

WOODSWORTH COLLEGE
University of Toronto
Summer 2018 Program at the University of Hong Kong,
June 11 – July 5, 2018

CIN 376Y0 - Chinese Cinemas

Instructor: Bart Testa bart.testa@utoronto.ca

Times: Monday – Thursdays 9:15Am to 1:15PM

Course Description

This course examines Chinese films in their main three production centres: Hong Kong and The People's Republic of China and Taiwan. Chinese films share common cultural ground in the 1930s in Shanghai. As the war with Sino-Japanese War progressed, Chinese cinema fragmented. After 1949 and the establishment of the People's Republic, Mainland filmmaking fell under state control. Enjoying an infusion of capital and business acumen, Hong Kong cinema developed a vibrant industry with great export reach. Taiwan had a separate and slighter development under state control until the 1980s and the rise of the New Taiwanese Cinema.

This course will fix most attention on Chinese films produced since the 1980s, when the three centres of production experienced fresh developments simultaneously. It was then that Chinese films attracted much international interest and recognition.

The first section of the course will examine, first, the way Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan pursued a nostalgic "historiography" of the 1930s with two films: *Rouge* and *Centre Stage*, a biography of Ruan Lingyu, an important star in 1930s Shanghai. Kwan opened important questions about the family bloodlines between Shanghai and Hong Kong filmmaking.

The course then turns to Hong Kong action films, beginning with Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan; we then look back to the 1960s martial innovator King Hu before advancing to the later action auteurs, Tsui Hark, John Woo and Johnnie To.

The PRC's new cinema of the 1980s, which was called The Fifth Generation, was a self-conscious reaction to the preceding era in Mainland films. Before that, we look at an example of PRC filmmaking from the "17 Years" before the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), *Red Detachment of Women*. The Fifth Generation filmmakers re-ignited mainland cinema by focusing on China's rural past. The Fifth Generation was followed by a Sixth, which began as an independent "underground" and contrasting urban movement in the 1990s. This generation arose outside standard distribution circuits at the same time that mainstream Chinese cinema became much more commercialized and saw the production of the martial arts blockbuster *Hero*.

The Taiwanese film industry, tightly controlled by the KMT, fluctuated until it hit a major down turn at the start of the 1980s. In desperation, producers turned to young filmmakers, who became the nucleus of the short-lived New Taiwanese Cinema. It did not much affect the commercial fortunes of Taiwanese industry but gained unprecedented international recognition and influence in Asian filmmaking circles.

Recommended preparation for this course is an introductory film course. Ordinary prerequisites for the course will be waived.

Evaluation

Essays, two film analyses (20% each; 40% overall)

Tests (20% each, 40% overall).

Group seminar papers (10%). Note that all students will participate in group seminars.

Class participation (10%)

NB: attendance will take at each class. Attendance is required as per Study Abroad policy.

Lateness penalty for all written work is 5% per day.

All reading assignments for this course will be posted on Blackboard site for this course

NB: the instructor will be available after our classes for consultations on analysis papers by informal arrangement. Group seminar groups must meet with the instructor at least one day prior to group presentations.

COURSE TOPICAL OUTLINE

Introduction – short class

Section 1: Nostalgia, Memory, History

FILMS - *Rouge* (HK, 1988, dir. Stanley Kwan); *Centre Stage (aka Actress)* (HK, 1992; dir. Stanley Kwan); *The Goddess* (China, dir. Wu Yonggang, 1934).

Section 2: Hong King Means Action!

FILMS: *Fists of Fury* (HK, 1972, dir. Lo Wei); *Project A* (HK, 1983; dir. Jackie Chan); *Touch of Zen* (HK/Taiwan, 1971 dir. King Hu). Excerpts: *One-Armed Swordsman*; *Dirty Ho*; *Once Upon a Time in China* (HK, 1991, dir. Tsui Hark); *A Better Tomorrow* (HK, 1986, dir. John Woo); *PTU* (HK, 2003, Johnnie To).

Section 3: Mainland Chinese Cinema During and After Maoism: Fifth Generation

FILMS: *Red Detachment of Women* (1961; dir. Xie Jin); *Spring in a Small Town* (1948); *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (1970); *Yellow Earth* (PRC, 1984, dir. Chen Kaige); *Red Sorghum* (PRC, 1987, dir. Zhang Yimou); *Hero* (PRC, 2002, dir. Zhang Yimou); *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (HK/Taiwan/US, 2000, dir. Ang Lee). (*Sixth Generation*) *Still Life* (PRC, Zang Ke Jia, 2000). y

Section 4: Taiwan New Cinema

FILMS: *Time to Live, Time to Die* (Taiwan, 1984, Hou hsaio-hsien) *Good Men, Good Women* (Taiwan, dir. Hou hsaio-hsien, 1995); *Yi Yi* (Taiwan, dir. Edward Yang, 2000).