Course Name: Chinese Film and Society
EAST-UA 9540
4 points

Instructor Contact Information
Name: Dr. Shaoyi Sun
Email: ss6489@nyu.edu
Phone: 13482562916

Class Day and Time
Mondays, 5-8pm

Office Hours Day and Time
Mondays, 4-5pm

Course Description
This course will examine Chinese cinema from its infancy to contemporary film within a social, political and cultural context, focusing specifically on films produced in mainland China. While acknowledging the importance of examining Chinese cinema in the general framework of national tradition and identity, this course also emphasizes the transnational or pan-Asian nature of Chinese film productions at present. In this way, it is hoped that the course will not only help students cultivate a greater command over current trends and debates in analysis and theorization of Chinese cinema, but also help facilitate students’ understanding of Chinese cinema/culture in the context of globalization.

No prior knowledge of Chinese cinema and culture is required. All films carry English subtitles. All works are read in English.

Course Objectives
The course aims to 1) help students gain an understanding of some of the social, political, cultural, and economic changes that have taken place in China since the 1920s, particularly in recent years; 2) help students cultivate a greater interest in the history and extraordinary development of Chinese cinema, and in cinemas beyond Hollywood; 3) present mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan as a culturally interconnected region through the tracking of cross-border activities in the recent history of Chinese-language cinema and introduce students to new ways in thinking about national cinema and culture.

Grading Components
Response Papers 20%
*Think of these response papers as part of a film journal or literary diary that you will keep for this course. You will write a single-spaced one-page review for 8 screenings.
Mid-Term Project 15% (TBA)
Final Project/Oral Presentation: 15%
*Detailed description of the assignment will be discussed in class when the semester approaches the end.
Term Paper 40%
*Each of you will write a term paper (8 to 10 pages in length, double-spaced), which is due by the end of the semester (see specific date and time below). Detailed description of the assignment will be discussed and distributed in class. Feel free to consult with me if you have questions or think you need extra help.
Class Participation 10%
*DO NOT overlook the importance of this portion, as it will affect your overall grade in a significant way.

Instructor Brief Biography
Shaoyi Sun is Professor of Film and Media Studies at Shanghai University’s School of Film & TV. He has taught Chinese film, literature, and cultural studies at the University of Southern California (USC), the University of California at Irvine (UCI), and NYU Shanghai. He was the NETPAC (Network for the Promotion of Asian
Cinema) juror of the 2011 Bengaluru International Film Festival, the 2009 Singapore International Film Festival (Chair), the 2007 Brisbane International Film Festival, the 2001 Hawaii International Film Festival, and a jury member of the 2008 Shanghai International Film Festival’s International Student Shorts Award and the 2000 Dhaka International Film Festival.


Blog: [http://shaoyis.wordpress.com/](http://shaoyis.wordpress.com/) (requires VPN to get access to)

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<th>Grading Expectations</th>
<th>A: Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning. B: Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research. C: Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level. D: Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations. F: Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria.</th>
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<td>Attendance Policy</td>
<td>NYU Shanghai has a strict policy about course attendance that allows no unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence will result in the deduction of three percentage points from the final grade. More than two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course. Students should contact their instructors to catch up on missed work but should not approach them for excused absences. All absence requests and excuses must follow the application procedure directions here: <a href="https://wikis.nyu.edu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=46203406">https://wikis.nyu.edu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=46203406</a>. Students are expected to arrive to class promptly both at the start of class and after breaks. Arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early can be considered an unexcused absence. Unexcused absences from exams are not permitted and will result in failure of the exam. If you are granted an excused absence from an exam by NYU Shanghai administration, your instructor will decide how you will make up the exam. This attendance policy also applies for classes involving a field trip or other off-campus visit. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the agreed meeting point on time. There will be no adjustment of attendance records after the end of the semester. If you wish to contest a marked absence, you must do so before you leave Shanghai; if you think that there may be a discrepancy about your attendance in class on a given day, ask the NYU Shanghai academic staff to let you look at the attendance record.</td>
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<td>Submission of Late Work</td>
<td>Written work due in class must be submitted during class time.</td>
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Late work should be submitted in person to the Academic Assistant during regular office hours (9:30-6:00, Monday-Friday). The Academic Assistant will mark down the date and time of submission in the presence of the student. In the absence of the Academic Assistant, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work in person, following the same protocol.

