

Everybody is Kung-fu Fighting: East Asian Martial Arts Films (30855)

Instructor: Chien-hsin Tsai

Office Hour: MW 3:00-4:30 pm or by appointment

Office: WCH 5.105

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Class location: JGB 2.218

Screening location: JGB 2.102

Class time: TTH 3:30-5:00

Screening time: T 5:00-8:00

Course Description:

At the turn of the twentieth century, one notices the fast-growing popularity of Asian films outside Asia. What used to be high-brow, academic, or even “cultish” has now, in the twenty-first century, become a popular if not entirely routine part of visual experience in the US. Seemingly, everything Asian becomes the “It,” ever in trend and ever showcasing the awareness and sensitivities of foreign culture. Certainly, things are always more complex than one would like to imagine. For instance: How do we understand Asian, geographically or ethnically or both?

This undergraduate class is designed to reconsider the notion of “East Asian” from the cinematic perspective. To get the minimal specificity of the issue at stake, we are to focus on the specific genre of martial arts film. Through weekly screenings, we are to rethink the following issues: What are the possible significances of the choreography of martial arts? How does the choreograph of actors in East Asian martial art films correspond to heroism, self-discipline, and routine training? How does the expressiveness of body correspond to cultural, ideological, and economic transactions, or even political confrontations, either inside or outside the East Asia proper? What influence do East Asian martial arts films have on its western counterparts?

Requirements and Grading:

Participation	25%
11 Quizzes	15%
Presentation (10)/Final Project (25)	35%
Final exam	25%

1. Participation: Attend lectures and discussions, actively and consistently engage in dialogues in class and online (discussion board). Undocumented absence means no in-class participation.
2. Weekly quizzes contain 5 to 10 multiple choice questions on assigned films.
 - a. You will not be asked about trivia questions such as: how many outfits does the protagonist own? or what does he eat for breakfast?

- b. You are expected to know about the basics (title, directors, etc), the plot and details that pertain to the storyline.
 - c. You are encouraged but not required to take notes during screen for future use (i.e. for final projects, quizzes, etc.). Notes, however, will be extremely helpful.
 - d. No make up quiz. Lowest quiz score will be dropped.
3. Presentation and Final project.
- a. For your final project, you may do a critical analysis (10-15 pages) of one or two martial arts film(s) not played in our class.
 - b. For those who are familiar with clip making, you may choose to make a 2 to 3-minute clip (think Youtube). It can be a montage of various martial art films (with your voice over narration of interpretation). The clip should be carefully edited to demonstrate a critical analysis of the footage.
 - c. Please speak to your instructor during midterm week or earlier about your final project. Let us work together to decide on interesting, informing, and manageable topics.
 - i. On how to write effectively and critically, please consult with writing guides on course website. Go to Blackboard → Course documents → writing guides.
 - d. Presentation is about presenting not reading. Reading your paper will result in a less desirable grade.
 - e. At the end of the semester, you will be given 8-10 minutes to present your final project. Please use your time wisely. For instance:
 - i. Introduce your topic. 1 min
 - ii. Explain why you choose to work on the topic and its significance. 2 mins
 - iii. Give concrete examples to support your argument. 3 mins
 - iv. Concluding remarks 1-2 mins.
 - f. You may choose to collaborate with another classmate on your final project/presentation. The length should reflect your collaborative efforts (paper 20-25 pages and clip 4-5 minutes).
 - i. Communication and collaboration is key.
 - g. Final Project due May 6.
4. Final exam: Date TBA
- a. 10 multiple choices questions 40 pts
 - b. 5 term definitions 30 pts
 - c. 1 long answer (essay) question 30 pts

The instructor does not round up grades. A grade close to the next grade level (i.e. 79.5, 89.6) may be rounded up. This exception can be made if the student consistently and actively contributes to class discussions throughout the semester.

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79

C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	Below 60

Week 1: Spectacles and Spectators: Introduction

Jan 19: General introduction.

Jan 21: Introduction to basic film analysis and terminology.

Reading:

David Desser, "The Martial Arts Film in the 1990s"

Week 2: The Small Dragon of China: Bruce Lee

Jan 26: Lecture and Screening.

Film: *Fist of Fury (aka The Chinese Connection)*

Jan 28: Quiz# 1, Discussion

Reading:

Kato, M. T. "Kung Fu Cultural Revolution and Japanese Imperialism"

Week 3: Where Have All the Martial Artists Gone: The Complex Network of "Jianghu"

Feb 2: Lecture and Screening.

Film: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

Feb 4: Quiz# 2 and Discussion.

