



EALC 2926/6926

Chinese Martial Arts

Spring 2023

Dr. Ori Tavor

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Office: 710 Williams Hall

Office Hours: R 2:00-3:00

Class Meeting: R 3:30-6:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course offers an overview of major themes in Chinese martial arts fiction and film. Throughout the semester, we will explore the social, political, and cultural contexts of martial arts narratives, from the pre-modern period to the 21st century. The course will take an interdisciplinary approach to situating martial arts narratives in history through an examination of religious, literary, and cinematic sources against the backdrop of theoretical approaches from across gender and media studies, philosophy, and cultural theory. The first few weeks will be dedicated to the pre-modern period. We will learn about the link between martial arts and gender politics, the relationship between martial training and spiritual self-cultivation, and the place of the wuxia (martial heroes) genre in the history of Chinese literature. We will then turn our attention to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, investigating the role of martial arts practices and narratives on such issues as nation-making, social critique, and historical revisionism. We will conclude by examining the global impact of Chinese martial arts on contemporary popular culture as well as its place in broader discourses of orientalism, cultural appropriation, and globalization. No knowledge of Chinese is presumed, and all readings will be available in English on the Canvas website in PDF form. Graduate students may take this course as EALC6926 and should see the instructor to discuss requirements for graduate credit.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Class Attendance and Participation: 10%

Weekly Quizzes: 40%

Final Project Presentation: 10%

Final Project: 40%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Class attendance is part of the learning process. Students will be permitted to miss up to **two** sessions without their grade being adversely affected. If you will miss an assignment due to a legitimate absence (such as serious illnesses, religious holidays, or University-sanctioned events), please notify me in advance of the class you will be missing. In addition, class attendance means participation. This is a discussion-based class, so you must come prepared, after having completed all assigned readings and the quiz and be ready to discuss them in class.

WEEKLY QUIZZES

Starting from week 03, students will be expected to submit their answers to short quizzes posted on the Canvas website, based on the weekly readings. The quizzes must be completed by 11 AM every Thursday.

FINAL PROJECT AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECT PRESENTATION:

students will offer an analysis of a martial arts film or literary piece (or comparison of a theme in multiple works). This project will be comprised of two parts: a short in-class presentation and a written essay (2500 words). The goal of the presentation is to explain your topic to the class in a clear and concise manner, with an emphasis on why the topic is important to our understanding of Chinese martial arts. **The Final project is due at noon, May 4, sent to oritavor@sas.upenn.edu.**

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Week One (1/12): *Course Introduction*

Week Two (1/19): *Heroes and Bandits: Masculinity and Marginality in Martial Arts Literature*

Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, 1-21.

Chen Pingyuan, *The Development of Chinese Martial Arts Fiction*, 8-33.

“Shi Jin the Nine-Dragoned,” in: *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, 226-237.

Week Three (1/26): *The Shaolin Temple, Buddhist Masculinity, and Martial Arts Training*

Meir Shahar, “Chen Zongyou, Exposition of the Original Shaolin Staff Method,” in: *Hawaii Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, 514-516.

Nikolas Broy, “Martial Monks in Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 40 (2012): 45-89.

The 36th Chamber of Shaolin (少林三十六房, dir. Lau Kar-leung 劉家良, 1978)

Week Four (2/2): *Swordsmen and Sorcerers: Fantastic Martial Arts Literature*

Andrew Schroeder, *Tsui Hark’s Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain*, 1-34.

Robert L. Chard, “Transcendents, Sorcerers, and Women Warriors: Huanzhulouzu’s Mountain Sword-warriors of Sichuan,” *CHINOPERL Papers* 20-22 (1997-1999): 169-195.

Zu Warriors from the Magic Mountain (新蜀山劍俠, dir. Tsui Hark 徐克, 1983)

Week Five (2/9): *Challenging the Patriarchy: Women and Martial Arts*

Ya-chen Chen, *Women in Chinese Martial Arts Films of the New Millennium*, 31-46.

