HUMA 6001X: Socialist Film Culture

Instructor: Daisy Yan Du
Associate Professor
Division of Humanities
Office: Room 2369, Academic Bldg
Office phone: (852) 2358-7792
E-mail: daisyyandu@ust.hk
Office hours: by appointment only

Time & Classroom:
Time: 3:00-5:50pm, Thursday, Fall 2021
Mixed Mode: in person (Room LTH) & Zoom
No video recordings will be provided.

Required Textbooks:
• All available online at “Modules,” Canvas

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:
By the end of the semester students should be able to:
• track the development of socialist cinema under Mao
• be familiar with major film directors, their representative work, and the socio-historical context in which they emerged
• analyze particular films (identify their directors, analyze their aesthetics, filming technology/techniques, visual and auditory styles, and socio-historical condition)
• understand related theories and concepts
• use a professional and theoretical vocabulary to discuss films
• sharpen critical thinking and enhance academic writing skills in film studies
• 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

Assignments for MPhil and PhD Students:
- Watch all required films and finish all required readings every week
- At least one formal presentation (around 15 minutes)
- At least one leading discussion (around 15 minutes)
- Presentation of final research project (5 minutes)
- A research proposal (around 2 pages, double spaced)
- A final paper (around 15 pages, double spaced)

Assignments for MA Students:
- Watch one film (feature length) and read two self-selected articles every week
- One formal presentation (around 15 minutes)
- One leading discussion (around 15 minutes)
- Presentation of final research project (5 minutes)
- A research proposal (around 2 pages, double spaced)

Due Dates:
- 3-6pm, November 11, Research Proposal (mailbox, general office)
- 3-6pm, November 25 (last class), presentation of final research project
- 3-6pm, Dec 16, final paper due (mailbox, general office)

Grading Criteria:
- Attendance: 10% or F
- Participation: 10% (15% for MA students)
- Presentation: 10% (15% for MA students)
- Leading Discussion: 10% (15% for MA students)
- Research Proposal: 20% (45% for MA students)
- Final Paper: 40%

Technical Issues:
- Reading Materials: available online at “Modules,” Canvas.
- Audiovisual Materials: Films for this course are available at the Reserve counter in the library. You can also find some films online through youtube and youku.
- Lecture Notes: Lecture notes will NOT be uploaded online because graduate students are expected to attend classes and take notes. Other course materials, if any, will be uploaded to “Modules,” Canvas.
- Discussion Forum: Students can post questions/comments/concerns about this course for open discussion. The instructor will check the forum on a regular basis to address your postings if necessary. 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 your instructor. The instructor will reply your emails within
48 hours. Please check your campus email account on a daily basis.

- **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 attendance. If you forget to sign up an attendance, the instructor will not make up for it. If you have to miss a class for a legitimate reason, please inform your instructor at least one day in advance and present relevant documents to the instructor within one week after the absence. Being 5 minutes late for class three times will be counted as one unexcused absence.

- **No Late or Incomplete Assignments** are allowed. The instructor will grant an extension or incomplete 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 the instructor in advance if you believe you have a legitimate reason for late or incomplete assignments. You are expected to present convincing documents to the instructor.

- **Preparation:** You are expected to be well prepared before each class begins. Please read all assigned course materials and watch the required films of the week before you come to class. In this way, you can better follow the instructor’s lectures and make the most of classroom discussions with your classmates. Your diligent preparation is crucial for the success of this course.

- **Electronic Devices:** Please turn off your cell phones in class. Laptops and other electronic devices are allowed only for learning purposes.

- **Notification in Advance:** Always inform the instructor at least one day in advance for absences 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. Supporting documents are needed.

- **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. Supporting documents are needed.

- **Academic Integrity:** Any academic dishonesty of any kind will be officially processed in accordance with the policies of the university.
Week 1 (September 2): Introduction: Socialist Cinema as Propaganda and Art

Film Screening in Class:
- *Birth of New China* (Li Qiankuan and Xiao Guiyun, 1989) Recommended

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:
- David Bordwell and Kristine Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (10th edition), Part III Film Style 112-306 & Glossary 500-505

Week 2 (September 9): Socialist Cinema at the Threshold of 1949

Film Screening in Class:
- *Crows and Sparrows* (Zheng Junli, 1949)
- *The Wandering Life of Sanmao* (Zhao Ming and Yan Gong, 1949)

Required Readings:

Week 3 (September 16): The Collectivization of Film Industry in the Early 1950s

Film Screening in Class:
- *This Life of Mine* (Shi Hui, 1950)

Required Readings:

Week 4 (September 23): Ethnic Minorities and Socialist Comedy
Film Screening in Class:

- *Five Golden Flowers* (Wang Jiayi, 1959)

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


**Week 5 (Sept 30): Female Tractor Drivers and Socialist Modernity**

Film Screening in Class:

- *The Spark of Life* (Dong Fang, 1962)
- *Female Train Drivers* (Xian Qun, 1950)

Required Readings:


**Week 6 (October 7): Women Directors and Female/Feminist Perspective**

Film Screening in Class:

- *The Story of Liubao Village* (Wang Ping, 1957)
- *Small Grass Grows on the Kunlun Mountain* (Dong Kena, 1962)
• *Dreaming to be Emperor* (Chen Bo’er, 1947)

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 7 (October 14): No Class (Chung Yeung Festival)**

**Week 8 (October 21): Film Projection and Viewing**

**Film Screening in Class:**

- *Li Shuangshuang* (1962)

**Required Readings:**

- Jie Li, “Cinematic Guerrillas in Mao’s China,” *Screen* (Summer 2020).

**Week 9 (October 28): The National Style of Animation in the Early 1960s**

**Film Screening in Class:**
- *The Conceited General* (1956)
- *Little Tadpoles Look for Mama* (1960)
- *The Herd Boy’s Flute* (1963)
- *Uproar in Heaven* (1960-1964)

**Required Readings:**

**Week 10 (November 4): On the Eve of the Cultural Revolution**

**Film Screening in Class:**
- *Early Spring in February* (Xie Tieli, 1964)

**Required Readings:**
- Paul Clark, “Beyond Shanghai” and “Film Genres, 1956-1964” in *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*
- Ban Wang, “Desire and Pleasure in Revolutionary Cinema,” *The Sublime Figure of History*, 123-154.

**Week 11 (November 11): Model Opera Works during the Cultural Revolution**
Film Screening in Class:
- *Red Detachment of Women* (1971)
- *Red Detachment of Women* (Xie Jin, 1961)
- *Morning Sun* (Carma Hinton, 2003)

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Week 12 (November 18): Animals and Animation during the Cultural Revolution

Film Screening in Class:
- *Heroic Little Sisters of the Grassland* (1965)
- *The Little Trumpeter* (1973)
- *Little Sentinels of the East Sea* (1973)
- *One Night at the Art Studio* (1978)
- *The Fox Hunts the Hunter* (1978)

Required Readings:
- Ann Anagnost, “Children and National Transcendence in China,” *Constructing China*:
The Interaction of Culture and Economics, 195-222.


Week 13 (November 25): The Soundscape of Socialist Cinema & Final Project Presentations

Film Screening in Class:
• Nie’er (Zheng Junli, 1959)
• Sparkling Red Stars (Shanshan de hongxing, 1974)

Required Readings:

Week 14 (December 2): Self-Study: Film Internationalism

Film Screening in Class:
• Tractor Drivers (Soviet, 1939)
• The Cranes are Flying (Soviet, 1957)
• The Red Shoes (UK, 1948) (internal reference & passerby films, 1970)

Required Readings: