

CHIN 521 Syllabus (Spring 21)
What Does It Mean to Be Modern?
Lenses of Modern Chinese Literature and Film

Time & Location: TR 9:40-11:00, Murkland 203

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Office Hours: TR 11-12 & by appointment (zoom)

Course Description: What does it mean to be modern? For us who are used to calling ourselves the “moderns,” this question might bring to mind a host of familiar ideas and experiences we usually take for granted in our lives. To be modern, as the common wisdom goes, means to uphold the value of individual freedom, to embrace science and technology, to question religion and authority, to be adapted to change and movement, etc. Yet the familiar is not necessarily the most well understood. What are the philosophical and socio-political significances of the modern values of rationality and individual freedom? How does modern technology affect our life? What are the benefits and potentials we enjoy as moderns? What are the problems and crisis we are facing in the modern time? Is modernity a European invention that has been replicated in the rest part of the world, or is it a universal phenomenon with different local variations that are rooted in different local cultures?

This course proposes to explore the meaning of modernity through the lenses of 20th and 21st century Chinese literature and film. China of the past century provides us a remarkable case of study as it has experienced during this period an intense struggle between tradition and modernity, as well as many positive and the negative facets that are characteristic of the modern condition. Through the study of modern Chinese literature and film, we will discuss both the general intellectual, ethical, socio-political, and aesthetic issues that shape the global modernity, and the particular situations China faces as a non-Western culture with its own unique history.

Our discussion will be clustered around various themes central to the understanding of Chinese modernity, while also following approximately a chronological order. We will explore a wide range of short stories, novels, essays and films from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The major writers and filmmakers to be covered include Lu Xun, Xiao Hong, Fei Mu, Wang Anyi, Jia Zhangke, Hou Hsiao-hsien, and Wong Kar-wai. Readings are in English translation. Films are provided with English subtitles.

Reading/viewing, discussion, and writing will be three major components of the learning process for this course. Besides gaining in-depth knowledge of modern Chinese culture, students can also expect to develop critical skills of textual interpretation and analytical writing that are applicable to other areas of study. This course fulfills Discovery Humanities and Writing Intensive requirements.

Course Requirements and Grading Ratio:

1) Attendance (10%). Attendance is Mandatory. Each unexcused absence will result in 0.5 point deduction from your final grade. You will receive an F for more than 5 unexcused

absences. If, for some justifiable reason, you are unable to come to class on a certain day, you must inform me in advance, unless it is an emergency. Supporting documents (e.g., doctor's note) should be submitted timely in order for an absence to be excused. For missed classes, it is your responsibility to speak to your classmates or me about the material covered in class and any work assigned for the next class.

2) Class Participation (10%). You are expected to complete the reading or watch the film before coming to the class and to actively participate in class discussion. **Sitting in on classes does not constitute participation.** Your participation score is determined by your preparedness for class, as well as your willingness to participate in group and class discussions. Active participation includes asking thoughtful questions, volunteering answers, and an attitude that is respectful of fellow students and the topic being discussed.

3) Seven text summaries (10%; 150-200 words). Due every Monday midnight, except in weeks when there are other writing assignments. Your summary should provide a concise and logically coherent account of the main content of the text(s) to be discussed on **Tuesday**. This assignment is meant to keep you on board with the class, and should not require much extra efforts if you have completed the reading or watched the film.

I will not provide written comments on your summaries, unless they contain obvious or serious problems, or are exceptionally good. But our class discussions should help you grasp the merits and the weakness of your writings. If you would like to receive more feedback in person, please feel free to come to my office hours for a chat.

4) Three response papers (10%; 250-300 words). Critical analysis of designated readings or films (specific assignments are given below). These papers are meant to be low-stake exercises that prepare you to write midterm and final papers. Detailed comments will be given to help you improve your writing.

5) Midterm Paper (15%+20%; 1500-1800 words). Critical analysis of one or more texts discussed before its due date. You will also be given the opportunity to revise your paper in response to my comments on your first version. Both the first and the second versions of your paper will be graded.

Please note that your revision does not automatically earn you a higher grade. Substantial improvement is needed for you to increase your grade on your second version. You can opt not to do the revision; in this case your grade for the second version will remain the same as the first.