Rong Cai, “Gender Imaginations in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and the Wuxia World,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 13.2 (2005): 441-471.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (臥虎藏龍, dir. Ang Lee 李安, 2000)

Week Six (2/16): Modernity and the (Re-)Invention of Martial Arts Traditions

Stanley Henning, "The Martial Arts in Chinese Physical Culture, 1865-1965," in: *Martial Arts in the Modern World*, 13-35.

Eunyeong Kim, "Chinese Connection in Diasporic Nationalism: An Analysis of *Fist of Fury* as a National Allegory," *Journal of S.N.U. Institute for Asian Studies* 52 (2014): 227-246.

Fist of Fury (精武門, dir. Lo Wei 羅維, 1972)

Week Seven (2/23): All under Heaven: Nationalism and Revisionist History

Wendy Larson, "Dismantling the Myth of Cultural Power," *Zhang Yimou: Globalization and the Subject of Culture*, 271-304.

Ping Zhu, "Virtuality, Nationalism, and Globalization in Zhang's *Hero*," *Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.2 (2013): 1-9.

Hero (英雄, dir. Zhang Yimou 張藝謀, 2002)

Week Eight (3/2): Effortless Action: Martial Arts and Daoist Aesthetics

Stephen Teo, *Chinese Martial Arts Film and the Philosophy of Action*, 13-39.

Hsiu-Chuang Deppman, "Ethics and Aesthetics in *The Assassin*," in: *The Assassin: Hou Hsiao-hsien's World of Tang China*, 161-177.

The Assassin (刺客聶隱娘, dir. Hou Hsiao-Hsien 侯孝賢, 2015)

Week Nine (3/9): NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Week Ten (3/16): Sinful Heroes: Violence and Social Critique in Contemporary China

Shenshen Cai, "Jia Zhangke and His *A Touch of Sin*," *Film International* 13.2 (2015): 67-78.

Yanjie Wang, "Violence, Wuxia, Migrants: Jia Zhangke's Cinematic Discontent in *A Touch of Sin*," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 9.2 (2015): 159-172.

A Touch of Sin (天注定, dir. Jia Zhangke 賈樟柯, 2013)

Week Eleven (3/23): Only China can Save the World: Patriotism and 21st Century Martial Masculinity

Stephen Teo, *Chinese Martial Arts Film and the Philosophy of Action*, 122-140.

Tingting Hu and Tianru Guan, "Man-as-Nation: Representations of Masculinity and Nationalism in Wu Jing's *Wolf Warrior II*," *SAGE Open* 11.3 (2021): 1-13.

Wolf Warrior 2 (战狼 2, dir. Wu Jing, 2017)

Week Twelve (3/30): *Kung Fu Pandemonium: Martial Arts as Global Popular Culture*

Wang Chenjun, "The Western Gaze in Animation: A Case Study of Kung Fu Panda," *Journal of Content, Community and Communication* 6 (2017): 3-12.

Chung Hye-Jean, "Kung Fu Panda: Animated Animal Bodies as Layered Sites of (Trans)National Identities," *Velvet Light Trap* 69 (2012): 27-37.

Kung Fu Panda (dir. John Stevenson and Mark Osborne, 2008)

Week Thirteen (4/6): *The Global Impact of Martial Arts Cinema and the Question of Representation*

Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park, "Leukocentric Hollywood: Whitewashing, Alohagate, and the Dawn of Hollywood with Chinese Characteristics," *Asian Cinema* 29.1 (2018): 133-162.

Daniel Martin, "The Americanization of the Hong Kong Kung Fu Hero: Orientalism and Social Class in Marvel Comics' *Iron Fist*," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 51.6 (2018): 1521-1539.

Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings (dir. Destin Daniel Cretton, 2021)

Week Fourteen (4/13)

Final Presentations

Week Fifteen (4/20)

Final Presentations

Final project due May 4, sent to oritavor@sas.upenn.edu by noon.