

SHANGHAI IMAGINED

First-Year Seminar

Course: Asian 017 / English 014
Term: Fall 2009
Time: TTh 1:00-2:25
Location: Mass Hall - McKeen Study

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Office Hours: TTh 2:30-4:00
& by appointment

Course Description

This course examines literary and filmic representations of 1930s and 1940s Shanghai. We will explore how Shanghai imagined itself in this period via its own writers and films as well as how it has been imagined retrospectively by contemporary writers and filmmakers, both within mainland China and in the diaspora. Topics include Shanghai's history of semi-colonialism; conceptions of cosmopolitanism and modernity; intersecting discourses of gender, nationalism, and colonialism; the status of Westerners and the figure of the Eurasian; the Sino-Japanese War and representations of the Japanese soldier; the Jewish ghetto; and hybrid cultural forms such as Shanghai jazz.

Primary Readings

- * Shi Zhecun, *One Rainy Evening*
- * Mao Dun, *Spring Silkworms*
- Eileen Chang, *Written on Water*
- Eileen Chang, *Love in a Fallen City*
- Diana Chang, *The Frontiers of Love*
- J. G. Ballard, *Empire of the Sun*
- Kazuo Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans*
- Ian Buruma, *The China Lover*
- Lisa See, *Shanghai Girls*
- * Irene Eber, ed., *Voices from Shanghai*
- Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*

Note: Starred titles are available as PDFs on Blackboard, under "Readings," as are several supplemental essays. Please print these out ahead of time and bring hard copies to class on the scheduled dates.

Film Screenings

During Unit II, there will be four *mandatory* film screenings at 7-9pm, location TBA. However, if you have an approved scheduling conflict, you can view the movie on your own time prior to class. All films will be put on reserve at the Language Media Center (basement of Sills Hall).

Writing Assignments

There are three formal essay assignments in the course, with one required revision. Detailed instructions will be handed out at later points in the term. All three essays must be completed for a passing course grade. Late papers will be penalized one-third a letter grade per class day beyond the due date.

In addition, you will write a series of 2-page response papers. These shorter papers are intended to encourage initial exploration of texts/films and will not be graded individually. Cumulatively, though, they constitute 20% of your overall grade. See handout for guidelines.

Oral Presentations

Each of you will be responsible for a 15-minute oral presentation on the literary work of your choice. Oral presentations are not graded individually but count as part of your overall participation grade. See handout for guidelines.

Class Participation

“Participation” means more than just attendance. You are expected to come to each class ready to discuss the assigned material. Contributions to class discussions in the form of thoughtful, productive comments or questions are an essential part of your participation grade. I favor quality over quantity: purely opinion-driven remarks such as “I love/hate this book” or “I agree/disagree with the author” may serve as catalysts for more substantive observations, but in themselves they neither advance our analysis of a work nor qualify as strong participation.

Grade Distribution

Essays	= 60% (20% each)
Response Papers	= 20%
Participation	= 20%

You are allowed two unexcused absences in the term. Each unexcused absence thereafter will result in the drop of one-third a letter grade from your participation grade.

In general, I adhere closely to my grade distribution, but I also reserve a margin of discretion for reward or penalty when calculating final course grades.

Grade Scale

An “A” paper is exceptional in every respect. The topic is complex and challenging; the thesis is original, persuasive, and well-supported; analysis of textual evidence is meticulous, precise, and thoughtful; the writing is crisp and vigorous. The writer goes considerably beyond a competent fulfillment of the assignment and addresses the text(s) perceptively, deeply, daringly. The paper contains minor to no mechanical errors and has no significant lapse in organization or logic.

A “B”-range paper fulfills the assignment with proficiency and care. It goes beyond a routine reading of the text(s) and shows clear signs of thought and planning, though it may lack the level of conceptual originality and/or analytic depth of the “A” paper. The topic is well-chosen, and the paper moves through a clear organizational structure. There may be moments of refreshing and powerful insight, but these may occasionally be offset by a lapse in logic, unsupported claims, and/or careless use of textual evidence. The overall writing is smooth, clean, free of jargon and clichés.

A “C” indicates a range of acceptable work. One type of the “C” paper competently carries out the assignment but in a perfunctory manner. The topic chosen may be appropriate but undemanding, and development of the topic may be predictable or shallow. Analysis of text(s) usually lacks depth of engagement, and conclusions often reveal little independence of thought. Another type of the “C” paper signals a general lack of care in composition or proofreading, leaving intact a moderate share of mechanical errors, awkward syntax, jargon and/or colloquialisms. A simple regurgitation of class notes also falls into this category.