6) Final Paper (25%; 2000-2400 words). Critical analysis of one or more texts discussed after the midterm paper. The last class session will be held as a workshop during which you will work in small groups to provide comments and suggestions on each other's paper.

***All reading materials are uploaded on Canvas; the films are mostly available online.** You are strongly advised to print out the readings and bring hard copies to class.

***All writing assignments are due on Canvas.** I will propose a few possible paper topics for both the midterm and the final papers, but you are also encouraged to develop your own. In the latter case, you are advised to consult with me on the topic before writing the paper.

*** General Guideline for the Papers**

The papers are expected to be *critical analysis* of selected text(s), rather than merely summary of their main ideas or plots, nor your own opinion of the issues presented in the text(s). Your paper should provide a valid, in-depth and clearly articulated argument, supported with sufficient and logically coherent textual analysis. It should also be well-structured and conform to the academic writing style.

Your paper will be evaluated on **4 basic elements: thesis, analysis, structure, and style.** Please use the following questions as a guideline while writing your own paper or evaluating your peer's work:

1. Is there a central thesis (argument, point, etc.) to the paper? Is the thesis valid and faithful to the work under discussion? Does the thesis provide critical insight (i.e., not just stating the obvious) on a significant aspect of the work? Is the thesis clearly and succinctly articulated in the introductory and concluding paragraph of the paper? Is the central thesis broken down into well-developed sub-arguments? (30%)

2. Are the central thesis and the sub-arguments supported by sufficient textual analysis? Do the specific examples (e.g., quotes, paraphrases, summary, etc.) cited from the text fit well with the argument they are supposed to illustrate? Are these examples analyzed in such a way that one can easily grasp what is at stake? (40%)

3. Is the structure of the paper clear? Are the ideas developed in different paragraphs connected in a logically coherent manner? Is there a smooth transition from one idea to another? (20%)

4. Is the writing easily comprehensible? Are there grammatical errors (e.g., sentence structure, subject/verb agreement, etc.)? Are there spelling and punctuation errors? Is the choice of words precise and appropriate for the academic style? Does the citation follow a correct format (e.g., Chicago style, MLA style, etc.)? (10%)

* You are strongly advised to use the free service provided by the UNH Writing Center to improve your writing. More information can be found at <https://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc/>.

Policies/ Statements

***In-class Technology Policy:**

Students must receive the instructor's approval before using any electronic devices in class, including but not limited to cell-phones, smart phones, tablet devices, and laptop computers. This is a small class and your full attention and participation are critical to doing well in class activities. Unauthorized use of electronic devices in class will result in being counted as "unexcused absence" for that day.

***Academic Honesty**

Please note the University has no tolerance for students who break the University Academic Honesty Policy. Please see the Students Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities Handbook for full description.

*** Disability Services for Students**

The University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities equal access to all university programs and facilities. If you think you have a disability requiring accommodations, you must register with Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you have questions about the process, please contact DSS at (603) 862-2607 or disability.office@unh.edu. If you are registered with DSS, and eligible for accommodations that you would like to utilize in this course, please forward that information to me in a timely manner so that we can meet privately in my office to review those accommodations.

***Emotional/Mental Health**

Your academic success in this course is very important to me. If during the semester, you find emotional or mental health issues are affecting that success, please contact the University's Counseling Center (3rd floor Smith Hall: 603-862-2090/TTY:7-1-1) which provides counseling appointments and other mental health services.

***Classroom Behavior**

To insure a climate of learning for all, disruptive or inappropriate behavior (repeated outbursts, disrespect for the ideas of others, etc.) may result in exclusion (removal) from this class. As a reminder, the use of cell phone/pda, etc. including text messaging, is not permitted in this class by Faculty Senate rule unless by instructor permission.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS/ ASSIGNMENTS:

Week 1. Introduction: Enlightenment and Chinese Modernity

Feb-2. Course overview

Feb-4. Lu Xun. "A Madman's Diary," "More Thoughts on the Collapse of Leifeng Pagoda," "Thoughts before the Mirrors"

