



# The Beijing Center

北京中国学中心

---

Fall 2018

## TBC 1130 Modern Chinese Fiction

Credit Hours: 3.0

Class Times and Location: TBA

Instructor: Sun Hong, Ph.D.

E-mail: h.sun@thebeijingcenter.org

### Course Description

Modern Chinese fiction has gone through unprecedented development since the dawn of the 20th century and has become increasingly interwoven with the many-faceted global existence. Hence substantial knowledge of modern Chinese fiction will enable students to understand central aspects of 20th and 21st century Chinese society and culture.

This course introduces selected fictional works by some of the most insightful writers of modern China. The course focuses on significant aspects of these works with an objective to enhance students' fascination with and capacity for reading and analyzing modern Chinese fiction. Participants in this course will study the writers' moral obligation to expose prevalent spiritual corruption in the face of progress and modernization. The participants will also learn to comprehend the Chinese writers' emotional intensity as well as their faith in human dignity and wisdom. All readings are in English and there is no prerequisite for this course.

### Learning Outcome

Course assignments and class investigation will:

1. Promote, through oral and written communication, students' reading skills, critical thinking, and analytical abilities appropriate to the study of literature.
2. Provide students with the opportunity, both in and outside of class, to practice writing.
3. Introduce students to basic concepts of literary criticism.
4. Enable students to develop the practice of reading literary texts within their social, historical, and cultural contexts.
5. Guide students to explore the relationship of literature to other disciplines.
6. Broaden students' understanding of the multifaceted relationship of Chinese literature to society: as mediator, mirror, interpreter, and critique.
7. Enhance students' understanding of the ethical implications in Chinese literature concerning expression of self and depiction of others.

### Course Requirements

1. Textbook and Course Readings

1. Lu Hsun. *Selected Stories of Lu Hsun*. Trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1972. 1-215.
2. Shen Congwen. *The Border Town. The Border Town and Other Stories*. Trans. Gladys Yang. Beijing: Panda Books, 1981. 1-101.
3. Lao She. *Rickshaw: The Novel Lo-T'o Hsiang Tzu*. Trans. Jean M. James. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1979.
4. Pa Chin. *The Family*. Trans. Sidney Shapiro. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1972.
5. Huang Ch'un-ming. "A Flower in the Rainy Night." *Chinese Stories from Taiwan: 1960-1970*. Ed. Joseph S. M. Lau. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976. 194-241.
6. Huang Ch'un-ming. "The Two Signpainters." *The Drowning of an Old Cat and Other Stories*. Trans. Howard Goldblatt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980. 185-216.
7. Huang Ch'un-ming. "Sayonara-Tsai-chien." *The Drowning of an Old Cat and Other Stories*. Ibid. 217-271.
8. Mo Yan. *Red Sorghum*. Trans. Howard Goldblatt. New York: Penguin Books, 1994.
9. Han Shaogong. *A Dictionary of Maqiao*. Trans. Julia Lovell. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
10. Yu Hua. *Brothers*. Trans. Eileen Cheng-Yin Chow and Carlos Rojas. London: Picador, 2009.
11. Sun Hong. *Myth and Reality in the Rural and Urban Worlds: A Survey of the Literary Landscape in American and Chinese Regional Literatures*. Xi'an: Shaanxi People's Publishing House, 1997.

## 2. Assignments

In addition to regular attendance and class participation, students will be required to complete a term project (i.e. an oral presentation), take a mid-term examination, and write a final paper. Details on the topics, focus, and format of the papers will be given to the students on each assignment.

The following are some specific policies:

- a) Students are assigned 120-150 pages of readings per week. Reading assignments are carefully chosen to accompany critical studies and related assignments. Students are expected to have completed the assigned weekly readings before attending class.
- b) All papers should be typed (double-spaced, with proper margin on each side).
- c) All work should reflect students' own ideas. If they borrow other's ideas, they are expected to either express the idea in their own words or use quotation marks to cite the exact words of the source; in either case, a note is necessary to acknowledge the borrowing.

## 3. Grading

Each paper is graded as A, B, C, or D if turned in on time, or C, D, or F if turned in late. Students' grade for the course will be based on the grades of their class attendance and participation (10%), term project (20%), mid-term examination (30%), and final paper (40%).

## 4. Attendance Policy

Only valid medical or family emergencies qualify as an absence, and documentation of the same must be presented to the professor no later than the next class meeting. All

other absences are considered to be unexcused. Unexcused absences will affect students' grade (see below).

Arriving more than 10 minutes late for any three classes will cumulatively count as one unexcused absence, while arriving 30 minutes late for any class will count as an unexcused absence.

Penalties for unexcused absences:

1 absence—class participation grade drops one full letter grade (example: A- to B-).

2 absences—class participation grade drops two full letter grades.

3 absences—class participation grade drops three full letter grades.

4 or more absences—class participation grade is a failing grade.

Any absence, whether excused or not, will require catch-up reading.