A “D”-range paper indicates sub-standard work. The paper contains a variety of major issues: inappropriate topic that fails to address the assignment; no thesis, or else an underdeveloped or overgeneral thesis; utter lack of organization; poor or faulty handling of textual evidence; failure to engage with the text(s) altogether; etc. An abundance of mechanical and stylistic problems may obscure the writer’s meaning. Obviously sloppy and hasty work falls into this category.

An “F” is given to unsubmitted or plagiarized work (see below).

Academic Honesty

The word *plagiarism* derives from the Latin word for “kidnapping.” Intellectual kidnapping can take many forms. It can be as self-consciously deceitful an act as the calculated stealing of someone else’s words or ideas and passing them off as one’s own. More often, though, it is the result of inattention and carelessness, as when one forgets to provide proper documentation for external sources. Depending on the nature of the offense, penalty will range from failing the assignment to failing the course and, in the most serious cases, disciplinary action from the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs. Refer to the *Student Handbook* for a full statement of the Academic Honor Code.

As a rule of thumb, err on the side of safety and cite your sources. If you are ever unsure about how or when to do so, just ask.

Schedule

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|--------------------------------|----|--------------|---|
| 1. | Th | Sep 3 | Overview: Tropes of Shanghai |
| Unit I: Shanghai in Modernity | | | |
| 2. | T | Sep 8 | Betty Wei (BB); Shi Zhecun (BB) |
| 3. | Th | Sep 10 | Mao Dun (BB) |
| 4. | T | Sep 15 | Eileen Chang, <i>Written on Water</i> (chapters 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 16, 21, 31) and “Sealed Off” (<i>Love</i> 235-251) |
| 5. | Th | Sep 17 | Eileen Chang, “Love in a Fallen City” (<i>Love</i> 109-167) |
| 6. | T | Sep 22 | Eileen Chang, “Red Rose, White Rose” (<i>Love</i> 253-312) |
| 7. | Th | Sep 24 | Eileen Chang, “The Golden Cangue” (<i>Love</i> 169-234) |
| Unit II: Shanghai in Film | | | |
| 8. | T | Sep 29 | Film: <i>The Goddess</i> ; Essay 1 due |
| | T | Sep 29 (7pm) | Film: <i>Street Angel</i> |
| 9. | Th | Oct 1 | Shuqin Cui (BB); Yingjin Zhang (BB) |
| | Th | Oct 1 (7pm) | Film: <i>Red Rose, White Rose</i> |
| | M | Oct 5 (7pm) | Film: <i>Lust, Caution</i> |
| 10. | T | Oct 6 | Hanchao Lu (BB); Xudong Zhang (BB); Leo Ou-fan Lee (BB) |
| | T | Oct 6 (7pm) | Film: <i>Perhaps Love</i> |
| 11. | Th | Oct 8 | Film: <i>Kung Fu Hustle</i> |
| | T | Oct 13 | * Fall Vacation * |
| 12. | Th | Oct 15 | Discussion: Shanghai across Asia and genres |
| Unit III: Shanghai in Diaspora | | | |
| 13. | T | Oct 20 | Diana Chang (1-127) |
| 14. | Th | Oct 22 | Diana Chang (128-246); Essay 2 due |
| 15. | T | Oct 27 | J. G. Ballard (1-123) |
| 16. | Th | Oct 29 | J. G. Ballard (124-211) |
| 17. | T | Nov 3 | J. G. Ballard (212-279) |
| 18. | Th | Nov 5 | * Library Tour * |
| 19. | T | Nov 10 | Kazuo Ishiguro (1-131) |
| 20. | Th | Nov 12 | Kazuo Ishiguro (132-213) |
| 21. | T | Nov 17 | Kazuo Ishiguro (214-336) |
| 22. | Th | Nov 19 | Ian Buruma (1-134) |
| 23. | T | Nov 24 | Lisa See (1-85); Essay Revision due |
| | Th | Nov 26 | * Happy Thanksgiving! * |
| 24. | T | Dec 1 | Lisa See (86-192) |
| 25. | Th | Dec 3 | Lisa See (193-315) |
| 26. | T | Dec 8 | <i>Voices from Shanghai</i> (BB) |
| 27. | Th | Dec 10 | Conclusions |
| | T | Dec 15 | Essay 3 due |

Readings marked with (BB) are available on Blackboard.

