaced
- [Chicago Citation Style](#) (with footnotes and a bibliography)

### **Sample Papers:**

- Look for various sample film analyses in *Film Art: An Introduction*, edited by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, available at HKUST library
- “Frustrated Communication in *Ex Machina*’s Opening Sequence,” with comments, Purdue Online Writing Lab, [link](#)
- “The Killer Bean,” [link](#)
- “Alternative Vision and Alternative History: On the Child Image in 11 Flowers,” available at Modules, Canvas
- “From Local to Translocal: Story of McDull Series,” available at Modules, Canvas

### **Technical Issues:**

- **Reading Materials:** All available online at “Modules,” Canvas.
- **Audiovisual Materials:** Films for this course are available at the Library Circulation Counter on G/F. You can also find some films online through youtube and youku.
- **Discussions Forum:** Students can post questions and comments about the contents of this course for open discussion at “Discussions,” Canvas. The instructor will check the forum on a regular basis to address your postings. 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 the instructor. The instructor will reply to your emails within 48 hours. Please check your campus email account daily.

- **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 your attendance. If you forget to sign up an attendance, your TA will not make up for it. If you have to miss a class for a legitimate reason, please inform your TA at least three days in advance and present relevant documents to your TA within one week after the absence. Being 5 minutes late for class three times will be counted as one unexcused absence. Four or more unexcused absences will automatically lower your final grade to F.
- **No Make-up Papers** are allowed. The instructor will grant a make-up paper 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 your TA in advance if you believe you have a legitimate reason for a make-up paper. You are expected to present convincing documents to the TA. The make-up paper will be graded more strictly than the regular ones.
- **No Late Submission** will be accepted. Please be on time.
- **Preparation:** You are expected to be well prepared before each class begins. Please read related course materials and watch the required films of the week before you come to class. In this way, you can make the most of classroom discussions.
- **Electronic Devices:** Please turn off your cell phones in class. Laptops, iPad, and other electronic devices are allowed only for taking notes in class. Please do not use them to check emails and browse irrelevant websites. If a student is found violating the rules, it means 5 points off his/her final score.
- **Notification in Advance:** Always inform the instructor at least three days in advance for absence 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. You need to provide supporting documents.
- **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. Please provide supporting documents.
- **Academic Integrity:** Any academic dishonesty of any kind will be officially processed in accordance with the policies of the university.

## **Week 1 (Sept 2): Introduction: Chinese Women on and off Screen**

### Film Screening:

- *Chinese Women: The Great Step Forward—From Confucius to Mao* (Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 2001) (54 minutes)

### Readings:

- Tani Barlow, “Theorizing Woman: Funü, Guojia, Jiating (Chinese Women, Chinese State, Chinese Family),” *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, 173-196.
- Zhang Zhen, “Introduction,” *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema*, xiii-xxxiii

### References:

- David Bordwell and Kristine Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (10<sup>th</sup> edition), Part III Film Style 112-306 & Glossary 500-505
- “History of China,” MCLC Resource Center, <<http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/toc.html>>

## **Week 2 (Sept 9): Prostitutes and the Nation in Republican China**

### Film Screening:

- *The Goddess* (Wu Yonggang, 1934) Shanghai: Lianhua, 74 minutes
- *The Flowers of War* (Zhang Yimou, 2011). Recommended.

### Readings:

- Rey Chow, “Visuality, Modernity, and Primitive Passions,” *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, 4-26.
- Zhang Yingjing, “Prostitution and Urban Imagination: Negotiating the Public and the Private in Chinese Films of the 1930s,” in *Cinema and Urban Culture*, 160-182.
- Film Synopsis of *The Goddess*:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Goddess\\_%281934\\_film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Goddess_%281934_film%29)

## **Week 3 (Sept 16): Modern Girl and New Women in Republican China**

### Film Screening:

- *New Women* (Cai Chusheng, 1934) Shanghai: Lianhua, 114 minutes
- *Center Stage* (Stanley Kwan, 1992). Recommended.

### Readings:

- Sarah E. Stevens, “Figuring Modernity: The New Woman and the Modern Girl in Republican China,” *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (Autumn, 2003): 82-103.

- Kristine Harris, “The New Woman Incident: Cinema, Scandal, and Spectacle in 1935 Shanghai,” *Transnational Chinese Cinemas* (University of Hawaii press, Honolulu, 1997), 277-302.
- Laikwan Pang, “The Left-wing Cinema Movement,” *Building a New China in Cinema: The Chinese Left-Wing Cinema Movement, 1932-1937*, 37-72.
- Film Synopsis of *New Women*: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Women](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Women)
- Nora in *A Doll’s House* (Ibsen): [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Doll%27s\\_House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Doll%27s_House)

#### **Week 4 (Sept 23): Women, Wartime Nationalism, and Animation**

##### Film Screening:

- *Princess Iron Fan* (Wan Brothers, 1941) Shanghai: Xinhua/Lianhe Studio, 73 minutes
- *Havoc in Heaven* (Wan Laiming, 1961-1964). Recommended.
- *Mulan* (Disney, 1998). Recommended.

##### Readings:

- Daisy Yan Du, “Chapter One: A Wartime Romance: *Princess Iron Fan* and the Chinese Connection in Early Japanese Animation,” in *Animated Encounters: Transnational Movements of Chinese Animation*.
- Poshek Fu, “The Ambiguity of Entertainment: Chinese Cinema in Japanese-Occupied Shanghai, 1941-1945,” *Cinema Journal* No. 1 (Autumn 1997): 66-84.
- Hung Chang-tai, “Female Symbols of Resistance in Chinese Wartime Spoken Drama,” *Modern China* 15:2 (April 1989): 149-177.

