

## **EAST 211 Introduction to East Asian Culture: China**

### **General Information:**

Term and Year: Fall, 2024

Course pre-requisite(s): There are no pre-requisites for this course

Course Schedule: Tuesdays, Thursdays, 8:35-9:55 am.

Number of Credits: 3

### **Instructor Information:**

Name and Title: Gal Gvili, Associate Professor

Email: [gal.gvili@mcgill.ca](mailto:gal.gvili@mcgill.ca)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:35-3:35 pm; Thursdays: 9:55-10:55 am.

Office Location: 680 Sherbooke, Room 272.

### **Teaching Assistants:**

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Ziwei JIANG

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**Communication Plan:** Please email the teaching assistants with any question or issue regarding mycourses, or any technical or logistical concern. Please email the course instructor with any course content-related questions or clarifications. Please allow up to 48 hours to receive a response due to high volume of emails not including weekends. Please **do not** email us to let us know you will be absent from class. Such emails will not receive a response and we will not be keeping track of them.

**Course Overview:** This course provides a critical introduction to central themes in Chinese culture. The course will also examine the changing representations of the Chinese cultural tradition in the West. Readings will include original sources in translation from the fields of literature, philosophy, religion, and cultural history.

In this course, we will focus on different critical aspects of China's cultural history via particular objects or frames of thought in literature, cinema, craft, religion, philosophy, and medicine. This is not a comprehensive historical survey of China—those are offered in the history department. Nor is this a survey course covering all aspects of Chinese culture. In the short span of one semester, we cannot possibly cover the entire cultural history of China, which extends beyond 4500 years. What we can do and what we will aim to do is to examine expressions of historical moments in different time periods of Chinese history through culture. By the end of the semester, students will have read some key texts, discussed major issues, and hopefully, emerge with hunger for more knowledge that could be pursued in other courses offered in East Asian Studies. The course will be conducted in lecture form, with some class discussion and group work element.

**Learning Outcomes:** 1. Students who complete this course will become familiar with critical aspects of Chinese culture across different time periods, so that they will be able to participate with ease in China related upper-level courses at McGill. 2. Students who complete this course will become better critical readers and will develop preliminary skills of discussing primary texts within a historical context.

**Required Course Materials:** All readings are available Available on mycourses or as E-books in the library and there is no need to purchase any books.

**Attendance:**

Attendance in this class is mandatory. We will take attendance **eight** times during the semester. Students are allowed to be absent **once** during those eight times. Absence of more than once during the dates checked, **that is not backed up by medical documentation**, will result in 1% grade reduction of total grade for every missed session. As noted above please do not email us to inform us that you will be absent from class as notice will not count toward your grade.

There will be no recordings of the lectures made available. We encourage you to share notes with those who are absent and have created a discussion group on mycourses for anyone wishes to message their peers. The title of the discussion group is: “Open Discussion Regarding Note Sharing, Socializing, and anything that comes to mind!”

**Please turn on update alerts on your mycourses account as we often update the announcement section.**

**Assessment:**

ID Quiz, October 25 <sup>th</sup>	25%
Film Review, December 10 <sup>th</sup>	25%
Final Take Home, December 10 <sup>th</sup>	50%

**ID Quiz:**

The ID quiz, scheduled for October 25, will cover everything we learned until and including October 11. At the beginning of every class, the first slide will show a list of terms to study. For the ID quiz we will select 10 terms and you will need to ID them and write a short paragraph explaining them. Grading will be divided as such: 50%: correct identification of the term 50%: explanation of what the term is and what is its significance. We will discuss the terms and how to prepare and succeed in the exam during the first weeks of the semester.

**Film Review :**

Select **one** of the five films that we will discuss between and November 7 and November 28, and write a two-page (double space) review of the film. Your review should NOT summarize the plot of the film. Instead, raise two or three main points that the film makes—for example the representation of the Communist party in *Yellow Earth*, or the parents-children relationship in *Petition*—and discuss these issues in relation to what we learned in class. The goal of this task is to allow you to pick freely what YOU see as important in the filmographic text and present it in clear writing. You may consult the [Yale](#)

[Film Analysis](#) to learn how to do basic film analysis. We will conduct a tutorial for this assignment in class on **November 12**. We will also introduce and discuss this resource in class. Please submit your film reviews on the mycourses assignment section where we will post instructions and a grading rubric. **Submit by December 10 at 11 pm (with your final take home).**

### **Final Take Home:**

The final take home is a short paper consisting of two essay questions. For part 1: Student will choose one prompt of two options and write a response paper of 2-3 pages. For part 2: Student will choose one prompt of two options and write a response paper of 1-2 pages. There will be a review session where students can ask question. Prompts will be given to students on November 28<sup>th</sup>, and deadline is December 10 at 11 pm. Please submit your take-home final on the mycourses assignment section where we will post instructions and a grading rubric.

