

HONG KONG NEW WAVE FILM & MEDIA

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description:

The Hong Kong New Wave (1980s-2000s) was an intensely creative period of film and media production in Hong Kong whose legacy lives on in global film and popular cultures today. This course will survey key figures, works, trends, and contexts of the Hong Kong New Wave movement, beginning with proto-New Wave developments in the 1960s and 70s and ending with its afterlives in contemporary Hong Kong and Hollywood. Sessions will be structured around ten films by directors including Wong Kar-Wai, Tsui Hark, Patrick Tam, Tang Shu Shuen, Angie Chen, Stanley Kwan, and Ann Hui. We will examine their works formally, through shot-by-shot analysis, as well as in relation to broader cultural and political developments, such as the 1967 anti-colonial riots, the Cultural Revolution, the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising, the 1997 handover, the formation of new ciné-clubs and film magazines, the rise of television and piracy, and recent pro-democracy movements in Hong Kong. We will also consider pertinent questions of stardom, reception and fandom, history and memory, gender and sexuality, protest and dissent, and what constitutes “Hong Kongness” in an era of postcoloniality, globalization, and rising nationalism.

Screenings: Each class session will be accompanied by a film screening. During some class sessions, we may watch clips alternating with discussion.

Requirements & Grading:

Attendance & Participation: 15%

Presentations: 20%

Midterm Assignment: 25%

Final Paper: 40%

Assignments must be submitted by the due date. All late papers without legitimate excuse will be marked down ½ of a letter grade for each successive day they are not received (i.e. a paper submitted 2 days late goes from an A- to a B).

1) Attendance & Participation:

Students are expected to fully prepare for class and actively participate in seminar discussions.

Attendance is mandatory. With only ten sessions, each unexcused absence will have a significant impact on the final grade.

2) Presentations:

Students will be required to give **two** 5-minute in-class presentations. One of the presentations must be completed by Session 4.

One will be a presentation on an assigned reading. This should include the following components: (a) the question the book/article answers (b) a keyword or concept with a concise definition (c) sources and methodologies (d) your criticism of the reading (e) one discussion question for the class

A second will be a presentation on the previous session's film. This should include the following components: (a) background on the film, director, & context (b) show a clip less than 1 minute or up to 5 still images that you find central to the film (c) explain your choice of clip/images with an interpretation (d) one discussion question for the class.

3) Midterm Assignment – Scene Analysis (4–5 pages)

For the midterm assignment, students will analyze one scene from a film on the syllabus. Your paper should: (a) identify a central issue in the film (b) select a scene that explores this issue (c) perform a shot-by-shot analysis of this scene, addressing formal aspects such as *mise-en-scène*, *cinematography*, *sound*, *editing* (d) Based on formal evidence, give an interpretation of each shot and/or the overall scene, explaining its function within the film. This can later be used as a piece of your final paper, should you choose to write on the same film and topic.

DUE: SESSION 5

4) Final Research Paper (8-10 pages):

For the final paper, students will write 8–10 pages on a film from the syllabus. This paper should cover the film's formal, cultural, and historical elements, and offer an original interpretation based on formal analysis and existing scholarship. Students can incorporate a revised version of their midterm scene analysis into this paper if relevant.

This paper should include (a) background on the film, director & political, social, and/or economic context (b) one central issue or theme (c) analysis of two or more scenes that explore said issue (d) a clear thesis (e) bibliography of existing scholarship (three or more relevant scholarly or critical texts, i.e. not Wikipedia).

The paper will be due the day of the final session. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss possible topics and films as early as Week 1.

DUE: SESSION 10

Academic Integrity Statement

Academic integrity and honesty are central components of a student's education, and the strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be treated lightly. You must document all of your source material. If you take any text from somebody else, you must make it clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from. You

must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material. If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask! Yale punishes academic dishonesty severely. The most common penalty is suspension from the university, but students caught plagiarizing are also subject to lowered or failing grades as well as the possibility of expulsion. Please be sure to review Yale's Academic Integrity Policy: <http://catalog.yale.edu/undergraduate-regulations/policies/definitions-plagiarism-cheating/>

Generative AI Policy

This course aims to teach students to read and write critically, research independently, formulate original arguments, and develop their own relationship to the material. The use of ChatGPT and other AI composition software would hinder these aims and is thus not permitted.