##### References:

- *Journey to the West*: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journey\\_to\\_the\\_West](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journey_to_the_West)
- Film Synopsis of *Princess Iron Fan*: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess\\_Iron\\_Fan\\_%281941\\_film%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Iron_Fan_%281941_film%29)
- Hua Mulan: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hua\\_Mulan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hua_Mulan)

#### **Week 5 (Sept 30): Female Voices from the Ruins of War**

##### Film Screening:

- *Spring in a Small Town* (Fei Mu, 1948) Xi’an: Xi’an Studio, 91 minutes
- *Spring Cannot Be Locked* (Wang Weiyi, 1948). Recommended.
- *Dreaming to be Emperor* (puppet, Chen Bo’er, 1947). Recommended.

##### Readings:

- Mary Ann Doane, “The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space,” *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 33-50.

- Jie Li, “Home and Nation Amid the Rubble: Fei Mu’s Spring in a Small Town and Jia Zhangke’s Still Life,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 21 no. 2 (Fall 2009): 86-125.

### **Week 6 (Oct 7): Ethnic Girls and Socialist Comedy**

#### Film Screening:

- *Five Golden Flowers* (Wang Jiayi, 1959) Changchun: Changchun Film Studio, 90 minutes
- *From Mao Towards Full Equality* (Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 2001) (55 minutes)

#### 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.

### **Week 7 (Oct 14): Women and Machines: Tractor Girls and Socialist Modernity**

#### Film Screening:

- *Spark of Life* (Dong Fang, 1962) Xi’an: Xi’an Studio, 91 minutes

#### 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, “Female Icons, Feminist Iconography? Socialist Rhetoric and Women’s Agency in 1950s China,” *Gender & History* 15 (2), 2003: 268-95.
- 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.
- Film Synopsis of *Spark of Life* in PDF format

### **Week 8 (Oct 21): Masculinization of Women during the Cultural Revolution**

#### Film Screening:

- *Red Detachment of Women* (Fu Jie and Pan Wenzhan, 1971) Beijing: Beijing Studio, 100 minutes
- *Red Detachment of Women* (Xie Jin, 1961). Recommended.

Readings:

- Kristine Harris, "Re-makes/Re-models: The Red Detachment of Women between Stage and Screen," *Opera Quarterly* 26 (2010): 316-342.
- Paul Clark, "Introduction: A Revolution in Culture," *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History*, 1-9.
- Cultural Revolution: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\\_Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_Revolution)
- Film Synopsis of *Red Detachment of Women*  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red\\_Detachment\\_of\\_Women\\_%28ballet%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Detachment_of_Women_%28ballet%29)

**Week 9 (October 28): Midterm Break**

**Week 10 (Nov 4): Women Directors**

Film Screening:

- *Woman, Demon, Human* (Huang Shuqin, 1987) Shanghai: Shanghai Studio, 102 minutes
- *The Story of Liubao Village* (Wang Ping, 1957). Recommended.

Readings:

- Haiyan Lee, "*Woman, Demon, Human: The Spectral Journey Home*," *Chinese Films in Focus II*, edited by Chris Berry. 2nd edition, 243-249.
- Dai Jinhua, "Invisible Women: Contemporary Chinese Cinema and Women's Film," *Positions* 3:1 (Spring 1995): 255-280.
- Film Synopsis of *Woman, Demon, Human* in PDF format

**Week 11 (Nov 11): Gender, Forced Migration, and Independent Filmmaking**

Film Screening:

- *Bingai* (Feng Yan, 2007) 117 minutes
- *Bumming in Beijing: The Last Dreamers* (Wu Wenguang, 1990). Recommended.

Readings:

- Daisy Yan Du, "Documenting Three Gorges Migrants: Gendered Voices of Displacement and Citizenship in Rediscovering the Yangtze River and Bingai," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 38.1&2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 27-47.
- Paul Pickowicz, "Social and Political Dynamics of Underground Filmmaking in China," *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China*, 1-21.
- Three Gorges Dam: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three\\_Gorges\\_Dam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Gorges_Dam)

**Film Review: Queering Independent Cinema (due in class on Nov 18)**

- *Fish and Elephant* (Li Yu, 2001)

**Week 12 (Nov 18): Female Migrant Workers**

Film Screening:

- *Ermo* (Zhou Xiaowen, 1994) Shanghai: Shanghai Studio, 95 minutes

Readings:

- Judith Farquhar, “Technologies of Everyday Life: The Economy of Impotence in Reform China,” *Cultural Anthropology* 14:2 (May, 1999): 155-179.
- Janet Wolff, “On the Road Again: Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism,” *Cultural Studies* 7.2 (1993): 224–39.
- Film Synopsis: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ermo>

**Week 13 (Nov 25): Gender, Diaspora, and Transnational Feminism**

Film Screening:

- *Farewell China* (Clara Law, 1990) Hong Kong: Youhe Film, 111 minutes

Readings:

- Gina Marchetti, “Gender and Generation in Clara Law’s Migration Trilogy: Farewell China, Autumn Moon, and Floating Life,” *From Tiananmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens: 1989-1997*.
- Rosi Braidotti, “The Exile, the Nomad, and the Migrant: Reflections on International Feminism,” *Women's Studies International Forum* 15 (1992): 7–10.

**Week 14 (Dec 2): Anna May Wong: Chinese Women on Hollywood Screen (Zoom Lecture by Professor Yiman Wang), 9am-10:30am**

**Final Paper due: before 6pm on Dec 9**