

CHN 491 Oral Fluency through Chinese Films
T TH 12:00 pm – 1:15 pm
Online Zoom <https://hawaii.zoom.us/j/2702357476?>
Meeting ID: 270 235 7476, password 485

Instructor:

司馬老師 Sima laoshi (Prof. Madeline K. Spring)

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Office hours: By appointment & TBA (will arrange time by week 2)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Prerequisite: CHN 301 or equivalent

This course is multifaceted, since it is both a language course and a course that explores Chinese culture and history through film. The course is designed for students at the Intermediate Mid level of proficiency of Chinese or above. Please see the instructor for clarification. The designation of **oral literacy** applies to this course.

Film is one of the best ways to learn a language, and the films chosen for this class are particularly well suited to language learning. The majority of the films we will study are generally accepted as classics that are representative of some of the highly renown Chinese films produced from the 1990s to 2010s. The language used in these films is almost entirely in clear Mandarin, with little interference from accents or inclusion of dialect or local slang. Furthermore, the general pace of these films is such that it allows students time to focus on the language, while at the same time being involved in the plot.

Students will improve their listening and speaking in Chinese through guided instruction and by focusing on acquiring metalinguistic language learning strategies. In addition, the course will enhance students' understanding of connections between culture and language, which will improve their overall language and literacy proficiency levels. We will consider how cinematic images reflect and inform audiences about Chinese culture and ideologies. In studying these films, students will gain a deeper understanding of particular issues that are critical to modern China. Specifically, we will examine depictions of 1) historical events (e.g. the Cultural Revolution) and the impact this has had on traditional moral and ethical systems in modern Chinese society, 2) questions of generational identity and individuality, 3) gender roles and familial issues, 4) differences between life in rural and urban China, 4) depictions of public versus private space.

All of the films we will watch have English subtitles, and some also have subtitles in Chinese characters. However, students need to apply themselves purposefully to focus on language and not rely only on subtitles. Most of the shorter clips we will work with do not have subtitles, so that students can focus on the actors as they are actually speaking, without the

disturbance of added text on the screen. Some films will be viewed in their entirety; some will only be studied based on short clips.

In addition to watching and working with specific segments of the films. Students will read film critiques and other material that will contextualize the content of the film and also focus on specific directors. Students with higher levels of language proficiency might read longer parts of scripts, interviews with the directors, and critical essays about the film written in Chinese; others may read comparable material in English. In other words, regardless of level, each student will be challenged and graded appropriately.

Given the various language proficiency levels of students in this class, students and instructors will need to be flexible and actively create a dynamic class time by participating fully in individual and group projects that apply the various skills learned. Students with similar levels of language proficiency will at times work together, and in those cases, there will also be group grades. Frequent practice of short passages and “mini-scripts” will be key to improving speaking fluency. This process will be described in greater detail in class.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Acquire strategies for learning from Chinese films and other authentic video without relying on notes or pre-prepared vocabulary lists.
- Gain a critical awareness of how generational, historical, and cultural issues depicted either explicitly or in other ways (e.g., visual images and cinematic choices, body language and expressions of actors, etc.) have been (and still are) influential to understanding Chinese culture.
- Gain an explicit metalinguistic awareness of their own language proficiency levels in speaking, listening, reading, and to a lesser extent writing, which will help in advancing in this course and in future study of Chinese (and of other languages).
- Learn about some of the critical contemporary Chinese directors through studying some of their best-known movies, and gain an understanding of these directors’ backgrounds to see how they reached international acclaim.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN THIS COURSE

- Be sure to watch the film we will be studying as indicated on the Google Classroom assignments. Plan to watch the film at a time you will not be interrupted so you can give your full attention to the film and to the related assignments.
- Keep up on class assignments; sometimes Google Classroom can be confusing, so you may need to scroll down to find an assignment that was given a few days ago.
- Make sure to be on time for class sessions and to be sure that your audio and video is working, since both audio and video are required for this class.
- Class preparation and participation are a significant part of your grade, so make sure

you are ready to take an active part in each class session.

- Make sure to turn homework assignments and take quizzes on time.
- Be sure you come to class on time and are ready to focus. In other words, **PLEASE don't plan to eat your lunch during class (in Chinese culture students don't eat during class – it is generally considered rude behavior and insulting to teachers. It's also inconsiderate and distracting to other classmates, especially in an online environment!)**.

Consider this class a great venture into the world of Chinese film; hopefully you will be captivated and be motivated to watch more Chinese films on your own.

GRADING POLICY

Success in this course largely depends on individual and small group participation and preparation. This course differs from a regular language class, since the levels of students' language proficiency are diverse. There will be individualized quizzes based on vocabulary items, grammar structures, etc. write a brief critically reflective essay on each film (written in English) plus a detailed language study plan. In addition, there will be two mini projects and a final project. More details will be given in class.

Participation & Homework (including oral presentations & reflective essays)	30%
Quizzes (primarily oral presentations)	20%
Mini Projects (both oral and written)	20%
Final presentation	20%
Final exam (take home)	10%

(Please note: some adjustments may be made as the semester proceeds and we further determine the balance between language learning and critiquing films).

Video Quizzes (five; either recording of you reading a passage from the script or of an oral presentations) We will use Flipgrid to record some oral projects.

