

Chinese Studies 531: Modern Chinese in Contemporary Mass Media

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Frequency and Place of Meetings:

The class meets Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 4:30 pm to 5:40 pm in Meier Hall 142.

Course Description

Our primary goal in this course is to become familiar with, discuss, and debate some of the economic, political, and cultural situations of the contemporary Chinese speaking-world through the modern mass media of newspapers, television, and film. During the first semester of this course, we will focus on discussing and debating the issues raised by five major films of the 1990's paired with short newspaper editorials that explore similar topics. In the second semester we shift our focus to materials drawn from Chinese journalism (in print and on-line) and television broadcasts (news and interview shows), expanding the range of your mass media vocabulary to include more formal uses that often draw on sentence patterns, expressions, and idioms from classical Chinese. A secondary goal of this course is to train yourself to become effective managers of your own learning so that you will be able to function independently in Chinese culture in your future professional pursuits. At this point in your Chinese language-learning careers, it is assumed that you are sufficiently mature and responsible to manage your own language learning with the guidance of the instructor and language tutors. With this goal in mind, we will pursue three core projects during this spring semester.

Class Structure and Two Core Projects:

1. Two In-class Presentations on Chinese Films/ Three In-class Debates:

In this class students will learn colloquial vocabulary and sentence patterns used in the dialogue of five major Chinese films of the 1990's, as well as some commonly used formal terms for discussing film in Chinese. Students will put this new vocabulary and sentence patterns directly into practice in written and oral form through in-class presentations. Through the term of this course students give two film presentations each. In the presentations students will either summarize the plot and major characters of a film in a "film digest" (电影梗概) or provide an in-depth analysis of an issue the film explores in a "film review" (电影评论). Accompanying these oral presentations, students will provide vocabulary glossaries to audience members and utilize the smart-board technology in our classroom to incorporate scenes from the films and/or power point presentation images into their presentations. The dates for the four presentations are:

- Presentation #1: 9/8 and 9/9
Presentation #2: 9/29 and 9/30
Presentation #3: 10/21, and 11/20
Presentation #4: 11/11 and 11/13

All students will also participate in three in-class debates on the issues raised in the newspaper editorials we will read, held on 9/15, 10/6, and 11/18. A handout of commonly used debate phrases and sentence patterns will be distributed in class prior to our first debate. Mark your calendars and prepare accordingly.

2. Class Film Screenings:

As part of your class attendance and participation grade, at the beginning of each new unit students are required to attend five group screenings of the Chinese films we will discuss in this course on the following Thursdays, from 1:00-3:00 pm in 140 Mueller Hall:

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|----------------------------------|----------------|
| “Not One Less” (一个都不能少): | Week 1, 8/29 |
| “Shower” (洗澡): | Week 4, 9/18 |
| “To Live” (活着): | Week 7, 10/9 |
| “Sigh” (一声叹息): | Week 10, 10/30 |
| “Eat, Drink, Man, Woman” (饮食男女): | Week 15, 12/4 |

Missing a class film screening will be considered an unexcused absence and the attendance grade for the class will be lowered accordingly. After each group film screening, all class film DVDs will remain on reserve at the Learning Resource Center in Meier Hall throughout the course of the semester. Once we have begun studying the film in class, the DVD will be available for individual student check-out from the LRC for a maximum of two-hours during the day or overnight at the end of LRC hours. DVDs checked out overnight must be returned in the morning at the opening of the LRC. As a courtesy to your classmates and to make sure everyone has a chance to practice with the DVDs do not forget to return DVDs to the LRC on time.

3. A Revised and Expanded Final Chinese Film Presentation:

At the end of the semester, students will choose one of their first three presentations to revise and expand to a composition of 800 to 1000 汉字 that will both summarize relevant scenes from a film and discuss and analyze an important issue that the film raises. Final presentations can examine issues raised in the films, as well as those discussed in the newspaper editorials we will read. Final presentations will be delivered during the last two days of class. There is a limit of two students who can select to present on any one film.

Textbooks and Audio-Visual Materials

- *The Silhouette of China: Readings in Contemporary Chinese Films* 中国侧影: 当代中国电影选读, (Purchase at University book center)
- *Anything Goes, An Advanced Reader of Modern Chinese* 无所不谈: 现代汉语高级读本, (Purchase at University book center)
- DVDs for the following five Chinese films will be available for check-out from the reserves area in the LRC: “Not One Less” (一个都不能少), “Shower” (洗澡), “To Live” (活着), “Sigh” (一声叹息) and “Eat, Drink, Man, Woman” (饮食男女).
- On-line Chinese film resources- See “External Links” page of the course website

Course Requirements

Attendance

- You are expected to attend every class and participate actively. If you know you will miss a class, please contact me ahead of time by e-mail or phone to let me know the reason for your absence. Your absence will be considered “excused” only in cases of family or medical emergency. Absences due to medical reasons must be documented by a written doctor’s note. After your second unexcused absence,

every subsequent unexcused absence will demote the final course grade by one percent. Being late to class twice will be considered equivalent to one unexcused absence and it will affect your grade accordingly.

Class Performance and Homework:

It cannot be overemphasized how critical your preparation is in this intensive language course. All classes will be taught with the assumption of prior study of assigned material for that day. This includes:

- Memorizing new vocabulary for each lesson and sentence patterns **on a daily basis**.
- Attending all group screenings for films highlighted in the *Silhouette of China* textbook and practicing your listening comprehension with the DVDs outside of class.
- Preparing all written grammar/translation homework completely and turning them in on time.
- Writing a short essay of 500-600 汉字 for each of the first four films that we will discuss in class.
- Revising and expanding one of your four essays into a final written essay of 800-1000 汉字 and an oral presentation of 20 minutes in length.

Daily written homework will be graded with a check if complete (full credit), a check minus if incomplete (half credit), and a zero if not turned in at all (no credit). Homework turned in late will be corrected but will receive no credit. Late homework will only be accepted for credit in the case of an excused absence.

Quizzes and Tests

- Two to three vocabulary or listening comprehension quizzes will be given for each lesson covered in the two class textbooks. There will also be four tests covering specific lessons from the newspaper editorial and film textbooks on 9/16, 10/7, 10/27, and 11/20. Refer to the schedule below and prepare accordingly. Tests can only be made up in the case of excused absences. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes under any conditions.

Small group classes (中班) and Individual tutoring classes (小班) :

- In addition to meeting in large-group classes, all students will meet twice a week (Mondays and Wednesdays) for small group tutoring classes and once a week for individual tutoring classes. Small group classes will be composed of up to four students and will focus on group discussions of class texts or films, using the most recent vocabulary, and group rehearsal of skits or presentations to be given later in the week. Individual tutoring sessions, on the other hand, will concentrate on intensive practice in the area in which each particular student needs improvement, from pronunciation, to character writing, to particular sentence patterns or listening comprehension.

Chinese Noodle Hour

- You are strongly encouraged to attend Chinese table (“Noodle Hour”) held every Tuesday from 11:15 am to 12:15 pm at the VU Confucius Institute House (1402 Laporte) beginning on September 2. Please take advantage of this important opportunity to practice speaking Chinese where you can exchange daily conversation with your teachers and classmates in a relaxing and natural environment.

***While this syllabus outlines the goals and expectations for students in this course, I reserve the option to make alterations to the course syllabus, assignments, and pace of the schedules if needed throughout the course of the semester.

Grading

Class Participation and Homework:	10%
Quizzes:	10%
3 Unit Tests:	30%
4 Written Presentations	20%
2 Oral Presentations	10%
Final Written Presentation	10%
Final Oral Presentation	10%