



EALC 2926/6926

Chinese Martial Arts

Fall 2023

Dr. Ori Tavor

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Office: 710 Williams Hall

Office Hours: F 12:30-1:30

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 (*wuxia* 武侠), from the pre-modern period to the 21st century. The course will take an interdisciplinary approach to situating the *wuxia* genre in history through an examination of cinematic and literary 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 an examination of classical martial arts film from Hong Kong and Mainland China. We will learn about the link between martial arts and gender politics, the relationship between martial training and spiritual self-cultivation, and the relationship between *wuxia* and nationalism. In the second half of the semester, we will then turn our attention to less traditional martial arts narratives and the interplay between *wuxia* and other cinematic genres such as detective stories, action films, and social criticism. We will conclude by examining the global impact of *wuxia* 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: 25%

Response Papers: 50% (10% each)

Final Project: 25%

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 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 be ready to discuss them in class.

RESPONSE PAPERS:

Each student will be responsible for writing a response to **five** films (out of a total of ten). Half of the students will write on group 1 and half on group 2. Groups will be assigned in class, at the end of our first meeting. One week before we discuss the film in class, students will be given a set of questions that will help them analyze it against the backdrop of the weekly readings. Each essay will be ~1000 words. The dates are clearly marked below and there will be **no extensions**.

Group 1	Group 2
9/21 <i>The 36th Camber of Shaolin</i>	9/28 <i>Zu Warriors</i>
10/5 <i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon</i>	10/19 <i>Fist of Fury</i>
10/26 <i>Hero</i>	11/2 <i>The Grandmaster</i>
11/9 <i>A Touch of Sin</i>	11/16 <i>Wolf Warrior 2</i>
11/30 <i>Kung Fu Panda</i>	12/7 <i>Shang Chi</i>

FINAL PROJECT:

For their final project, students will offer an analysis of a martial arts film or literary piece (or comparison of a theme in multiple works). The goal of this 1500-words paper is to use the tools learned throughout the semester to analyze a work of film or fiction not explored in class. The due date is December 20, 5:00 PM EST.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Week One (8/31): *Course Introduction*

Week Two (9/7): *Heroes and Bandits: Masculinity and Marginality in Martial Arts Literature*

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

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

Week Three (9/14): NO CLASS (Rosh Hashanah)

Week Four (9/21): *Buddhism, Masculinity, and Martial Self-Cultivation*

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

Joshua Capitanio, “Health, Illness, and the Body in Buddhist and Daoist Self-Cultivation,” in: *Brahman and Dao*, 181-192.

[*The 36th Camber of Shaolin*](#) (少林三十六房, dir. Lau Kar-leung 劉家良, 1978)

Week Five (9/28): *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: Huanzhulouzhū’s Mountain Sword-warriors of Sichuan,” *CHINOPEL 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 Six (10/5): *Gender and the Pursuit of Selfhood in The Realm of Rivers and Lakes*

Beata Grant, "Gender," in: *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions*, 397-417.

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 Seven (10/12): NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Week Eight (10/19): *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 Nine (10/26): *All under Heaven: Nationalism and Revisionist History in Post-Mao China*

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

Yuri Pines, "A Hero Terrorist: Adoration of Jing Ke Revisited," *Asia Major* 21.2 (2008): 1-34.

[*Hero*](#) (英雄, dir. Zhang Yimou 張藝謀, 2002)

Week Ten (11/2): *The Legends of Ip Man and Chinese Diasporic Nationalism*

Stephen Teo, *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Wuxia Tradition*, 204-216.

Tom Cunliffe, "The Grandmaster: Socio-Political Plurality in Contemporary Hong Kong," *The Journal of Cinema and Media* 59.2 (2018): 101-120.

[*The Grandmaster*](#) (一代宗師, dir. Wong Kar-Wai 王家衛, 2013)

Week Eleven (11/9): *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 Twelve (11/16): *Only China can Save the World: Patriotism and 21st Century Martial Masculinity*

Chris Berry, "Wolf Warrior 2: Imagining the Chinese Century," *Film Quarterly* 72.2 (2018): 38-44.

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 Thirteen (11/23): NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

Week Fourteen (11/30): *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 Fifteen (12/7): *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)

FINAL PAPER DUE ON DECEMBER 20, 5:00 PM EST.

Please send it as a PDF file to oritavor@sas.upenn.edu.