Week 1: Overview & Proto-New Wave

What was the Hong Kong New Wave? What were the social, political, and economic conditions that enabled its emergence? Who were the major players (directors, writers, performers, studios, film festivals)? What were some defining styles, genres, settings, subjects, and themes? What is the significance of this new wave movement in the context of global film culture from the 1980s to now?

What came before the New Wave? How did new magazines such as *Film Biweekly* and ciné-clubs such as *Phoenix Club* create a new film culture? How did film interact with adjacent forms such as Cantopop, Cantonese opera, and Cantonese TV dramas?

Session 1

READING

- Ackbar Abbas. "Introduction: Culture in a Space of Disappearance." In *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997. 1-15.
- Law Kar. "An Overview of Hong Kong's New Wave Cinema." In *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*." Edited by Esther C. M. Yau. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. 31-52.
- OPTIONAL: James Tweedie. "Introduction: Youth, Cities, and the Globalization of Art Cinema." In *The Age of New Waves: Art Cinema and the Staging of Globalization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- OPTIONAL: Rodriguez, Hector. "The Emergence of the Hong Kong New Wave." In Esther Yau, ed. *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. 53–70.

FILM

- *My Heart is That Eternal Rose* (Patrick Tam, 1989)

Session 2

Learn to navigate this online resource: [https://filmanalysis.yale.edu/Links to an external site.](https://filmanalysis.yale.edu/Links%20to%20an%20external%20site)

READING

- Poshek Fu. "Epilogue: My City in Flux." In *Hong Kong Media and Asia's Cold War*. Oxford University Press 2023. 149-175.
- Yau Ching. "Introduction: Framing a Hong Kong Chinese Female Authorship in History." In *Filming Margins Tang Shu Shuen: A Forgotten Hong Kong Director*. Hong Kong University Press, 2004. 1-28.
- OPTIONAL: Ting Lin, "Escaping Real Time: Cantopop Nostalgia." *Heichi Magazine*. November 4, 2021. <http://www.heichimagazine.org/en/articles/995/escaping-real-time-on-cantopop-nostalgia>

FILM

- *The Arch* (Tang Shu Shuen, 1968)

Week 2: History in/against the Nation

How do Hong Kong New Wave directors engage with historical upheavals such as the Cultural Revolution and the 1997 handover? How do their films challenge notions of national identity and belonging? How is Hong Kong identity constructed and deconstructed in Wong Kar-Wai and Ann Hui's works?

Session 3

Midterm assignment Q&A and brainstorm.

READING

- Ackbar Abbas. "The New Hong Kong Cinema and the *Déjà Disparu*" and "Wong Kar-Wai: Hong Kong Filmmaker." In *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997. 16-62.
- Rey Chow. "Between Colonizers: Hong Kong's Postcolonial Self-Writing in the 1990s." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 2, no. 2 (1992): 151-170.

FILM

- Wong Kar-Wai, *Happy Together* (1997)

Session 4

PRESENTATION #1 DUE

READINGS

- Patricia Erens. "Crossing Borders: Time, Memory, and the Construction of Identity in " 'Song of the Exile.' " *Cinema Journal*, 39, No. 4 (Summer, 2000): 43-59.

- Kwai-Cheung Lo. "Hong Kong Cinema as Ethnic Borderland." In *A Companion to Hong Kong Cinema*. Edited by Esther M. K. Cheung, Gina Marchetti, and Esther C.M. Yau. Wiley Blackwell, 2015. 71-88.

FILM

- *Song of the Exile* (Ann Hui, 1990)

Week 3: Popular Cinema and Transnational Stardom

What are some stylistic signatures and innovations of 1980s Hong Kong action genres? What is the relationship between entertainment and arthouse, lowbrow and highbrow filmmaking in Hong Kong?

How is stardom constructed? How do stars enable Hong Kong cinema to cross borders and speak to global audiences? What roles do studios and audiences play in shaping genre conventions and transnational stardom?

