



GLOBAL SUMMER PROGRAMME 2025

COR2613 SCREENING ASIA: HISTORY, SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN FILM

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Films are more than just entertainment products. As cultural materials, they provide insights to the historical narratives, politics, economy, and ideological complexities of societies. This course is designed to provide an interdisciplinary and visual approach to understanding Asia using films about Asia produced by Asians themselves as well as those films about Asia produced by non-Asian filmmakers.

First, we will briefly explore the history of film in the Asian region and discuss various methods of reading films as texts. Second, we will critically examine what films reveal about the history of Asia - the period of colonialism, decolonization and nation-building, the Cold War, and globalization in the Asian region. Next, we will explore the various aspects of Asian identities and examine how films construct and interrogate race, religion, and gender in Asia. Finally, we will explore the contemporary role and significance of films against the rapid technological disruptions taking place within Asia and beyond.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course aims to improve students' knowledge and understanding about Asian history, economy, politics, and society through analyzing films; cultivate in them a deeper appreciation and critical understanding of films as lens to Asian narratives and social transformations; equip them with the necessary skills to formulate their own evaluation and interpretation of Asian films; and challenge students' perception about films and Asia as well as propel them to see the connections among culture, politics, history, and economy.

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Disciplinary and Multidisciplinary Knowledge
 - Explain how the films discussed in class reflect the history, politics, and society in Asia.
2. Intellectual and Creative Skills
 - Apply the lessons learned in this class to other fields such as business, public policy, social history, and economics.
3. Global Citizenship
 - Describe and interrogate the power and significance of films within the historical, political, social, and economic context of Asia.
 - Critically examine Asian films as a site of historical-cultural discourse and social interpretation.

PRE-REQUISITES / REQUIREMENTS / MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE COURSE(S)

This course does not have any prerequisites.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

<p>Class Participation</p> <p>You are encouraged to actively participate in the discussions and activities that take place in class. Good class participation involves actively listening to your instructor and other students during class, joining class discussions, asking questions which are thoughtful and helpful, and being a good team member during classroom group work, if any. Merely speaking in class or attending the online sessions will not earn you full marks for class participation. Moreover, failing to watch the pre-recorded lecture, reading the required readings, and sharing your insights about the course materials will negatively affect your class participation.</p>	20%
<p>Group Presentation</p> <p>As part of a group, you will deliver a 30-min presentation on an assigned film and theme of the session. In this presentation, you will provide the context of the film, how it relates to the readings, and your group's analysis of the theme as portrayed and screened in the film. Followed by a 30-min facilitated discussion/Q&A.</p>	30%
<p>Film Response</p> <p>The instructor will create a Discussion Topic (Padlet) and students are required to post, comment, or share about what they learned from the films covered in class. This can be done asynchronously.</p>	10%
<p>Final Individual Paper</p> <p>Reflection Paper: You will write an essay reflecting on how this course shaped your understanding of your own identity, your place in the world, and the power (and dangers) of film as a lens in understanding the intricacies, dynamics, and narratives of societies (in particular, Asia). You are to integrate at least two films and three readings discussed/covered in class into your essay.</p> <p>The rubric can be found below. For brevity, please keep in mind that your midterm exam will be evaluated based on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarity of argument 2. Coherence and logic of structure 3. Clear understanding, integration, and synthesis of the readings and topics discussed in class 4. Self-reflection and connection to experience 5. Originality and provocation 	40%
Total	100%

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND EXPECTATIONS

1. Each session is divided into three distinct parts:
 - a. Baseline lecture delivered by the instructor that aims to provide a structured approach to literature and conceptual parameters for the week's themes.
 - b. Student-led discussions about the film and the main questions of the week where you are encouraged to share your comments, questions, and thoughts on the readings, lecture, and the broader theme of the week;
 - c. Conclusion to be facilitated by the instructor – this serves as an opportunity to reiterate the main points, clarify concepts, identify persistent questions, and offer further points to ponder on.
2. You are required to watch the films before class.
3. Your attendance and active participation in class will contribute significantly towards your class participation marks.
4. You will refrain from talking over your classmates. You will make use of the different tools and platforms to participate in class (Slack, Kahoot, Slido, Mentimeter, etc.).
5. You should feel free to ask questions at any point of the session.

CONSULTATIONS

Time: Tuesdays, 9:00-11:00pm (set up an appointment by email)

Venue: YPHSL 04-14

RECOMMENDED TEXT AND READINGS

See lesson plan below.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity

All acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exam questions, or tampering with the academic work of other students) are serious offences.

All work (whether oral or written) submitted for purposes of assessment must be the student's own work. Penalties for violation of the policy range from zero marks for the component assessment to expulsion, depending on the nature of the offense.

When in doubt, students should consult the instructors of the course. Details on the SMU Code of Academic Integrity may be accessed at <https://smu.sharepoint.com/sites/oasis/SitePages/DOS-WKLSWC/UCSC.aspx>.

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Accessibility

SMU strives to make learning experiences accessible for all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers due to disability, please let me know immediately. You are also welcome to contact the university's accessibility services team if you have questions or concerns about academic provisions: accessibility@smu.edu.sg. Please be aware that the accessible tables in our seminar room should remain available for students who require them.

