



## Hong Kong Cinema

(ENGL 3396: Selected Topics, Fall 2012)

T, Th 11:30-1:00

C111

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office hours: T, Th 1:30-2:30 and by appointment

Bruce Lee. Jackie Chan. John Woo. Chow Yun-fat. These names spring to mind when we think of Hong Kong film, but how much more to the distinct national cinema exists beyond these figures famed from martial arts-inspired action? This course in film studies surveys one of the most locally successful and internationally influential national film traditions outside of Hollywood. By looking at Hong Kong movies from the 1980s and 1990s—the era of renown for most of the preceding stars—as well as films from before that time and after, we will explore the distinguishing aspects of this fascinating non-western film style. What generic, stylistic, and thematic elements characterize Hong Kong cinema, and what do they suggest about the local culture in which these films were made and viewed? How do these attributes compare with other western and non-western film styles, and what forms of Hong Kong cinema have been most popular abroad? To what extent does Hong Kong cinema reflect the idiosyncrasies of the territory's social and political situation, and how much is it a product of global film traditions in which all movies inevitably also partake?

8/28 INTRODUCTION  
read Bordwell, from *Planet Hong Kong* (pp.1-13: part of “All Too Extravagant, Too Gratuitously Wild”)

### Genres, Movements and Trends

8/30 *WU XIA, KUNG FU, AND MARTIAL ARTS*  
Chu with Sek, “A Brief Historical Tour of the HK Martial Arts Film”  
Teo, from *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema* (pp.1-6, 11-12)

9/4 *Magnificent Trio* (Chang Cheh, Shaw Brothers, 1967)

9/6 OPERA, MUSICALS, AND MELODRAMA (*HUANG MEI DIAO* OR YELLOW PLUM OPERA)  
Lyman, “Watching Movies with Ang Lee: Crouching Memory, Hidden Heart”  
**TBA**

9/11 *Love Eterne* (Li Han-Hsiang, Shaw Brothers, 1963)

9/13 COMEDY AND SOCIAL REALISM  
Teo, from *Hong Kong Cinema* (pp.47-50, 56-60: parts of “The Early Cantonese Cinema” )  
Bordwell, from *Planet Hong Kong* (pp.28-33: part of “Local Heroes”)

- 9/18            *House of 72 Tenants* (Chor Yuen, Shaw Brothers, 1973)
- 9/20            ACTION/CRIME  
Bordwell, “Aesthetics in Action: *Kungfu*, Gunplay, and Cinematic Expressivity”
- 9/25            *God of Gamblers* (Wong Jing, Win’s Movie Productions, Ltd., 1989)
- .....

**Lens Change: Imperialism**

- 9/27            Lii, from “A Colonized Empire: Reflections on the expansion of Hong Kong films in Asian countries”
- 10/2            *Aces Go Places* (a.k.a. *Mad Mission*, Eric Tsang, Cinema City, 1982)
- 10/4            **MIDTERM EXAM**

**Stars**

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- 10/9            BRUCE LEE  
Chiao, “Bruce Lee: His Influence on the Evolution of the Kung Fu Genre”
- 10/11           *Return of the Dragon* (Bruce Lee, Golden Harvest, 1972)
- 10/16           JACKIE CHAN  
Wolf, “Jackie Chan, American Action Hero?”  
*Drunken Master* (Yuen Woo-ping, Seasonal Film Corporation, 1978)
- 10/18           STEPHEN CHOW  
Kraicer, “Stephen Chiau: A Guide for the Perplexed”  
*All for the Winner* (Jeff Lau, Paragon Films, 1990)
- .....

