



**BEIJ FSCF360 Contemporary China through Film: Space, Memory,  
and the Future of China Nostalgia: Discovering China through Movies  
The Alliance for Global Education China Now: Development, Politics  
and Social Change Program**

*Professor Teng Jimeng*

**Course Description**

The course will give an overview of major films produced in mainland China since 1949. We will examine the genres of Chinese film better known in contemporary China, and consider them a major source of reflection upon, and critique of contemporary Chinese society. The focus will be on the fifth-generation mainland cinema—as well as some films from the 1950s and 1970s, and most important of all, some classics directed by the new generation of filmmakers of the 1990s, normally grouped under the rubric of the sixth-generation directors.

All films chosen for the course will help inform our understanding of modern China in terms of its material conditions and ideology. Furthermore, the narrative structures and cinematic images celebrate the changes and convey the anxieties associated with it. (3 credits)

**Method of Presentation**

Three-hour classes once a week. Lectures with discussion. Film clips will be shown in class. Screening of full-length films in class.

**Required Work and Form of Assessment**

Students must attend all classes and screenings and read all of the mandatory reading material. Two quizzes and a mid-term exam will be based on this material, and failing in the quizzes/exam is tantamount to failing the course. Each student will write one term paper (length and topics to be announced), which should be well-written, well-researched, use supplementary reading material, and show originality. Written work will make up 80% of the final mark: two quizzes 30%, and mid-term 20%, term paper 30%; class participation 20%.

**Week One**

**Chinese Cinemas: An Introduction**

**Readings:** *Sheldon Lu, Historical Introduction: Chinese Cinemas (1896-1996) and Transnational Film Studies. Zhang, Generation Politics: What is the Fifth Generation?*

Film Clips shown in class: From Silent Films to Modern Films

In Class Screening: *One Hundred Year Chinese Cinema: Back to the Future*

Week Two

**Controlling the Spectacle: Chinese Cinema during the First Seventeen Years (1949-1966)**

**In-class screening:** *Lei Feng / The Pine Ridge Village* (clips)

**Issue:** The Good Old Days of Socialist Altruism

**Reading:** Mao, *Learn from Comrade Lei Feng, Serve the People Wholeheartedly:*

Clark, *Two Hundred Flowers on China's Screens* \*\*

Week Three

**Out of the Darkness of History: The Xie Jin Approach**

**In-class screening:** Xie Jin, *Hibiscus Town*

**Issue:** The Legacy of the First Seventeen Years

**Reading:** *The Force of Labels: Melodrama in the Post-modern Era* (Silbergeld: China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema)

**Supplementary reading:** *Spatiality and Subjectivity in Xie Jin's Film Melodrama of the New Period* (Ma Ning, in Browne: Chinese New Cinema. ed.)

Week Four

**The Dry Well Lane: Socialism Revisited by the Fifth Generation**

**In-class screening:** *The Blue Kite* Tian Zhuang-zhuang,

**Issues:** The Anti-Rightist Movement and the control of ideology during the Cultural Revolution.

**Reading:** Wang, "*Trauma and History in Chinese Cinema*"

Week Five

**Peking Opera: Arts for a Cause**

**In-class screening:** *Farewell, My Concubine* (Chen Kaige)

**Issue:** A national saga and a denunciation of the Cultural Revolution

**Reading:** *A Farewell to Arts: Allegory Goes to the Movies*

**Supplementary reading:** Pang, "*From Gender to Nation: Farewell My Concubine*"

**Reading:** Lu, *National Cinema, Cultural Critique, Transnational Capital: The Films of Zhang Yimou*

Week Six

**Revolutionary Romanticism on the Silver Screen**

**In-class screening:** Zhao Ming: *Railroad Guerilla*

**Issue:** Revolutionary Heroism in Time of Peace:

**Reading:** Hong, *The Evolutions of China's War Movies in Five Decades: Factors Contributing to Changes, Limits and Implications*

### Week Seven

#### **Disruption of the Official Narrative of Socialism: the Fifth Generation as the Chinese New Wave**

**In-class screening:** *Yellow Earth* (Chen Kaige)

**Issue:** The Making of the Fifth Generation and Chinese Movies Go Global.

**Readings:** Yau, *Yellow Earth: Western Analysis and a Non-Western Text*

**Supplementary reading:** Xie, "*My View of the Concept of Film*"; Zhang and Lee, "*The Modernization of Film Language*"

### Week Eight

#### **Postsocialism as Theatre of the Absurd**

**In-class screening:** *Black Cannon Incident* (Huan Jianxin)

**Issue:** Early Moment in the Era of Reform

**Reading:** Pickowicz, *Huang Jianxin and the Notion of Postsocialism*

**Supplementary reading:** The Children of Melodrama: Non-drama, Pseudo-drama, Melodramatic Masquerade and Deconstruction Drama

### Week Nine

#### **Chinese Movie Goes Underground: the Official beginning of the Sixth Generation**

**In-class screening:** Zhang Yuan, *Beijing Bastards*,

**Issue:** *Chinese cityscape: Rock music and the revolution that rages against the machine*

**Reading:** Harry Kuoshu, *Beijing Bastards, the Sixth Generation Directors, and 'Generation-X' in China.*"

**Supplementary reading:** Andrew Jones, *The Politics of Popular Music in Post-Tiananmen China*

Marie, "Zhang Yuan, the Enfant Terrible of Chinese Cinema";

### Week Ten

#### **A Journey across the Postsocialist Ruins: Jia Zhangke and the Rise of the "On Location"**

**Issues:** Marginalization and Street Realism

**In Class Screening:** *Xiao Wu, the Pickpocket* (Jia Zhangke)

**Readings:** Lin, Jia Zhangke's Cinematic Trilogy: A Journey across the Ruins of Post-Mao China, Zhang: "*Building on the Ruins: The Exploration of the New Urban Cinema of the 1990s*"

**Supplementary Readings & Screenings:** Wang: *Realist History in an age of Simulacra*; Jia: *Platform, Unknown Pleasure, Still Life* (All films are available at the IES library on DVD format.)

### Week Eleven

#### **The Power of Shower: Chinese Film Goes Commercial**

**In-class screening:** *Shower* (Zhang Yang)  
**Issue:** Demolishing Beijing: A City with a Face  
**Reading:** Zha: Beijing: A City Without Walls  
**Supplementary Readings:** *An Interview with Zhang Yang on Shower*

### Week Twelve

**My Camera Doesn't Lie: Coming of Age of the Sixth Generation**

**In-class screening:** *Su Zhou River/Summer Palace*

Issue: "*Tracing the City's Scars: Demolition and the Documentary Impulse in the New Urban Cinema*"

**Reading: Wang:** Realist History in An Age of Simulacra; **Shi:** Beyond the National: Transnational Urban Images in China's New Generation Films

**Supplementary reading:** Zhang: "*Building on the Ruins: The Exploration of the New Urban Cinema of the 1990s*"

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