## 5. Academic Honesty Statement

Please click the following link to see The Beijing Center's policy on Academic Integrity: <http://thebeijingcenter.org/academic-integrity>

## Course Schedule

### Week 1: Introduction

Topics for critical study:

1. The essence of literature and the purpose it serves
2. Your perception of modern China and its literature
3. The momentousness of "The May Fourth Movement"
4. The modernization movement in China: Literary and social reform
5. The social, political, and cultural elements in modern Chinese literature
6. Lu Xun's pivotal role in the development of modern Chinese literature
7. The significance of Lu Xun's *Call to Arms*
8. Chinese scholars under the imperial examination system

Required reading:

"Preface to *Call to Arms*" (1-6)

"A Madman's Diary" (7-18)

"Kong Yiji" (19-24)

### Week 2: Lu Xun (I)

Topics for critical study:

1. The traditional Chinese social system
2. Lu Xun's hard-core realist style
3. Lu Xun's human portrayal and social satire
4. "Ah Q-ism" and other typical "national traits"

Required reading:

"Medicine" (25-33)

"My Old Home" (54-64)

"The True Story of Ah Q" (65-112)

### Week 3: Lu Xun (II)

Topics for critical study:

1. Nostalgia expressed in Lu Xun's works

2. Women in traditional Chinese society
3. Chinese intellectuals in “The May Fourth Movement” and its aftermath
4. The cultural, social, and political import of Lu Xun’s *Wandering*

Required reading:

- “Village Opera” (113-124)
- “The New Year’s Sacrifice” (125-143)
- “In the Wine Shop” (144-155)
- “Regret for the Past” (197-215)

Hand in topics for presentation

#### **Week 4: Shen Congwen**

Topics for critical study:

1. Lu Xun’s initiation of the “native soil literature”
2. Shen Congwen’s contribution to the “native soil literature”
3. Shen Congwen: A writer unwilling to write anything against his conscience

Required reading:

*The Border Town*

Hand in a preliminary title for the term paper

#### **Week 5: Lao She (I)**

Topics for critical study:

1. Social criticism as an inheritance from Lu Xun
2. Lao She’s social /ethnic background and creative energy
3. *Rickshaw* as a chronicle of life in the city of Beijing

Required reading:

*Rickshaw* (Chapters 1-12)

Hand in outlines for the term paper

Oral presentation #1

#### **Week 6: Lao She (II)**

Topics for critical study:

1. Lao She and his tragic protagonist in *Rickshaw*
2. The allusions in *Rickshaw*
3. The symbolism in *Rickshaw*

Required reading:

*Rickshaw* (Chapters 13-24)

Hand in bibliographies for the term paper

Oral presentation #2

#### **Week 7: Mid-term Examination**

#### **Week 8: Ba Jin (I)**

Topics for critical study:

1. Ba Jin and the new generation’s soul searching
2. Confucianism vs. humanism
3. Family: A shelter or an institution of repression?

Required reading:

*Family* (Chapters 1-20)

Oral presentation #3

## **Week 9: Ba Jin (II)**

Topics for critical study:

1. Moral dilemma: Tradition vs. progression
2. The generation gap and the gap within a generation
3. Ba Jin's affliction and survival in the "Cultural Revolution"

Required reading:

*Family* (Chapters 21-33)

Oral presentation #4

## **Week 10: Huang Ch'un-ming**

Topics for critical study:

1. New development of "native soil literature" in Taiwan
2. Huang Ch'un-ming: A spokesman for the culturally disadvantaged people
3. The complicated social circumstances depicted by a native Taiwanese writer

Required reading:

"A Flower in the Rainy Night" (195-241)

"The Two Signpainters" (185-216)

"Sayonara·Tsai-chien" (217-270)

Oral presentation #5

## **Week 11: Mo Yan (I)**

Topics for critical study:

1. Mo Yan in the midst of the emergence of a new generation of nativists in Mainland China
2. The ambiguity and uncertainty of reality
3. *Red Sorghum*: A historical novel with a new creative vista

Required reading:

*Red Sorghum* (Chapters 1-2)

Oral presentation #6

## **Week 12: Mo Yan (II)**

Topics for critical study:

1. Perspectives of the Nationalist troops, Communist forces, and the "bandit" forces
2. The significance of symbolic elements in the narrative
3. The function of the setting of the novel

Required reading:

*Red Sorghum* (Chapters 3-5)

Oral presentation #7

## **Week 13: Han Shaogong**

Topics for critical study:

1. Han Shaogong and a new generation of nativists' quest for the root
2. *A Dictionary of Ma Qiao*: Society viewed from a lexicological perspective
3. Value system within its semiotized social context

Required reading:

*A Dictionary of Ma Qiao*

Oral presentation #8

## **Week 14: Yu Hua (I)**

Topics for critical study:

1. The “Cultural Revolution”: Its origin, course, and ramifications
2. The misleading appellation and brutal nature of the “Cultural Revolution”
3. The trauma of the “Cultural Revolution” and the danger of its staging a comeback

Required reading:

*Brothers* (Part I)

Oral presentation #9

## **Week 15: Yu Hua (II)**

Topics for critical study:

1. The permanence and change of the Chinese society as exposed in Yu Hua’s fiction
2. The legacy of Lu Xun: A sarcastic vision of the harsh reality
3. The art to circumvent censorship: Sexuality vs. politics

Required reading:

*Brothers* (Part II)

Wrap-up

Final paper is due