Work submitted within five weekdays will be penalized one portion of a grade for every day that it is late (so if it is late by one day, an assignment marked an “A” will be changed to an “A-,” and so on). Work submitted more than five days after the due date without an agreed extension will be given a zero.

Please note that final essays must be submitted on time.

**Plagiarism Policy**

The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

Students must retain an electronic copy of their work until final grades are posted on Albert. They must be prepared to supply an electronic copy if requested to do so by NYU Shanghai. Not submitting a copy of their work upon request will result in automatic failure in the assignment and possible failure in the class.

Penalties for confirmed cases of plagiarism are set out in the Student Handbook.

**Required Text(s)**


### Week 1
**August 27**

Introduction: Western “Magic” and Chinese Cinema  
Read: Zhang, 1-57;  
View: *Laborer’s Love* (d. Zhang Shichuan, 1922, 22 min.)  
View: *Shadow Magic* (clip; d. Ann Hu, 2000, 115 min.)

### Week 2
**Sept. 3**

Cosmopolitanism and the “Golden Period” of the 1930s & 1940s (I)  
Read: Zhang, 58-73;  
Shaoyi Sun: “From China with a Laugh: A Perusal of Chinese Comedy Films” (handout)  
View: *The Goddess* (d. Wu Yonggang, 1934, 85 min.)

### Week 3
**Sept. 10**

Cosmopolitanism and the “Golden Period” of the 1930s & 1940s (II)  
Read: Zhang, 73-95;  
View: *Street Angel* (d. Yuan Muzhi, 1937, 87 min.)  
**First Response Paper Due**

### Week 4
**Sept. 17**

Cosmopolitanism and the “Golden Period” of the 1930s & 1940s (III)  
Read: Zhang, 95-112; Sun & Li, 159-175;  
View: *Spring in a Small Town* (d. Fei Mu, 1948, 85 min.)  
**Second Response Paper Due**

### Week 5
**Sept. 24**

Mid-Term Project Day: TBA
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>View</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Oct. 8</td>
<td>Building a New China in Cinema: Socialist Realism</td>
<td>Zhang, 189-215; Mao, “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art” (handout);</td>
<td><em>The Red Detachment of Women</em> (d. Xie Jin, 1961, 115 min.)</td>
<td><strong>Third Response Paper Due</strong></td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Oct. 22</td>
<td>The “Sixth Generation:” Politics and Collective Identity</td>
<td>Sun &amp; Li, vii-92; <em>Suzhou River</em> (d. Lou Ye, 1999, 83 min.)</td>
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<td><strong>Fifth Response Paper Due</strong></td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Oct. 29</td>
<td>The Social and Human Price of the Economic Reform: The Case of Jia Zhangke</td>
<td>Sun &amp; Li, 93-112; <em>Still Life</em> (d. Jia Zhangke, 2006; 105 min.)</td>
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<td><strong>Sixth Response Paper Due</strong></td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td>Field Trip to Shanghai Film Museum (if it opens) or the Xie Jin Archive (if SFM not ready for the public)</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Nov. 12</td>
<td>“Post-Socialism” and “Post-Sixth Generation” Chinese Cinema</td>
<td>“The Stories I Want to Tell: An Interview with Zhang Meng” by Maria A. Ruggieri (handout);</td>
<td><em>The Piano in a Factory</em> (d. Zhang Meng, 2010, 107 min.)</td>
<td><strong>Final Paper Topics Distributed</strong></td>
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<td>“Enough to Make Your Head Spin: Chinese Films in 2010” by Maria A. Ruggieri (handout);</td>
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<td><strong>Final Project Guideline Distributed</strong></td>
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<td><em>Exemplary Clips</em></td>
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<td><strong>Seventh Response Paper Due</strong></td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>Regional Cooperation, Commercialism, and Globalized Production and Consumption</td>
<td>Sun &amp; Li, 134-158; Zhang, 259-296; <em>Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles</em> (d. Zhang Yimou &amp; Yasuo Furuhata, 107 min.)</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Dec. 3</td>
<td>Guest Speaker and Screening (TBA)</td>
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<td>Week 15/Final Exam</td>
<td>Dec. 10</td>
<td>Student Oral Presentations (on Final Project)</td>
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<td><strong>Final Paper Due in Class</strong></td>
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