**\*\*In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of McGill University, assessment tasks in a course are subject to change, provided students are sent adequate and timely communications regarding the change\*\***

### **Late assignment policy:**

**No extensions will be given for assignments.** Late assignments are subject to a penalty of 3% per day, including weekends. No assignments are accepted after one week past the due date. Exceptions are only made in extraordinary circumstances (illness, family emergency), **if arrangements are made in advance of the due date**, and appropriate documentation (e.g., a medical note or a funeral notice) is provided to the instructor.

### **Requests for Reread:**

Appeals or requests for a re-read of written assignments, quizzes or final take-home must be made within 10 working days after the graded materials have been returned or otherwise made available for the students to view. Requests must be made according to the “Reread Policy of the Department of East Asian Studies” available on MyCourses in the content section.

### **Language of submission:**

“In accord with McGill University’s [Charter of Students’ Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.” (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009)

« Conformément à la [Charte des droits de l’étudiant](#) de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté, sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue. » (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 21 janvier 2009)

### **Academic integrity:**

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#)” (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003) (See [McGill’s guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

« L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le [Code de conduite de l'étudiant et procédures disciplinaires](#). » (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 29 janvier 2003) (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill](#)).

### **Statement on the Use of Generative AI tools:**

While we do not encourage it, students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids. **However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.** Students who choose to use generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the assignments in this course must document their use in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work. Any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool must be cited appropriately. Many organizations that publish standard citation formats are now providing information on citing generative AI (e.g., MLA: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>).

### **A note on Chinese names:**

Chinese names are preceded by the last name to be followed by a first name. As is customary in China, people are usually referred to by their full name especially in writing. Please make a note of this and avoid confusing first and last names. For example, the famous Tang poet Du Fu's last name is Du and first name is Fu. You should refer to him in your writing as Du Fu and not as "Du" or "Fu." The film director Chen Kaige's last name is Chen and first name is Kaige, but you should refer to him in writing as Chen Kaige.

### **Schedule:**

\*\* Please read the items in the order in which they appear each week (beginning with number 1, then moving to number 2, etc.). Readings **MUST** be done prior to each session. \*\*

### **Unit I: Introduction**

**Aug 29:** Introduction: Course requirements, schedule, requirements. The Sinosphere: geographic features, climate, environmental challenges, languages.

### **September 3: Peking Man**

#### **Read:**

Sigrid Schmalzer, *The People's Peking Man: Popular Science and Human Identity in Twentieth Century China*, introduction and chapter 1: pp. 1–54.

### **Unit II: From Ancient Civilization to the First Dynasty**

### **September 5: Was there a Xia Dynasty? Between Myth and History**

Read:

1. John E. Wills, Jr., Ch. 1 “Yu.” from *Mountain of Fame: Portraits in Chinese History*. 3- 10.
2. Liu Li and Xu Hong, “Rethinking Erlitou: Legend, History, and Chinese Archaeology,” *Antiquity* 8, 314 (2015): 886- 901

**September 10: Oracle Bones: The Beginning of Documentation**

Read:

*The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, vol. 1, “The Chinese Language and Writing System and Inscriptions on Oracle Bones and Bronze Artifacts” pp. 1-17

<https://www.cambridge-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/core/books/cambridge-history-of-chinese-literature/76F4628F8A769EEF2DF952B530ED0CEE>

Recommended

Kim Chew Ng, “Fish Bones” (2016) in *Slow Boat to China and Other Stories*, E book, pp. 97-120.

**September 12+17+19: In Search of Unification: Major Schools of Thought in the Warring States Period**

Read:

Theodore De Bary and Irene Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol 1:

1. Confucianism: pp. 41-47; 114-119
2. Daoism: 77-81; 95-103
3. Legalism: 190-192; 199-208

**September 24: The Great Wall and the Great Historian**

Read:

Sima Qian, Introduction and “Letter to Ren An” in *The Letter to Ren An and Sima Qian’s Legacy* (Durrant, et al. eds) 2016, University of Washington Press, pp. 3-29. E Book

Sima Qian. “Shi Ji 110: The Account of the Xiongnu.” In: Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian* Translated by Burton Watson. 2 vols. Rev. ed. New York, Columbia University Press, 1993, vol. 2, pp. 129-162. E Book

Nicola Di Cosmo, “The Origins of the Great Wall,” *The Silk Road* 4/1 (2006): 14-19.

**Unit III: Humans and the Cosmos**

**September 26: Literature and the World**

Read:

1. Liu Xie, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, "On Tao, the Source" pp. 8-14; "Emotion and Literary Expression" pp. 230-235. E book.
2. Tang Poetry by Du Fu, in Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* pp. 413-440.

#### **Unit IV: Encounters and Connections**

##### **October 1: Buddhism and China**

###### Read:

1. Shirokauer and Brown, *A Brief History of Chinese Civilization*, "China in a Buddhist Age," 75-99.
2. Yü Chün-fang, "Avalokiteśvara: The Bodhisattva of Compassion," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Religion*, Oxford UP, 2016.