Reading:

Cai, Rong. "Gender Imaginations in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and the Wuxia World."

Week 4: In the Name of Our Country: Martial Art, Identity, and Nationhood

Feb 9: Lecture and Screening.

Film: *Hero*

Feb 11: Quiz #3 and Discussion.

Reading:

Feng Lan. "Zhang Yimou's Hero: Reclaiming the Martial Arts Film for 'All under Heaven'"

Week 5: Shadow Warriors: The Ninjas

Feb 16: Lecture and Screening:

Film: *Shinobi*

Feb 18: Quiz #4 and Discussion:

Reading:

Stephen Hayes. "Perspective" in *The Ninja and Their Secret Fighting Art*

Week 6: Masters of Martial Arts: The Samurais

Feb 23: Lecture and Screening:

Film: *The Twilight Samurai*.

Feb 25: Quiz #5 and Discussion

Reading:

Ken Belson, "Japan's Samurai Past Thunders into the Present," New York Times, December 7, 2003.

Alain Silver. "Chapter One: General Introduction" in *The Samurai Film*

Week 7: Midterm Week

March 2 and 4.

No screening and lecture. Individual/Group final project consultation.

Week 8: Korean Warrior of Virtue

March 9: Lecture and Screening:

Film: *The Warrior*

March 11: Quiz #6 and Discussion

Reading:

Eungjun Min, Jinsook Joo, and Han Ju Kwak eds. "Korean Cinema: Philosophical Foundations and Theoretical Frameworks"

Week 9: Spring Break

March 16, 18 no class meetings

Week 10: The Korean James Bond

March 23: Lecture and Screening:

Film: *Dachimawa Lee: The Orient Espionage*.

March 25: Quiz #7 and Discussion:

Reading:

Darcy Paquet. "Genre Blending in Contemporary Korean Cinema"
Eungjun Min, Jinsook Joo, and Han Ju Kwak eds. "Contemporary Korean Cinema: A Boom or a Renaissance?"

Week 11: Stephen Chow and Kung-fu Comedy

March 30: Lecture and Screening:

Film: *Kung Fu Hustle*

April 1: Quiz #8 and Discussion.

Reading:

Kin-Yan Szeto, "The Politics of Historiography in Stephen Chow's *Kung Fu Hustle*"
Gary Xu, "The Gongfu of Kung-fu Hustle"

Week 12: Global Kung Fu Manifestations

April 6: Lecture and Screening:

Film: *The Matrix 1*.
Hollywood Clips

April 8: Quiz #9 and Discussion.

Reading:

Meaghan Morris. "Transnational imagination in action cinema: Hong Kong and the making of a global popular culture"

Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, "Style and Substance in *The Matrix*"

Week 13: Kung Fu, Film Noir, Femme Fatale

April 13: Lecture and Screening:

Film: *Kill Bill 1*

April 15: Quiz #10 and Discussion

Reading:

Sean Tierney, "Themes of Whiteness in *Bulletproof Monk*, *Kill Bill*, and *The Last Samurai*"

Week 14: Orientalism

April 20: Lecture and Screening:

Film: *Kung Fu Panda*

April 22: Quiz #11 and Discussion

Reading:

Edward Said. "Introduction" in *Orientalism*.

Week 15: Presentations

Each student (group of students) gives a short presentation (8-10 mins; subject to change depending on final enrollment) of his/her final project.

April 27: Presentations

April 29: Presentations

Week 16: Review

May 4: Presentations

May 6: Review/ **Final Project Due**

Official Policies

- Academic integrity: You are expected to adhere to university requirements on academic honesty and integrity. Behaviors, **such as plagiarism, copying of another student's work**, are serious offenses that will result in the grade of an "F" for the course and will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Services, where further disciplinary action may be taken. Please refer to the following website for information on how to avoid plagiarism in your work and/or discuss this with the instructor:
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php
- University Electronic Notification Mail Policy: In this course, e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class announcements and assignments. As per the University Electronic Notification Policy (please see <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>), it is your responsibility to update your email address and to check your e-mail regularly.
- Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities: Students who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6529 voice or 471-4641 TTY). This letter should be presented to the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made at that time. For more information, please see: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/>
- Use of Blackboard in Class: **Most of our readings are available on blackboard.** You should print out and bring your readings to class. Please allow yourself enough time before an assignment is due. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Blackboard is available at <http://courses.utexas.edu>. Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 during business hours on weekdays.
- Religious Holidays: If you will need to miss class, tests, or other assignments due to the observance of a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the work you have missed provided you notify me **at least one week prior** to the absence.