**Lens Change: Gender**

- 10/23           Sek, “The War Between the Cantonese and Mandarin Cinemas in the Sixties, or How the Beautiful Women Lost to the Action Men”  
*Come Drink with Me* (King Hu, Shaw Brothers, 1966)
- 10/25           *Ah Kam* (a.k.a. *Stuntwoman*, Ann Hui, Golden Harvest, 1996)

## **History, Culture, and Industry**

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- 10/30 1997, OR THE “CHINA SYNDROME”  
Wong, “Hong Kong’s Final Cut?”  
*City on Fire* (Ringo Lam, Cinema City, 1987)
- 11/1 **NO CLASS**  
Bordwell, from *Planet Hong Kong* (pp. 115-134: “Made in Hong Kong”)  
\*\*\*e-mail assignment\*\*\*
- 11/6 Collier, “A Repetition Compulsion: Discontinuity Editing, Chinese Classical  
Aesthetics, and Hong Kong’s Culture of Disappearance”
- 11/8 TBA
- 11/13 NATIONALISM  
Rodriguez, from “Hong Kong popular culture as an interpretative arena: the Huang Feihong  
film series”
- 11/15 semester catch-up
- 11/16 optional film screening: *You’re the Apple of My Eye*  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
Friday, November 16, 7 pm
- Extra credit: due Monday, 11/19**
- 11/20 *Once Upon a Time in China II* (a.k.a. *Wong Fei Hung II*, Tsui Hark, Golden Harvest, 1992)
- 11/22 **NO CLASS** (Thanksgiving)
- 11/27 GLOBALIZATION AND DIGITALIZATION  
Hunt, “Wicked Shapes/Wicked Lies: Performance and ‘Authenticity’ in Hong  
Kong Martial Arts Films”
- 11/29 *Bodyguards and Assassins* (Teddy Chen, Beijing Polybona, 2009)

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### ***Lens Change:* Auteurs**

- 12/4 *In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar-wai, Jet Tone Production, 2000) cut
- 12/6 **FINAL EXAM**

## Assignments and Course Requirements:

Pop quizzes/ In-class Writings: Unannounced in-class writing exercises are a significant component of your final grade. The objective of these exercises is to test for comprehension and critical thinking about the assigned readings, and also to serve as preparation for class discussion. (They are conducted at the start of the class session.) The exercises may consist of 2-4 short answer questions, or one written topic, for which you are expected to provide 1-2 paragraphs of discussion. You may reference your readings and notes during the quiz. Because these exercises stimulate analysis by “brainstorming” issues without the formality of a written paper or exam, they are completed within 15 minutes of class time. **Late students do not receive extensions, and absence on a writing exercise is entered as a ‘zero.’** Therefore, it is in your interest to be present and prompt for all classes. Before calculating your final grade, I discard your lowest quiz score. So that you are abreast of your performance, work is graded and returned at the following class meeting. Please consult with me at any time if you have any questions about the course material and/or your quiz grades.

Opening Questions: At least once in the semester, you will be responsible for developing a set of questions to initiate class discussion. (Depending upon the number of class participants, you may do this exercise twice.) This assignment has two parts: (1) a 1-paragraph **written discussion** of your question, which must be **e-mailed to me by 5:00 pm the day before class**, and (2) your 3-5 minute **oral presentation** in class of your question, to be delivered at the start of the class session.

Because these questions will start our conversation, they must be specific to the day’s reading, and be something your peers can respond to by **utilizing the same material**. A good approach is to begin with a very basic question, whose discussion can lead to larger idea. For example, focus on a particular aspect of the reading, such as a term, passage, or expressed idea, and begin by offering possible interpretations (“does she mean x, which would imply y; or does she mean a, which might mean b?”), or by comparing/contrasting it with something else we’ve read (“I was interested by this... because it seems to contradict the claim there...” or “this reminds me of how... perhaps meaning the same as...”). A great strategy is to develop two or three basic questions that lead up to a more sophisticated query. Start by posing one or two questions about specific terms or passages in the text, and connect them to a final question that builds upon the previous ideas.

