

Rong Cai

Russian and East Asian Languages and Cultures

Course: Post-Mao Literature in the Original

July 2014

I participated in the Piedmont Project in spring 2014. The readings, discussions, and presentations inspired me to develop a course module focusing on environmental issues for an existing course on contemporary Chinese Literature that I teach regularly. Environmental issues are particularly urgent in contemporary China. Since the country embarked on economic reforms in the late 1970s, China has made spectacular achievements. Its GDP has increased at a double-digit rate for more than 30 years, often seen as a miracle by economists. Known to be the most populous country in the world, China has managed to lift 680 million people out of extreme poverty in the past three decades. In fact it is responsible for three quarters of the world's achievements in poverty reduction since the 1980s. But the toll on the environment is equally earthshaking, literally and figuratively. Air pollution in China is legendary, topping the country's environmental challenge list. Following closely behind are water pollution and desertification caused by deforestation and loss of arable land, to name a few most pressing issues.

As a China specialist who travels to China 2-3 times a year, I am acutely aware of the environmental challenges and impacts faced by the country and its people. Participation in the Piedmont Project gave me an invaluable opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, opening my eyes to new approaches and perspectives to dissect and tackle environmental problems. For example, it just never occurred to me that eating local is part of sustainability. And of course it all made sense when one thinks about the impact on the environment created by transporting foods from one location to another.

A course module highlighting environmental protection will be added to Chn. 404, an upper level language course required for the Chinese major. The course introduces students to contemporary Chinese society and culture through fiction and films produced by representative writers and filmmakers. The purpose of the module on sustainable development is to raise student awareness of the need for environmental protection and balanced development as China races to become the world's largest economies. The module will use China's Three Gorges Dam as a case study. The Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydroelectric dam, resulted in flooding of 395 square miles of land and resettlement of 1.2 million people. Students will be divided into several groups—each group in charge of researching one aspect of the Three Gorges Project—to examine how such a massive-scale project has impacted the natural world and people's lives. Students are encouraged to weigh the pros and cons of the project and explore the environmental challenges resulted from this project. The challenges to be examined include such issues as habitat loss and threat to wild life, ethical issues in the resettlement of people, the loss of cultural heritage due to the flooding, and water pollution. As China is at a different stage of economic development, students will also engage in exploring how China can learn from the success and failures of countries that have gone through similar stages in their history. More broadly, students will discuss issues of reaching a balance between the need to improve the living standards of millions of people, allowing them to enjoy the same benefits that economic development has brought those in the more advanced world and the need to achieve sustainable development. Course materials will come from journalistic/scholarly discussions and literary/filmic representations on environmental issues. Reading,

discussion, and research will culminate in a group presentation for students to share their findings and thoughts with the rest of the class.

Post-Mao Literature in the Original 中国当代文学选读

Chn. 404, Emory University
Spring 2015
Instructor: Rong Cai
Office: Modern Languages 306
Phone: 404-727-5028; Email: rcai@emory.edu
Office hours: Tu. Th. 4:00pm-5:30pm
Emory University

Course objectives and methods:

This course is designed for students who have completed Chn 303 and those with a comparable level of Chinese proficiency. Course materials are drawn from a wide range of literary and cinematic works in the original produced by Chinese writers/directors in the post-Mao era (1976 to present). The goal of the course is two-fold. It seeks to acquaint students with changing artistic and cultural sensibilities in post-Mao literature and cinema. It also focuses on the social issues confronting Chinese people and society in a fast changing world, treating the fictional texts as the authors' reflections on humanity and contemporary China. A special module is devoted to environmental issues, focusing in particular on the Three Gorges Dam project. Questions to be explored include the intersections of economic development and sustainability, environmental protection and human needs, and economics and politics.

Since the goal of the course is to develop understanding of contemporary China through film and literature, the course emphasizes content of the readings and the development of students' literary competence. Even though language learning is not the top priority of the course, to enhance the ability to appreciate literary work in the original, assignments and exercises will also be adopted to strengthen students' linguistic proficiency.

The readings vary in length, level of difficulty, stylistic and rhetorical features. Students should expect to read a larger amount of materials for each class session than in previous language courses and learn to read for comprehension in the context without attempting to memorize every word and phrase. We aim to carry out class discussions in Chinese. However, since the course is designed for students with diverse background and preparation in Chinese, where necessary we will also conduct the discussion in English to facilitate understanding of the texts and the exchange of ideas. Those who are new to reading literature in the original are encouraged to identify difficult linguistic structures and passages for clarification and discussion in class.