Mini Projects (two; both oral and written)

For each mini project, students will work in small groups to act out clips from videos that use language that will help you improve your Chinese and are representative of Chinese culture. Further guidelines will be given by the instructor. Topics could include the role of women in the clip, the portrayal of young professionals, use of lighting, sounds, and other aspects of mise-en-scène analysis, and could be done in English or Chinese. Another option for a project might be comparison between the original text (book or short story) and the film adaptation. More information about projects will be forthcoming. We will also use **Flipgrid** to record some oral projects and for some discussions.

Final Presentations will be similar to the mini-projects but will involve a more in-depth study of the topic.

PLAGIARISM

The following definition of plagiarism comes from the UH-Manoa Conduct Code:

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to submitting, in fulfillment of an academic requirement, any work that has been copied in whole or in part from another individual's work without attributing that borrowed portion to the individual; neglecting to identify as a quotation another's idea and particular phrasing that was not assimilated into the student's language and style or paraphrasing a passage so that the reader is misled as to the source; submitting the same written or oral or artistic material in more than one course without obtaining authorization from the instructors involved; or "drylabbing," which includes obtaining and using experimental data and laboratory write-ups from other sections of a course or from previous terms. (University of Hawai'i at Manoa Student Conduct Code (1992), p. 6).

It is ultimately each student's responsibility to understand the rules regarding plagiarism and cheating at UH, and to learn how to avoid such violations. At UH, common punishments for such violations include failing the assignment, failing the course, suspension from the university, or even expulsion.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability is invited to contact me privately. I would be happy to work with you, and the KOKUA Program (Office for Students with Disabilities) to ensure reasonable accommodations in my course. KOKUA can be reached at (808) 956-7511 or (808) 956-7612 (voice/text) in room 013 of the Queen Lili'uokalani Center for Student Services.

List of Films (tentative, & not necessarily in this order):

In most cases, two or more films will be compared with each other (e.g. A & B)

1. Growing up during the Cultural Revolution

Historical perspective (I)

A. 《阳光灿烂的日子》 *In the Heat of the Sun* (week 1 & 2)

B. 《蓝风筝》 *Blue Kite* week 3

+ (clips from *China My Sorrow*)

2. Growing Up –Family Dynamics & Interactions I

A. 《和你在一起》 *Together*

B. 《一一》 *Yi Yi: A One and a Two (? Depends on time)*

C. 《请投我的票》 *Please Vote for Me*

3. Historical perspectives (II) Love, Sacrifice, & Cultural Turmoil

A. 《霸王别姬》 *Farewell My Concubine*

B. 《回归》 *Returning Home*

+ clips from 《芙蓉镇》 *Hibiscus Town* and 《活着》 *To Live*

4. Families reconfigured again II

A. 《明天记得爱上我》 *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?*

B. 《喜宴》 *Wedding Banquet*+ clips from 《饮食男女》 *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman*

Other possible film choices:

《大佛普拉斯》 *The Great Buddha*

《天注定》 *A Touch of Sin*

《十七岁的单车》 *Clips from Beijing Bicycle*

《我的父亲母亲》 *Clips from The Road Home*

《小城之春》 *Spring in a Small Town (2 versions)*

Sample of Reading Materials (to be used in conjunction with films)

Books in Chinese that include film scripts and background information about the production of the film are available for the following films:

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|----------|-----------|
| ✧ 《饮食男女》 | ✧ 《暗恋桃花源》 |
| ✧ 《喜宴》 | ✧ 《芙蓉镇》 |
| ✧ 《推手》 | ✧ 《香魂女》 |
| ✧ 《滚滚红尘》 | ✧ 《秋菊打官司》 |
| | ✧ 《站台》 |

Books in English that are translations of the original story from which the film is adapted are available for some of the films, such as *Farewell My Concubine* and *The Story of Qiu Ju*. Excerpts from some of these materials may be part of student presentations.

**Selections from the following books may be assigned (depending on students' level).
Additional/alternative articles may be assigned or recommended.**

Chen Kaige 陈凯歌. *Shaonian Kaige* 【少年凯歌】. 台北：源流, 1991.

Gatewood, Frances, ed. *Zhang Yimou Interviews*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2001.

Phillips, William. *Film: An Introduction* (3rd ed.). Bedford/St. Martins, 2005.

Silbergeld, Jerome. *China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*.
London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1999.

Stuckey, G. Andrew. *Metacinema in Contemporary Chinese Film*. Hong Kong University Press, 2018.

Wang Xianghui 王向晖 & Yu Wenqing 余文青. *Farewell My Concubine* 【中国电影欣赏】.
Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University Press, 2009.

Yeh, Emile Yueh-yu and Darrell William Davis. *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Zhang Jingbei 张靓蓓. *Li An zhuan, shinianyijue dianyingmeng* 【李安传，十年一觉电影梦】.
2nd rpt. Beijing: China CITIC Press, 2016.

Zhang Jiuying 张久英. *Fanpai Zhang Yimou* 【翻拍张艺谋】. Beijing：北京：中国盲文出版社, 2001.

Zhao Yunhui 赵昀晖 & Liu Xiaoyu 刘晓雨. *Learning Chinese through Movies* [看电影学汉语]. Vol. 1. Beijing: Shijie tushu bangongshi, 2010.

**Important links (for determining your language proficiency)
More links that focus on Chinese films will be added**

<https://linguafolio.uoregon.edu/site/landing-page>

<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012>

<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/chinese>

<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-performance-descriptors-language-learners>