Week 2. Life and the Power of Self-transcendence

Feb-9. Lu Xun. "The True Story of Ah Q," "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home"

***1st Response Paper due on Monday midnight: Please make a critical analyses of Ah Q's "spiritual victory." Make sure to use specific examples from the story to support your argument.**

Feb-11. Lu Xun. "The Shadow's Leave-taking," "The Beggar," "Hope," "Tremors of the Dilapidated Line," "Mending the Sky"

Week 3. The Individual and the Collective: Choices of the Intellectuals

Feb-16. Ding Ling. "Miss Sophia's Diary," "Shanghai, Spring 1930" (Part I)

Feb-18. Qu Qiubai, "Superfluous Words"

Week 4. The Individual and the Collective: Tales of Common Folks

Feb. 12. Lao She. *Richshaw Boy*, 1-108

Feb. 14. Film: Yuan Muzhi. *Street Angel* (1937)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dax8EnfuUg>

Week 5. The Lifeworld of A Traditional Community

Feb-23. Xiao Hong. *Tales of Hulan River*, 1-127

Feb-25. Xiao Hong. *Tales of Hulan River*, 128-237
***2nd Response Paper due on Wednesday midnight: Please discuss one major trait of the traditional community portrayed in the novel. Make sure to use specific examples from the novel to support your argument.**

Week 6. Distanced Views of Modernity

March-2. Shen Congwen. *Border Town*

March-4. Eileen Chang. "Love in a Fallen City"

Week 7. Reviving Traditional Values In a Modern Era

March-9. Film: Fei Mu. *Spring in a Small Town* (1948)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt5d-hqYmkw>

March-11. Film: Wang Jiayi. *Five Golden Flowers* (1959)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntx_EcTnzmg

***March 14th midnight: Midterm Paper (1st version) due.**

Week 8. Two Faces of the New Women

March-16. Film: Xie Jin. *The Red Detachment Of Women* (1960)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0PM9d18e9o&frags=pl%2Cwn>

March-18. Film: Yi Wen. *Air Hostess* (1959)
DVD or online source to be provided later

Week 9. Remembrance, Nostalgia and Melancholy

March-23. Pai Hsien-yung. "Wandering in the Garden, Waking from a Dream,"
"Winter Night"

March-25. Film: Hou Hsiao-hsien. *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* (1985)
(Available to rent on Amazon, free for prime membership)

Week 10. Cultural Roots and Magical Realism

March-30. Film: Chen Kaige. *Yellow Earth* (1984)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEqfyZGYVrM>

***3rd Response Paper due On Monday midnight: Please make an interpretation of the ending of the film in the context of the film as a whole.**

April-1. Mo Yan. *Red Sorghum: A Novel of China*, 1-81

Week 11. Cosmopolitan Imagination and a Changing Social Dynamic

April-6. Wang Anyi. *I Love Bill*, 1-38 (...to France)

April-8. Wang Anyi. *I Love Bill*, 38-79 (By now...)

***April 11th midnight: Midterm Paper (2nd version) due.**

Week 12. Rebel Without a Cause

April-13. Film: Jiang Wen. *In the Heat of the Sun* (1994)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsY7NmNeECo&list=PLVASq-H1JTWtzDc-T7MKZQ0JsuaYqA_pN

April-15. Film: Tsai Ming-liang. *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992)

<https://unh.kanopy.com/video/rebels-neon-god>

Week 13. Weariness and Desire in Everyday life

April-20. Film: Jia Zhangke. *Platform* (2000)

DVD reserved at UNH library: PN1997.Z487

April-22. Film: Wong Kar-wai. *In the Mood for Love* 花样年华 (2000)

<https://unh.kanopy.com/video/mood-love>

Week 14. Dreamscapes of the Wasteland

April-27. Film: Han Jie. *Hello, Mr. Tree!* (2011)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxyZ4MnomTo>

April-29. Film: Jia Zhangke. *A Touch of Sin* (2013)

<https://unh.kanopystreaming.com/video/touch-sin>

Week 15. Wrap-up and Final Paper Workshop

May-4. Wrap-up and open discussion

May-6. Final paper workshop

***May 16th midnight: Final Paper due on Canvas.**