##### **October 4: Porcelain and Translation**

###### Read:

1. Meha Priyadarshini, *Chinese Porcelain in Colonial Mexico: The Material Worlds of an Early Modern Trade* pp. 29-62.
2. Lydia H. Liu "Robinson Crusoe's Earthenware Pot," *Critical Inquiry* 25.4 (1999): 728-757.

##### **October 8: Gender, Marriage, and Concubinage in Late Imperial China. Guest Lecturer: Lingheng He.**

###### Read:

Shen Fu, *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*, Part 1 (pdf pages 26-65+ Part 3 (pdf pages 88-124)

Lu, Weijing. "Women, Gender, the Family, and Sexuality". *A Companion to Chinese History*, edited by Szonyi, Michael. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2016 (pp205-220).

###### Recommended

Mann, Susan. "Women, Families, and Gender Relations." In Willard J. Peterson ed. *The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 9, Part 1: The Ch'ing Empire to 1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. ( Recommended )

Huang, Martin W. *Intimate Memory: Gender and Mourning in Late Imperial China* (Chapters 4-6). Suny Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2018.

( Recommended )

##### **October 11: Opium Wars**

###### Read:

Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, third edition, Chapter 6: China and the Eighteenth-Century World, Pp. 115-135; 143 -163

Two Edicts from the Qianlong Emperor on the Occasion of Lord Macartney's Mission to China September 1793. Pp. 1-7. [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china\\_1750\\_opium.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1750_opium.htm)

Lin Zexu, *Letter to Queen Victoria*, pp. 1-5. [http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china\\_1750\\_opium.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1750_opium.htm)

### **October 14+17 Fall Break No Class**

### **October 22: Review for ID Quiz**

### **October 25: ID Quiz**

### **Unit V: Revolution and Reform**

### **October 29: Footbinding Is History**

#### Read:

1. Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 9-37

### **October 31: The Birth of Chinese Feminism**

#### Read:

1. Qiu Jin. 1905–1907. “Excerpts from Stones of the Jinwei Bird” In Amy D. Dooling and Kristina M. Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China*, pp. 39–78.
2. Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, 2013, Columbia University Press, “Introduction” pp. 1–27.
3. He-Yin Zhen. 1907. “On The Question of Women’s Liberation” In Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, 2013, Columbia University Press, pp. 53–72.

### **November 5: Literature to the Rescue**

#### Read:

1. Liang Qichao. (1902) “On the Relationship Between Fiction and the Government of the People” In: Denton. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought* pp. 74-82.
2. Lu Xun. 1980. (1923). “Preface to Call to Arms”, “Medicine” In: Yang and Yang (trans.) *Lu Xun Selected Works* Beijing: Foreign Languages Press. pp. 33-39, 58-67.

### **November 7: The Golden Age of Shanghai Cinema**

Watch:

Sun Yu, *Tianming* (Daybreak, 1933)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cE4ZBIHNL3E>

Read:

Hansen, Miriam Bratu. 2000. "Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film as Vernacular Modernism," *Film Quarterly* 54.1: 10-22.

**November 12: Enter the Party**

Read:

Mao Zedong. "Talks at the Yan'an Forum On Literature and Art" In: Denton. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought* pp. 458-485.

\*film review tutorial in second half of the class.

**November 14: Art Work in the Cultural Revolution**

Watch:

*White Haired Girl* 1972 dir. Hu Sang

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVeBHpg3iwM>

The following Wikipedia entry has the libretto under "plot". I recommend you read that before watching the ballet.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_White\\_Haired\\_Girl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_White_Haired_Girl)

Read:

McGrath, Jason. "Cultural Revolution Model Opera Films and the Realist Tradition in Chinese Cinema" *The Opera Quarterly* 26(2-3), 2010: 343-376.

**Unit VI: Then and Now**

**November 19: 1980's: Chinese Cinema Going Global**

Watch:

Zhang Yimou, *Red Sorghum* (1987)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StUZdCc6gwg&t=676s>

Read:

Chow, Rey. 1995. *Primitive Passions*. Columbia University Press. "Film as Ethnography" pp. 173-202.

### **November 21: New Chinese Documentary Movement**

Watch:

Zhao Liang, *Petition* (2009)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6Y0ZbxdC3Y>

Read:

Chris Berry, Lu Xinyu, and Lisa Rofel, *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record*, "Introduction," pp. 1-48

**November 26:** No Class (Prof. Gvili is assisting a review of the Asian Studies program at University of Manitoba)

### **November 28: The Hong Kong Situation**

Read:

Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, pp. 1-15.

Watch:

Kwok Zune, Wong Fei-pang, Jevons Au, Chow Kwun-Wai, Ng Ka-leung, *Ten Years* (2015)  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/cevxbh9iz63kd8/Ten.Years.2015.HDRip.mp4?dl=0>

## **FINAL TAKE HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED**

**December 3: Review Session**

**Final Exam and Film Review Due Date: December 10**