Nation, Class, and the Body in 20th-Century Chinese Literature and Film

Time: M/W 01:10PM-02:30PM        Location: Fisk 314
Instructor: Shengqing Wu          Office: Fisk 307
Office Hour: M/W 2:30-4:00pm & by appointment
Email: swu03@wesleyan.edu          Phone No: 860-685-3389

Course description:
This course will explore the concepts of nation, class, and the body through the
examination of literary works and films from the early 20th century to contemporary
China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The critical questions addressed in the course include
how 20th-century Chinese literature and film represent the nation, national identity,
national trauma, and the national past; how class struggle is represented in or has
influenced literature and history; and how bodies are defined, exposed, commodified,
desired, or repressed in modern and postmodern contexts. Through critical essays that are
assigned in conjunction with the primary sources, students will be introduced to the key
concepts concerning aesthetics and politics and to the ways in which nationality, gender,
and other affiliations have been constructed in the Chinese cultural imaginary. While
primary attention will be paid to the modern and contemporary literary canons,
discussions of the films from different historical eras will also be included.

Screening Schedule
Time: Monday 6pm to 8pm. All the films are reserved at Language Lab at the second
floor in Fisk Hall.

Course Requirements:
All students must attend classes regularly and finish readings before class.
1. One 4-5 page paper. The topic discussed in the paper must relate to the course content.
The short paper will be due on 5pm March 9th (Friday) in my email box.
2. One take-home exam. The essay questions will be announced on April 11th and the
exam (3-4 pages) will be due on April 16th in class.
3. Final paper. Students are asked to write an 8-10-page paper. The final paper will be
due @12pm, May, 17th.
4. One page short writing assignments. Students will be asked to write 5 one page short
papers throughout the semester. The one-page assignments will not be graded. You will
get credit as long as you turn in your assignment on time. The response paper is due at
7pm every other Sunday night.
5. Students will be asked to give one or two oral presentation on the reading materials.
The oral presentation will not be graded.

Grading and Evaluation:
Attendance, class participation, presentation, pop quizzes, and short assignments: 30%
Short paper: 20%
Take-home exam: 20%
Final paper: 30%

**Required Texts:**
1. Course Reader The course reader is available for purchasing at www.pipmid.com 179 Main St 100 Plaza Middlesex, Middletown
2. *The Rice Sprout Song* by Eileen Chang (Wes Bookstore, 45 Broad Street)
3. *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* by Yu Hua (Wes Bookstore)
4. online readings (moodle course website)

**Suggested Background Readings:**
Sue Williams dir., *China: A Century of Revolution* (1997, an excellent documentary film, 6 hours) (Reserved at Language LAB).

**Course Schedule and Readings:**

**WEEK 1**
1/30  Introduction to the key concepts: Nation, Class and the Body

2/1  Sex, Racism and Nationalism
Readings: Yu Dafu, “Sinking” (handout)

**WEEK 2**
2/6  Nationalism, Gender and Canons: Lu Xun and his works
Kirk Denton: Lu Xun’s Biography  http://mclc.osu.edu/rc/bios/lxbio.htm

**Screening:** *Once Upon A Time in China*, dir. Hark Tsui, 99 min, 1991.

2/8  Negotiating Nationalism and Modernity: HK Action Film

**WEEK 3**
2/13  Nation and Women’s Issue

**Screening:** *Yellow Earth*, dir. Chen Kaige, 89 min, 1984.

2/15 Class, Gender and Revolution  
*Yellow Earth*, dir. Chen Kaige, 89 min, 1984.  

WEEK 4  
2/20 Sexuality and the Female Body  

**Screening:** *Raise the Red Lantern*, dir. by Zhang Yimou, 1991

2/22 Sexuality and the Female Body  
The comparative reading of the film and the novel  
Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (Course Website, OPTIONAL)

WEEK 5  
2/27 Women and the Issue of Modernity  
Reading: Mu Shiying, “The Shanghai Foxtrot,” *Modernism/Modernity* vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 797-807 (CR)  
Reading: Francesca Dal Lago, “Crossed Legs in 1930s Shanghai: How ‘Modern’ the Modern Women?”, *East Asian History* 19, 103-144. (course website)  

2/29 Nationalism, Betray and Female Body  

WEEK 6  
3/5 China’s Search for Roots  

**No Class on 3/7.** The paper due 3/9 in my email box.

WEEK 7  
3/26 The Maoist Revolution: Class Struggle, Gender, and the State

**Screening:** Opera: *The White-haired Girl*, Shanghai Film Academy, 1964 (OPTIONAL)

3/28 The Maoist Revolution: Class Struggle, Gender, and the State
Eileen Chang: The Rice Sprout Song (please finish the book)
Meng Yue: “Female Images and National Myth,” *Gender Politics in Modern China*, ed. Tani Barlow, Duke University Press, 1993, 118-136 (Course Website)

WEEK 8
4/2 Nostalgia for the Lost Nation: Taiwan & Nativist Movement

**Screening:** *In the Mood for Love*, dir. Wong Kar-wai, 2000.

4/4 Nostalgia for the Lost Nation: Hong Kong
Wong Kar-wai: *In the Mood for Love*
Reading: Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, bfi, 2005. (Course Website)
[http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/13/mood.html](http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/13/mood.html)

WEEK 9
4/9 Revolution, State and Family
Yu Hua, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* (1-145)

**Screening:** *To Live*, dir. Zhang Yimou, 1994.

4/11 Revolution, State and Family
Yu Hua, *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* (145-to the end)
The comparative reading of the film and the novel *To Live*

WEEK 10
4/16 Sexuality and Gender Identity

**The take-home exam is due on 4/16 in class.**

**Screening:** *Wedding Banquet*, dir. Ang Lee, 106 min, 1993.
4/18 Homosexuality and gender identity

WEEK 11
4/23 Youth, Urbanization and Taiwan Identity


4/25 Youths, Urbanization and Taiwan Identity

WEEK 12
4/30 Two Nations


5/2 Two Nations
Reading: Wendy Gan, chapters from *Fruit Chan’s Durian Durian* (course Website)

WEEK 13
5/7 Imagining the Future: Contemporary Science Fiction
Reading: Han Song, “The passengers and the Creator” (Course website)
Wang Jinkang, “The Regenerated Giant” (Course website)

5/9 Group discussion of the final paper topics
Schedule for Screening
Attendance is mandatory. 6pm to 8pm. Location will be announced later.


2/20: Raise the Red Lantern, dir. by Zhang Yimou, 1991

3/26: Opera: The White-haired Girl, Shanghai Film Academy, 1964 (optional)