If you are assigned a day in which we discuss a film, your **questions must apply the previous day’s reading** to film, and you must **include a clip**. Your e-mail should identify your chosen scene and discuss how you plan to use it, and your clip must not exceed 90 seconds of continuous play. Be sure to come to class early to cue the film, and be prepared to introduce your clip with some introductory remarks regarding where the passage occurs in the film and what you want us to look for. Clips simply chosen from **those already available on Youtube are strongly discouraged**, as a main objective of this assignment is the thoughtful, personal selection of a passage from the whole of the assigned film.

Be assured that do not need to know the answer to all your questions, or even to have a complete understanding of the reading; you simply need to raise a question that can give you and your peers **a way to start discussing** the assigned text. During your presentation you should be prepared for interruptions from me or your classmates. Similarly, feel free to continue raising questions throughout that class. You are the expert on that day’s material; your grade for this assignment is earned by the ideas you raise with the reading and how you connect them to issues in this course, both in your opening comments and throughout the class session.

Due to the limited number of classes, you should make every effort to fulfill the requirement on your assigned day. (It is highly **unlikely that there will be an opportunity when you can re-do** the assignment.)

Exams: There will be two in-class exams: a midterm and a final. Both exams are open book and open note. Please be aware that **there is no option to “make up” an exam**.

Class Participation: Because discussion is a powerful way to master content and try ideas, **class participation is expected** in this course. You will be graded on both quantity and quality. This requirement, however, is not meant to be punitive; please see me if you are uncomfortable participating in class discussion.

**\*\*\*A Friendly Reminder\*\*\*: In this course, as in all courses promptness, attentiveness, kindness and all other forms of courtesy are much appreciated.**

## Class Policies

**Absences:** Students may have a maximum of 4 absences, including the first week of classes. Students in excess of this allotment, regardless of reason, will be either failed or dropped from the course. **You are responsible for knowing your own attendance record;** you may not be warned when nearing the maximum.

**Lateness and Early Departure:** Arriving more than 15 minutes after class begins, or departing more than 15 minutes before class ends, counts as an absence. If you are late or if you plan to depart early, it is your responsibility to check with me to learn whether you will be recorded as absent or present. If you arrive late, but within the 15-minute grace period, you should check with me to ensure that your presence was recorded.

**Plagiarism:** Suspected cases of plagiarism will be investigated according to departmental and University policy. Plagiarism is the failure to give proper credit when using specific words, facts, or ideas drawn from some other source. (The exception to this rule is information that can be considered common knowledge.) Please see me if you have questions regarding the definition or consequences of plagiarism.

**Instructions on film viewing:** As with any other university course, this class includes assignments to be completed by the student outside of the class session. Such assignments include reading as well as film viewing. To aid you in accessing the assigned films, a limited number of copies are available on library reserve. If you choose to borrow the library copies, plan accordingly. **Don't wait until the night before class to get the film** from the library, as a copy may not be available. Also keep in mind that you are sharing these copies with all of your colleagues in this course: when you have completed viewing a film, please return it immediately (if you don't, others might do the same, and the library copies will not be available at all).

**Required Materials:**  
blue books (at least two)

**Recommended Texts:**  
David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*  
Leon Hunt, *Kung Fu Cult Masters*  
Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*

<u>Composition of Final Grade:</u>	
Opening Question	15%
Quizzes	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%
<u>Class Participation</u>	<u>10%</u>
	100%

**Item available on Reserve:**

**Texts:**

Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*  
Hunt, *Kung Fu Cult Masters*  
Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*

*All critical readings are available through e-Reserves.*

**Films:**

*Aces Go Places (Mad Mission)*  
*Ah Kam (The Stuntwoman)*  
*Bodyguards and Assassins*  
*City on Fire*  
*Come Drink With Me*  
***Days of Being Wild***  
*Drunken Master*  
*God of Gamblers*  
*God of Gamblers II*  
*House of 72 Tenants*  
*In the Mood for Love*  
*Love Eterne*  
*Magnificent Trio*  
*Return of the Dragon*  
*Once Upon a Time in China II*