Multimedia Missions EAST 559: Translating Asia in Word and Image

Instructor: Prof. Gal Gvili
Email: gal.gvili@mcgill.ca
Time: Wednesdays, 11:35 am-2:25 pm
Place: Sherbrooke 688, 465
Office hours: Wednesday 2:30-3:30, Thursday 11:40-12:40 688 Sherbrooke, Room 268 or on zoom.

Course Description

“Multimedia Missions” focuses on the fraught encounter between Anglo-American missionaries and Asian actors in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Christian missionaries were the first to use photographic and film technologies as means to convey a perception of Asia and its population back home. We will examine missionary documentation of China, Korea and India in literature, photography and early film as well as Asian depictions of missionary presence in literature and artwork. Translation (linguistic, cultural, visual) will serve as the theoretical focal point through which we will explore the problem of knowing the other and disseminating this knowledge to one’s local community.

Nineteenth century America witnessed an exponential growth in Protestant missionary activity. Across the colonial world, Protestant missions installed, by persuasion and by force, modern institutions of education, science, and technology, in order to influence processes of new nation building. In tandem, missionaries consistently documented the lives of the people they encountered—acting as proselytizers and ethnographers, and taking part in the shaping of modern transformations in the countries in which they operated. The encounter between missionaries and local populations yielded an array of responses on both sides from conversion and collaboration, to resistance and war. Investigating this encounter through the prism of translation will reveal the intricate ways in which “Christian imperialism” (Conroy-Krutz) helped shape Asian modernity.

In the course, we will take advantage of the relative availability of missionary archives—both physically and online. We will focus on investigating primary sources and practice using them in the research project that will be the culmination of the course.

Learning Objectives

The course familiarizes students with theoretical paradigms of translation, circulation and cultural identities while and by teaching how to closely read primary visual and textual sources.

Prerequisites

There will be no prerequisites for this class. The theoretical focus on translation, the textual focus on different media and the thematic focus on Asia will hopefully attract students from different majors, such as East Asian Studies, Comparative Literature, Religion, and Art History.
**Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

Attendance and participation 15%

Postings (graded in mid and end of the semester) 20%

1 Presentation on Class Readings 15%

Paper Proposal 15%

Research Paper (Undergraduates: 10-12 pages, Graduate Students 15-20 pages) 35%

**Class Participation and Presentations**

Each student is asked to pick one week and deliver a 10 minutes oral presentation of the required readings. Your presentation should summarize the main points the readings evoke, and raise one or two questions in order to launch class discussion for the larger part of the session. It is therefore very important that you come to each meeting having completed the readings, and ready to contribute to the conversation. The recommended readings are there for those of you who wish to further explore the various topics. You are welcome to read them, bring them up in class discussion or use them for further reference in your papers, but they are not a requirement.

**Weekly Postings**

Starting September 8, each student must submit a postings of approximately 300 words in mycourses. Your postings should be uploaded no later than 8:00 PM the day prior to our meeting. Each posting should demonstrate your reading of the literary and theoretical texts from that particular week. Please do not summarize the synopsis of texts but engage in close reading of the literary works and/or other primary and secondary sources in relation to general concerns of the class. You are encouraged to focus on one or two particular aspects of the text, and/or raise questions for class discussion. Please cite page numbers. It is essential that you submit your reviews on time so that your fellow students and I have ample time to read them before class. Postings submitted after class will result in grade reduction.

**Readings**

All available online.

**Visual Sources**
Many of the images or short films that we will be looking at will be drawn from the following databases. Feel free to browse through these and you may find them helpful for thinking about your final projects for this class:

**USC Library International Mission Photography Archive**

**Sidney D. Gamble Collection at Duke University**

**William Charles White**

**East Asia Image Collection**

**BFI Modern China Player**

**Yale Divinity School Library photographs collection**

**George and Marion Blydenburgh collection**

**Muriel Webb Treman album**

**Harry Caldwell collection**

**Chinese Christian Posters database**

**Class Policies**

**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 (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Submission of written work: In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

**Electronic Devices:** Laptops are permitted in lecture for taking notes only. No other electronic devices (e.g., cellphones, recording devices) are allowed so as to minimize distractions to other students and the instructor.

This course includes in-person teaching, and learning activities have been planned in accordance with public health directives and McGill’s protocols. It is important, however, to ensure you have read and abide by the following:

- Please review and follow the Health Guidelines for Students, and it is imperative that you understand when to stay home if, for example, you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- If you develop COVID-19 symptoms while on campus, please follow the required guidelines, which include ensuring you have a mask on, isolate in a closed, private room, immediately call 1-877-644-4545 (Info-Santé) for instructions, and notify the University by calling 514-398-3000.
• **Masks are required in classrooms settings**, at all times, and masks will be available for you on campus. Masks are also to be worn when entering and circulating in buildings and classrooms.

• If you are in a situation that might require you to miss some lectures or assignments because of short-term absences due to COVID-19, you are to request an academic accommodation using the online form found under the “Personal” menu in Minerva; the form is called “**COVID-19 Academic Accommodations Request Form**”. You are asked to use this form instead of requesting accommodations directly from your instructor.

• Finally, the context of attending University during a pandemic will bring on additional stress and may impact your wellbeing. Please do not hesitate to reach out for support if necessary, and access the many resources available, including, for example, **Student Services**, the **Office of the Dean of Students**, and your Faculty’s Student Affairs Office.

**Schedule:**

**UNIT I: TRANSLATION**

**September 1. Introduction: What’s between missionaries and media?**

**September 8. Rethinking Translation**


**September 15. Disciplines: The Unfinished Project of Modern Secularity**


*Max Müller, Sacred Books of the East, vol I The Upanisbads, 1879, “Introduction”, pp. 1–10


UNIT II: DOCUMENTATION


* Ari Larissa Heinrich, “The Pathological Empire: Early Medical Photography in China” In *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body Between China and the West* *73-111.


*Browse the visual sources list and bring one or two examples that strike you as interesting—be prepared to introduce it in class.

Recommended:

September 29.

Online tutorial with Yale Divinity School Librarian: Chris Anderson

UNIT III: PEDAGOGY

October 6. The Miracle of Literacy


October 20. New Fiction Competitions

*Lal Behari Dey, “Preface to Bengal Peasant Life, Folk-Tales of Bengal, Recollection of my School Days”


**October 27. Comparative Compulsions**

*Gal Gvili, “Undoing the Violence of Comparison” in Decolonizing Literature: Imagining India in Modern China (forthcoming, Columbia University Press), pp. 31-83.


*Xu Dishan, A Merchant’s Wife

***Submit Paper Proposals***

**November 3: One on One Meetings to Discuss Proposals and Paper**

**November 10. Sentimental Education: The Absence of Sympathy**


**UNIT III: BODIES**

**November 17. Disobedient Worshippers**
* Xu Dishan, Yu Guan, 1941


* Kim Tonghi, *The Shaman Painting*, 1936

**November 24. Laboring Bodies**


* Paek Sin-Ae, *Kkŏrei*, 1933.

**December 1. Negotiators of Protestant Modernity: Most Recent Research**


Presentations of Final Paper Projects

**December 15: Submit Final Paper by Email.**