

## CHIN 3271: Topics in Chinese Literature

### Course Description:

The rise of China has impacted world politics and economy in significant ways. How did it happen? This course introduces major topics in modern and contemporary Chinese literature and explores important social and political issues in Chinese modernity and postmodernity. Readings include fiction, poetry, prose, autobiographical writing, film and scholarships. Our goal is to develop critical reading skills and gain in-depth understanding of modern China and its engagement with the modern world beyond the Cold War rhetoric. Topics of discussion include historical rupture, loss and melancholy, exile, freedom, migration, social bonding and identity, capitalism, nationalism, and the world revolution. All films are in Chinese with English subtitles. Taught in English.

### Required Textbooks:

Bei Dao. *Blue House*

Can Xue. *Dialogues in Paradise*

Han Shaogong. *A Dictionary of Maqiao*

Hsiao Qian. *Traveller Without a Map*

Yu Hua, *The Past and Punishments*

All other readings will be downloaded from the library reserve.

The textbooks could be purchased at UConn Co-Op Bookstore.

### Requirements:

1. Make sure to preview the course materials before the class.
2. Course materials are subjected to change. Please pay attention to the announcements at the end of each class for the next week's materials.
3. Presentation: Each student will have the opportunity to present on the course materials at least once during the semester.
4. Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion; presence at film screenings is obligatory.
5. Cell phones or laptops in class are not allowed except for taking notes.
6. Homework must be turned in on the due date. Late homework is not accepted unless accompanied with a doctor's or academic advisor's note.
7. No make-up quizzes or exams unless a doctor's or academic advisor's note is provided.

**Weekly Responses:** You may write down one "quote" from the texts that we are going to discuss this week in class either Tuesday or Thursday. The quote does not need to be exact quotations. It could be your summery of a point by the author. Follow the quote with one corresponding "note": Why do you think it struck you? Is it confusing, inspiring, controversial or else? What do you think it means? You can write about this in terms of thoughts and ideas (related to either this or other courses), or to things you read,

or events in your life (or all of the above). Simple comments don't count unless followed with substantial elaborations. Please note: the "quote" does not count toward the word limit. The note where you elaborate on your analysis, interpretation or questions, should be about **300 words** long.

**Participation:** you are strongly encouraged to respond to your classmates' post on the online group discussion forum or participate in classroom discussions. On-line and in-class comments will count towards your participation grade. You earn one point for each comment and 20 points maximum for the semester. You have about **one week** to post your comments on each week's weekly responses. You may start posting comments as soon as someone posts their responses under the weekly topic. No posts will be accepted on online after Sunday Midnight time that week.

**Presentations:** During the first two weeks, each one will sign up for a date of your presentation. You may present on the texts or movies listed on the syllabus or choose materials not included in the syllabus but related to that week's class materials. You are strongly encouraged to discuss with the instructor about your presentation beforehand. Presentations will start from the third week at the beginning of each class. You are free to decide on the form of the presentation, but make sure your classmates could both enjoy and learn from it. For example, you may give your own analysis or interpretation, or summarize the main ideas of the article or chapter. Please do not repeat information easily accessible through a Google search or on Wikipedia. The presentations will be short (**10 minutes max**) with 5 minutes for Q & A. Please **practice, practice, and practice** before you present in class and make sure you finish presenting in 10 minutes.

**Final Exam / Project:** Final exam will be take-home short essay questions from lectures, discussions in class or online and course materials. Your notes will be very useful for the exam. Each answer should be about 250 words long excluding quotations. Your arguments or points should be well supported by textual evidence and your own analysis. Chinese majors are encouraged to answer some questions in Chinese.

To earn extra credits for the final, you also have the option of doing an individual or group video project exploring some issues we have discussed this semester. In addition to the video, you need to write a description of the issues you explore through the video (for example, what question(s) have lead you to this topic, what materials we have covered helped you thinking through the questions and how, and what conclusions you have reached or what further questions you want to raise.) Please make sure to send me the description before making the video so I could help you make necessary adjustments and corrections. Chinese majors should use Chinese in the video.

## **Grading:**

- Class participation: 20%
- Weekly Response Papers: 40%
- Presentation: 10%
- Final Exam: 30%
- Final Project (Optional): 10%

**Grading Scale:**

A = 95-100    A- = 90-94    B+ = 87-89    B = 84-86    B- = 80-83  
C+ = 77-79    C = 74-76    C- = 70-73    D+ = 67-69    D = 64-66    D- = 60-63  
F = anything below 60

## Course Schedule:

WEEK 1 Introduction: Bringing the World Home  
Bei Dao and Allen Ginsberg in *Blue House*

### Part One: The Transnational Imagination

WEEK 2: National Character and the Chinese-Japanese Dimension  
• Lu Xun, "Preface to Call to Arms," "The True Story of Ah Q."  
Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice*, chapter one.

WEEK 3: Local and Global  
• Han Shaogong, *Dictionary of Maqiao*  
• Xu Bing, Book from the Sky and New English Calligraphy at [www.xubing.com](http://www.xubing.com)

WEEK 4: Time, Revolution, and Cosmopolitanism  
• Hsiao Ch'ien, Traveller Without a Map

### Part Two: The City and the Country

WEEK 5: Labor and Masculinity  
• Lao She, Rickshaw  
Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice*, chapters 4

WEEK 6: Transpacific Crossings and the Politics of Literature  
• Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth*, selected chapters  
• Hua-ling Nieh, *Mulberry and Peach*, selected chapters

WEEK 7: Photography, Gender, and Shanghai's Cityscape  
• Wang Anyi, The Song of Everlasting Sorrow, Part One  
• Wong Kar-wai, *In the Mood for Love* (film screening to be arranged)

WEEK 8: Melancholy, Music, and Romantic Love  
• Eileen Chang, Love in a Fallen City; "Music" and other essays  
• Audio clip and film soundtrack  
• Andrew F. Jones, "The Orchestration of Chinese Musical Life" in *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age*

### Part Three: Politics and the Chinese Avant-garde

WEEK 9: Global Capitalism and the Chinese Revolution  
• Xu Bing, The Tobacco Project at [www.xubing.com](http://www.xubing.com)

- Sherman Cochran, *Big Business in China: Sino-Foreign Rivalry in the Cigarette Industry, 1890-1930*, chapter 1.

WEEK 10: Social Protest, Cultural Critique, and the Power of Language

- The poems of Bei Dao, Gu Cheng, Zhai Yongming
- Jiang Wen, *In the Heat of the Sun* (film screening to be arranged)

WEEK11: Documentary Filmmaking, Industrial Ruins and Post-Socialist Memory

- Can Xue, *Dialogues in Paradise*
- Wang Bin, *West of the Railway Tracks* (film screening to be arranged)

WEEK 12: Fantasy, Violence, and the Limits of Representation in Contemporary Chinese Fiction

- Yu Hua, *The Past and Punishments*

WEEK 13 Review and Discussion

WEEK 14: Final Project Presentation