Response Papers Guidelines

As part of the writing requirement for this course, you will write a total of six 2-page response papers – two on any two authors in Unit I (Shi Zhecun, Mao Dun, Eileen Chang); two on any two films in Unit II (from *The Goddess* to *Kung Fu Hustle*); and two on any two novelists in Unit III (Diana Chang, J. G. Ballard, Kazuo Ishiguro, Ian Buruma, Lisa See).

What are response papers, and how do I write one?

Response papers are a genre unto themselves. They are short and focused, not as argumentatively full-fledged as formal essays but still analytical in nature. This means you can dispense with rehearsing basic elements of a work (plot summaries, character descriptions, etc.). Assume that your audience – myself, and sometimes your peers in the class – is generally familiar with the material and interested in reading a thoughtful exploration of some *smaller* aspect of the text. Instead of beginning big, narrow in on something that especially engages or intrigues you: a scene, an image, a concept, a word. Wallow in the complexity of this detail, and try to pursue a thread of thought as far as it will take you. I am not expecting conclusive claims or theses but initial ideas and honest reflections.

As its name implies, a response paper registers your personal response to a text. While I don't mind and sometimes even enjoy subjective remarks such as "I love/hate this book" or "this author is a genius/a boor," I don't consider such declarations to be of great analytical substance. You can certainly start with opinions or emotional reactions, but be sure to then consider how or why the text has achieved this effect on you. Always anchor your reactions in the text.

Logistics

For Units I and III, response papers are due in to me the first class day for which a work is scheduled. For example, the response paper for Shi Zhecun is due on Tuesday, Sept. 8, that for Diana Chang on Tuesday, Oct. 20, etc. For Unit II, instead of submitting your papers in to me, post your response papers on the Blackboard Discussion Board by the next class day after a film's screening. So, post the response paper for *The Goddess* by Thursday, Oct. 1, and that for *Kung Fu Hustle* by Thursday, Oct. 15, etc.

Since this assignment is intended to help you generate preliminary and original thoughts on a work, late response papers – i.e., those turned in after we initiate class discussions – will not be accepted.

There is no need to notify me in advance if you pass on an author or film. You are responsible for keeping track of your own progress.

Although I will not be assigning grades to individual response papers, I will provide ample written feedback during Unit I and III to give you a sense of the quality of your work each time. During Unit II, you will be responsible for commenting on each other's ideas on the Discussion Board. Cumulatively, response papers constitute 20% of your final course grade.

Oral Presentation Guidelines

Each of you will be responsible for a 15-minute oral presentation on one literary work of your choice (sorry, no films). A sign-up sheet will be circulated next Tuesday. Review the books for this course as well as your schedules for other courses. Come prepared with a few preferences in case your first choice is taken.

The oral presentation is an exercise in textual analysis. It is not a book report, so do not summarize the plot at length or expatiate on authorial biography or historical context. Instead, focus on two to three passages that strike you as particularly important, rich, suggestive, challenging, etc. For each passage, draw out some possible themes, ideas, and questions. Your main goal is to guide the class into a discussion of the text by probing complexities in plot, theme, language, etc. Attempts at making connections between works or to larger issues of the course are especially welcome.

On the evening prior to your presentation, post 2-3 discussion questions on the Blackboard Discussion Board by 10pm. This is the only written component of the assignment and a mandatory part of it. The rest of the class will then use your questions to prepare for the next day's discussion.

Since this assignment is aimed to help you practice close reading – the skill of moving from small pieces of evidence to larger insights – avoid vague generalities. For example, while many of the works will address the topic of war, a statement such as “the author discusses war” says nothing concrete about the passages you have isolated or the distinctive ways this author approaches the subject. To arrive at more complex thoughts, pay attention to tensions and contradictions within a text. A strong discussion question may take the following form: “While passage A illustrates x about war, passage B suggests y . How do we reconcile the contrasting meanings posed by these two passages? Does the author provide support for one interpretation over the other elsewhere in the text?” Alternately, you may begin with one of the larger concepts of our course – for instance, *cosmopolitanism* – and then examine specific textual examples that address this concept. Some questions that may arise: “How does character A claim cosmopolitanism for him/herself? What are some implicit assumptions behind this claim? Do other characters challenge this understanding or offer alternative notions of cosmopolitanism?”

Keep in mind that you don't need to have all the answers. Often, an inquisitive and exploratory approach leads to the most fruitful conversations. Think of this assignment as an opportunity to generate and fine-tune ideas for your formal essays.

Oral presentations will not be graded individually but will be tallied as part of your overall participation grade.