Course materials:

Unabridged versions of the stories are posted on the Bb. Slightly abridged versions of majority of the readings are in the book *Advanced Reader of Contemporary Chinese Short Stories* that

contains voc. and grammar explanations. You are encouraged to purchase the book if you desire more grammar explanations. A vocabulary list with proverbs is provided for each story. If you use the Bb version, you MUST print out and have the texts with you during class, as we may refer to specific language items and passages for discussion. Points will be taken from participation if you fail to bring the reading materials to class.

Assignments and participation:

Participation is a central component of this course and weighs considerably in the final course grade. Mere presence will not count as full participation. Students are required to generate questions for discussion and share their thoughts with the class. Reading assignments for the day must be completed before class. All assignments must be completed on time. No late assignments will be accepted without prior agreement with the instructor. No electronic devices are allowed in the classroom except when you use your laptop for presentation. Please turn off your cell phone during class. No texting, checking emails or other distractive activities during class.

You have an option to complete the writing assignments in either Chinese or English. Grading standards remain the same regardless of the language used. Pop quizzes are on the facts of stories. No interpretation will be involved. Questions on the reading quizzes will be in Chinese and you can choose to answer either in Chinese or English. Requirements for the final paper will be announced later. All papers, whether Chinese or English, are to be typed (Times New Roman, font 12 with one-inch margins). You can choose to give the presentations in either Chinese or English. You are encouraged to use as much Chinese as possible in class.

Discussion posts are to be posted on Blackboard at least **by 8:00am on the day** before class session so we can benefit from each other's thoughts. Only one post is counted for any individual session even if we have multiple readings for that day.

Writing assignments:

- 1) 3 film response papers (1 page single space). You can choose to write 3 film response papers out of the 4 films.
- 2) 1 short critical paper (3-4 pages double space).
- 3) Final paper (6-8 pages) based on your research topic.

Two presentations:

- 1) Group presentations on environmental concerns; 2) Individual presentations on final paper.

Honor code: **Students are required to abide by the College's Honor Code. Violation of the Code will have serious consequences.** If you have any question about the Honor Code, please consult: http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html.

Grading:

- 8 pop quizzes: 8% (1% X 8)
- 4 Proverb quizzes: 12% (3% X 4)
- Translation exercise: 3%
- 8 discussion posts: 4% (0.5% X 8)
- 2 presentations: 10%
 - Group Presentation on Three Gorges Dam: 4%
 - Presentation Two: 6% (for term paper; details to be announced)
- 3 film response papers (one-page single space): 12% (4% X 3)
- 1 short critical paper (3 to 4-page double space): 10%
- Term paper (6-8 pages): 18%
- Culture project for China Day: 3% (Tentative)
- Participation: 20%

Grading Scale:

93-100 = A	80-82 = B-	67-69 = D+
90-92 = A-	77-79 = C+	60-66 = D
87-89 = B+	73-76 = C	Below 60 = F
83-86 = B	70-72 = C-	

Class schedule (subject to change if necessary):

- 1/15 First day of class; Syllabus; Bb
- 1/17 《十八岁出门远行》 ; 《 山上的小屋》
- 1/22 《我没有自己的名字》
- 1/24 《喷壶》 ; Instruction for writing a film response paper
- 1/29 《下午茶》 ; 《法国人》
- 1/31 电影 : 李米的猜想 (4:30pm-6:30pm.Location TBA)
- 2/5 Proverb Quiz #1; Film discussion (**Film paper 1 due**)
- 2/7 《哺乳期的女人》 ; 《留守儿童》
- 2/12 《走窑汉》 ; 《黑鸡白鸡》

- 2/14 《二分之一的傻瓜》；《知音遍地》；
- 2/19 Research paper assignment and Lib. session
- 2/21 电影：盲井 (4:30pm-6:30pm.Location TBA)
Research paper assignment
- 2/26 Proverb Quiz #2; Film discussion (**Film paper 2 due**)
- 2/28 “The Three Gorges Project: A Symbol of Uncontrolled Development in the Late Twentieth Century”
- 3/5 Chinese ecocinema
- 3/7 电影：《三峡好人》
- Spring Recess (3/11 – 15)**
- 3/19 Proverb quiz #3; Discussion of 《三峡好人》
- 3/21 Group presentations on Three Gorges Dam
- 3/26 《位子》；《能人难断小案件》
- 3/28 《阿咪的故事》；《宠物之灾》 (**Critical paper due**)
- 4/2 《少女小渔》
- 4/4 《伞》；《私奔》
- 4/9 《白坯院门》
- 4/11 电影：云水谣 (4:30pm-6:30pm.Location TBA)
- 4/16 Proverb quiz #4; Film discussion (**Film paper 3 due**)
- 4/18 Presentation
- 4/23 Presentation
- 4/25 Summary

