Seattle University Spring 2010

The History of Chinese Cinema: Film 364

Tuesdays, 6:00-10:00 p.m. Professor Richie Meyer Email: meyerhar@aol.com

Office Hours – By appointment

The History of Chinese Cinema will explore film in the context of that nation's rise from the "sick man of Asia" to a world power in less than a century. The films of China during the past 100 years reflect the turmoil and aspirations of a society that has been producing works of art for millennia. The course will explore the unique characteristics of films produced in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Mainland in the context of historical, social and political events. Film makers studied will include Sun Yu, Ang Lee, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Wong Kar Wai, Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, Jiang Wen, Xiao Jiang, Joan Chen and others. Films to be screened include "The Peach Girl," "Breaking with Old Ideas," "The Red Detachment of Women," "A City of Sadness," "Red Sorghum," "Xiu, Xiu, The Sent Down Girl," "Devils at the Doorstep" and others. Students studying history, political science, fine arts and film studies will find this course useful.

Objectives:

- 1. To familiarize students with a survey of important developments in Chinese cinema, from its beginnings through the present;
- 2. To assist students in understanding and appreciating the visual arts in general;
- 3. To familiarize students with major works in the early history of Chinese motion pictures;
- 4. To enable students to enjoy and appreciate how today's cinema is built upon that of the past;

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- 5. To encourage research and writing about film; and,
- 6. To enable students to understand the construction of film, its contradictions, its unique view of Chinese society and of human experience.

Special Needs

If, as a student, you have special needs to facilitate learning please notify Dr. Meyer during the first week of classes in writing specifically indicating what those needs are and what is required to satisfy those needs.

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted. If you are on assignment as a professional broadcaster, film maker, or newspaper reporter, deadlines cannot be missed. (All late work loses a grade a day.)

Typing

Typing is required for all work submitted and you should always have a second copy of what you submit to use in class discussions. Spelling and grammatical errors will result in lower grades. Please take time to proof your work carefully.

Absence

Attendance is required in class as well as at other films which may be chosen by Dr. Meyer. Assignments are due on dates indicated regardless of class attendance. If you are not going to be in class, please make arrangements to have the assignment that is due delivered at the start of class.

Copying

Copying someone else's work, using papers from previous semesters, purchasing papers and/or lifting segments of and/or complete works is not acceptable. If discovered during the semester or within 90 days after the semester, the student will fail the course.

Text Books

Meyer, Richard J., <u>Ruan Ling-yu: The Goddess of Shanghai</u> (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005). ISBN – 962-209-3957 (paper & DVD)

Yang, Jeffrey, Once Upon a time in China: A guide to Hong Kong, Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese Cinema (New York: Atria Books, 2003). ISBN – 0-7434-4817-0 (paper)

Books on Reserve

Book Report (Due Tuesday, Apr 20)

Each student will read a book suggested in the Bibliographies and Notes in the textbooks by Meyer and/or Yang. The Book Report will replace the mid-term exam. You may select another book about the class topic other than those in the Bibliography if you get prior approval from Professor Meyer.

Final Paper Narrative Outline (Due Tuesday, May 11)

Each student will select a topic for a final paper which lists the subject, method of research and sources.

Final Paper (Due Tuesday, Jun 1)

After the outline is approved, each student will write a 10-15 page paper on the topic

selected. Correct bibliographical citation and research methods will be required as well as a professional style of writing. Your final paper will be counted as the final examination for the course.

Journal (Due Tuesday, Jun 8)

Students will keep a journal in which they will write comments about each film screened in class.

Oral Reports

Students will be expected to present at least one oral report during the semester. Notes used for the reports are to be submitted after the presentation.

Basis for Grade

Final Paper - 50%

Pop Quizzes - Plus/Minus

Book Report - 20%

Oral Report - 10%

Class Participation and Attendance - 10%

Journal - 10%

Screenings & Lectures (Schedule subject to change)

Week 1: Apr 6 The Early Days: Shadow Magic

China has had 5,000 years of art. The 20th century saw the development of its newest art form – Cinema or Dian Ying ("electric shadows.") When Westerners screened early films in Beijing and Shanghai, the Chinese decided to start their own film industry.

Week 2: Apr 13 The Golden Age: *The Peach Girl*Shanghai, the "Paris of Asia," emerged after World War I as the center of film production. By the 1930s, thousands of motion pictures were made in that international city which soon became the Hollywood of Asia.

Week 3: Apr 20 War: The Big Road – Dalu

The Japanese invaded China in 1931, conquered Manchuria and bombed Shanghai. Chiang Kai-shek, the head of the Nationalist Government appeared the invaders by censoring films. However, leftist filmmakers produced films with anti-imperialist messages hidden enough to make it through the censors.

Week 4: Apr27 The Second Golden Age: Spring in a Small Town or Spring River Flows East

After Japan occupied Shanghai, many filmmakers escaped to Yan'an, Chonqquing, and Hong Kong, while some remained and continued to make movies under the Japanese. After World War II, most returned to Shanghai where that city entered a second Golden Age of film production until the takeover by the communists in 1949.

Week 5: May 4 The New China: Breaking with Old Ideas (Jue Lie)

The Red Detachment of Women

The establishment of the PRC on October 1, 1949 resulted in the nationalization of the film industry. Many filmmakers fled to Taiwan and Hong Kong. Those who remained wanted to build a "new China," using their medium to instill loyalty to Mao Zedong and his ideals.

Week 6: May11 Hong Kong: *Enter the Dragon or Drunken Master*Hong Kong became a vital production center for Asia with its "King Fu" agenda. Bruce
Lee and Jackie Chan became worldwide heroes.

Week 7: May 18 Taiwan: A City of Sadness

The Nationalists lost the Chinese Civil War and fled to Taiwan. A new cinema emerged with a different point of view from the Mainland. Native Taiwanese as well as those from Shanghai developed their own style when they produced films that reflected topics associated with Taiwan.

Week 8: May 25 The Fifth Generation: *Red Sorghum*

When the Beijing Film Academy re-opened its doors after the Cultural Revolution, the first graduating class in 1982 became known as the "Fifth Generation." The famous directors included Chen Kaige, Zhong Yimou, Tian Zhuang Zhuang and others. They used avant-garde film techniques to depart from old-style Maoist propaganda films.

Week 9: Jun 1 The Sixth Generation: *Devils at the Doorstep*A new sophisticated generation of filmmakers known as the "Sixth Generation" started to make controversial features with private funds and several were banned in China, but seen in the West. A few movies even referred to the Cultural Revolution.

Week 10: Jun 8 Back to the Future: *Xiu, Xiu, The Sent Down Girl* China is the largest media market in the world. Many of its films are co-produced and co-financed by Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, U.S. and other European countries. Chinese cinema has returned to the commercial style of Shanghai in the 1930s. Many directors and actors commute between Shanghai, Hong Kong and Hollywood.