LESSON PLAN		
LESSONS	TOPICS	RECOMMENDED TEXT / READING LIST / CASE STUDIES LIST
LESSON 1	<p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>What is Screening Asia?</p> <p>Is Film a reliable source to understand 'Asia'?</p>	<p>Rosenstone, Robert A. "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History into Film." <i>The American Historical Review</i> 93, no. 5 (1988): 1173-185.</p>
LESSON 2	<p>HISTORY:</p> <p>Displaced Memories</p> <p>IN CLASS SCREENING</p> <p>Film: <i>Forbidden Memory</i>, 2016, Dir. Gutierrez Mangansakan III (Philippines)</p> <p>To what extent does film afford a space to remember, forget, and depict history? What is the value of film in recovering forbidden memories? Is it necessary to remember past/historical traumas?</p>	<p>Castillo. (2015). The Emotional, Political, and Analytical Labor of Engaged Anthropology Amidst Violent Political Conflict. <i>Medical Anthropology</i>, 34(1), 70–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/01459740.2014.960564</p>
LESSON 3	<p>HISTORY:</p> <p>Decolonization and Nation-Building</p> <p>Film to Watch (in your own time): <i>Wolmi Island</i>, 1982, Dir. Cho Kyeongsun (North Korea)</p> <p>In what ways does cinema reinforce or produce national identity? How valuable is film in nation-building?</p>	<p>Hyang-Jin Lee's article, "Cinema and Construction of Nationhood in Contemporary Korea."</p>

<p>LESSON 4</p>	<p>HISTORY:</p> <p>Cold War</p> <p>Film to Watch (in your own time): <i>The Blue Kite</i>, 1993, Dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang (China)</p> <p>What does the film reveal about the realities and lived experiences of ordinary people in China during the Cold War? How does this film portray the Cold War in China?</p> <p>Group 1: 30mins presentation + 30mins Q&A</p>	<p>Zhang, Xudong. "National Trauma, Global Allegory: Reconstruction of Collective Memory in Tian Zhuangzhuang's <i>The Blue Kite</i>." <i>Journal of Contemporary China</i> 12, no. 37 (2003): 623-38.</p>
<p>LESSON 5</p>	<p>SOCIETY:</p> <p>Tradition and culture</p> <p>Film to Watch (in your own time): <i>Tsukiji Wonderland</i>, 2016, Dir. Naotaro Enao (Japan)</p> <p>How does this film change the way you view Japanese culture and tradition? What do you think is the key objective of the director in making this film? Is there one thing you hoped the film developed further?</p> <p>Group 2: 30mins + 30mins Q&A</p>	<p>Bestor. (2019). <i>Tokyo's Pantry</i>. In <i>Tsukiji</i> (Vol. 11, pp. 1–49). University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520923584-006</p>
<p>LESSON 6</p>	<p>SOCIETY:</p> <p>Gender</p> <p>Film to Watch (in your own time): <i>Writing With Fire</i>, 2021, Dir. Sushmit Ghosh and Rintu Thomas, (India)</p>	<p>Datta, Sangeeta. "Globalisation and Representations of Women in Indian Cinema." <i>Social Scientist</i> 28, no. 3/4 (2000): 71-82.</p>

	<p>In what ways does the film portray women in India? Are you able to see similarities and/or differences with the way women are treated in your own community? Can film contribute to gender equality, and if yes, how?</p> <p>Group 3: 30mins + 30mins Q&A</p>	
LESSON 7	Guest Lecture: TBC	
LESSON 8	<p>SOCIETY:</p> <p>Race</p> <p>Film to Watch (in your own time): <i>Sepet</i> (Malaysia, 2005)</p> <p>The film offers a commentary on the racial stereotypes and assumptions as well as privileges and injustices in Malaysia - in what ways does the film accomplish this? Does race matter in your community?</p> <p>Group 4: 30mins + 30mins Q&A</p>	<p>Sim, Gerald. "Yasmin Ahmad's "Orked" Trilogy." <i>Film Quarterly</i> 62, no. 3 (2009): 48-53.</p>
LESSON 9	<p>SOCIETY:</p> <p>Religion</p> <p>Film to Watch (in your own time): <i>Ayat Ayat Cinta</i> (Indonesia)</p> <p>In what ways does the film portray Islam in contemporary Indonesia? Can film contribute to redefining religion amid the changing social and political landscape, and if yes, how?</p> <p>Group 5: 30mins + 30mins Q&A</p>	<p>Hakim, L. (2010). Conservative Islam Turn or Popular Islam? an Analysis of the Film <i>Ayat-ayat Cinta</i>. <i>Majalah Al-Jamiah</i>, 48(1), 101–128. https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2010.481.101-128</p>

<p>LESSON 10</p>	<p>ASIA TODAY: Migration in Asia</p> <p>Film to Watch: <i>A Land Imagined</i>, 2018, Dir. Siew Hua Yeo (Singapore)</p> <p>How does the film portray the lives and experiences of migrant workers in Singapore? Why do their stories matter? How does this film deepen or problematize our understanding of Singapore? Our identity and our place in the world?</p> <p>Group 6: 30mins + 30mins Q&A</p>	<p>Baey, G., & Yeoh, B. (2018). "The lottery of my life": Migration trajectories and the production of precarity among Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore's construction industry. <i>Asian and Pacific Migration Journal</i>, 27(3), 249–272.</p>
<p>LESSON 11</p>	<p>ASIA TODAY: Environment and Sustainability</p> <p>Film to Watch: Short films (Cambodia)</p> <p>How does the film portray the impacts of the climate crisis in Cambodia? Why do these stories matter? How does this film deepen or problematize our understanding of environmental issues in Asia?</p> <p>Group 7: 30mins + 30mins Q&A</p>	<p>Rouhiainen, Henna, and Leena Haanpää. "The Antecedents of Adolescents' Climate Change Concern in Cambodia." <i>International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education</i>, 2024, 1–18. doi:10.1080/10382046.2023.2298072.</p>
<p>LESSON 12</p>	<p>WRAP-UP</p>	