Session 5

MIDTERM ASSIGNMENT DUE

READINGS

- David Bordwell. "All Too Extravagant, Too Gratuitously Wild"; "Local Heroes." In *Planet Hong Kong* 2nd edition. Madison, Wisconsin: Irvington Way Institute Press, 2011. 1-38.
- Stephen Teo. "The New Wave's Action Auteurs." In *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimension*. London: BFI, 1997. 162-183.

FILM

- *The Legend of the Swordsman* (Ching Siu-Tung, 1992)

Session 6

READINGS

- Sabrina Qiong Yu. "Introduction: Jet Li and transnational kung fu stardom." In *Jet Li: Chinese Masculinity and Transnational Film Stardom*. Edinburgh University Press, 2012. 1-30.
- Felicia Chan. "Maggie Cheung, 'une Chinoise': Acting and Agency in the Realm of Transnational Stardom." *East Asian Film Stars*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014. 83-95.
- OPTIONAL: Articles from *Cahier du Cinema's* 1984 "Made in Hong Kong" special issue.

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- *Irma Vep* (Olivier Assayas, 1996)

Week 4: Queer Undercurrents

How do Hong Kong New Wave films engage with issues of gender and sexuality? What formal strategies constitute feminist and queer Hong Kong cinema? We will pay particular attention to performance practices of gender-bending, masquerade, passing, and code-switching.

Session 7

READINGS

- Helen Leung, “Introduction”; “Sex and the Postcolonial City” and “Between Girls.” In *Undercurrents: Queer Culture and Postcolonial Hong Kong*. Hong Kong University Press, 2008. 1-64.

FILM

- *Last Romance* (Yonfan, 1988)
- *Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema* (Stanley Kwan, 1996)

Session 8

READINGS

- Sarah Perks. “Visible secrets: Hong Kong's women film-makers” *Film International* 7 no. 4 (2009): 48-56.
- Celine Shimizu. “The Hypersexuality of Asian/American Women: Toward a Politically Productive Perversity on Screen and Scene.” In *The Hypersexuality of Race*. Duke University Press, 2007.

FILM

- *My Name Ain't Suzie* (Angie Chen, 1985)

Week 5: Afterlives

How has the Hong Kong New Wave left its political and cultural imprint on contemporary filmmaking in Hong Kong and around the globe? We will link the New Wave of the 1980s-2000s to the rise of new independent documentaries in Hong Kong over the past decade, fueled by pro-democracy movements such as the 2015 Umbrella Movement and the 2019-20 protests.

We will also discuss the phenomenon of the Hollywood crossover: how have Hong Kong New Wave styles, tropes, filmmakers, and stars resurfaced in Hollywood productions from the 2000s to the present? What is the significance of Asian American reception and fandom?

Session 9

READINGS

- Ho-fung Hung, “Introduction” In *City on the Edge: Hong Kong under Chinese Rule*. Cambridge University Press. 2022. 1-21.
- Tiffany Sia. “New Territories: Reconfiguring Publics in Former and New Hong Kong Cinema.” *Film Quarterly* 76 no. 4 (2023): 9–21.

FILM

- *Blue Island* (Chan Tze-Woon, 2022)

Session 10

FINAL PAPER DUE

READINGS

- David Bordwell. “What Price Survival?” In *Planet Hong Kong* 2nd edition. Madison, Wisconsin: Irvington Way Institute Press, 2011. 186-213.
- Raymond Ang. “Maggie Cheung Walked Away From Acting 20 Years Ago, but Her Legend Endures.” *GQ*. September 18, 2024. <https://www.gq.com/story/maggie-cheung>
- Renee Tajima-Peña. “The Transformers: How *Chan Is Missing* Led to *Better Luck Tomorrow* Led to *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.” *Film Quarterly* 76 no. 4 (2023): 32–34.
- OPTIONAL: Excerpts from *Giant Robot: Thirty Years of Defining Asian American Pop Culture*. Drawn & Quarterly, 2024.

FILM

- *Everything Everywhere All At Once* (Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, 2022)