

HL4031 Comparative Literature

January 2017 semester

Description

The module will examine two related binary categories, the ‘modern’/‘traditional’, and the ‘modern’/‘primitive’, as they appear in (at best) modernising societies. A central question is: what did colonialism look like from the perspective of non-colonised societies such as Japan and China – societies which *still* has to deal with the (threatening) presence of the more modern Great Western Powers? A lot of colonial and postcolonial studies focus on India, in particular – but what about other parts of Asia?

We start with representative British cultural texts that dealt with its empire. Why did the homeland of the modern Industrial Revolution have a fascination with adventure and more *primitive* lands? We look at the short stories of Rudyard Kipling (the ‘Bard’ of Empire, and enormously popular in his time) and director David Lean’s multiple Oscar-winning film *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), and examine the lure of the primitive and the sexual other, and the importance of masculinity even as British modernity is taken for granted.

Then, the module will proceed to a few major Chinese and Japanese cultural texts (including one film), writers and intellectuals, and see how ‘*traditional*’ (rather than ‘*primitive*’) East Asian culture was affected by their sense of Western modern superiority in technology, political organisation and culture. These major countries in East Asia were never colonised, but they were intimidated by the presence of European colonies in the region (mainly in Southeast Asia). Post-Meiji Restoration Japan (1868 onwards) became the first modern Asian nation-state, and its intensive (and disruptive) modernisation of their culture had a profound impact on the whole region. This desire to be modern also meant that Japan itself became a colonising state, following the British, French and German states. China at the same time was not able to modernise or reform its society at the same pace as Japan, and then became mired in a civil until the Kuomintang was ejected by the Chinese Communist Party from the mainland in 1949. This module will introduce students to a comparative examination of the ambiguities and contradictions in the process of becoming modern both in the colonial centre (Great Britain) and in northeast Asia, and to an understanding of the new forms of literary culture that resulted in that latter region. The module of course will not make students ‘experts’ on China or Japan – as you are reading literature *only* in translation – but only function as an introduction to the issues.

Texts

The readings are a combination of fiction and one non-fiction material. The books have been ordered and should be available later in the bookshop. Some of the material will be made available as PDF texts closer to the start of the new semester. (See below, under ‘Readings’.)

Class Requirements

- One (1) class presentation, possibly in groups, depending upon enrolment size. (10%; the presentations should be based upon the reading[s]). There should be a concise summary of the author's main argument (or some sort of general thematic and/or aesthetic or analysis of the material) first, and students are encouraged to bring their own interests for the rest of the presentation. *Expressing critical opinions of the readings/production is important, as critical evaluative skills are vitally important – of course there must be evidence for the position taken*. Between 15 mins. (for a single presenter) to 20-25 mins. (for a group presentation). **Time limits must be maintained.** *Do be prepared to do group presentations if the seminar size is fairly large.*
- A final essay of between 1,500-1,700 words. (40%)
- A final exam. (50%) The exam: a) will be a closed-book exam; b) students will have to answer **three (3)** questions in 2 ½ hours; c) there will be no compulsory questions; d) there will be a choice of questions – i.e., more than 3 questions will be offered; e) the questions will be *both* comparative *and* on single works; & f) there should be no repetition of writers: an author used for one question *cannot* be used for another.

Readings

- Selection of Rudyard Kipling short stories from *The Day's Work* (1898) and *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888; 1890) ++
- The selection: The PDFs of the stories to be made available are the selection.
- Kakuzo Okakura, *The Awakening of Japan* [non-fiction] (1904; New York: Adamant Media Corp./Elibron Classics, 2001). **
- Natsume Sōseki, *Kokoro*, ed. Meredith McKinney (1914; London: Penguin, 2010) **
- Fukuzawa Yukichi, 'On De-Asianization' ('*Datsu-A ron*'; 1885); 5pp. document on Japan and Asia. ++
- Selection of short stories from Lu Xun, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, trans. Julia Lovell (London: Penguin, 2009) **
- Read: 'Nostalgia'; From *Outcry*: 'Preface', 'Diary of a Madman'; 'Kong Yiji'; 'Medicine'; 'Tomorrow'; 'A Minor Incident'; 'Hair'; 'A Passing Storm'; 'The Real Story of Ah-Q'; & 'Dragon Boat Festival'; From *Hesitation*: 'New Year's Sacrifice'. (Note: A selection of short fiction and reflective mini-essays, a literary form that Lu Xun excels in.)
- Selection from Eileen Chang, *Love in a Fallen City* (London: Penguin, 2007) **
- Read: *Love in a Fallen City* (novella); 'The Golden Cangue' & 'Sealed Off' (short stories)
- *Rurouni Kenshin* (2010; DVD) (Director Ōtomo Keishi) Variant title: *Samurai Rurouni Kenshin Live Action Movie*. Based on the comic by Watsuki Nobuhiro. Business Library (will be on reserve): PN1995.9.S24R948
- *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962; DVD) (Director David Lean) PN1995.9.L422 2000 DISCS 1-2 Business Library, Audio Visual (Level B2) (will be on reserve)

Key

** Please purchase the edition in this list so that we will (literally) will be on the same page.

++ Will be available as a PDF file on Blackboard/edventure.

Select Secondary Reading:

- James L. Huffman, *Japan and Imperialism* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Association for Asian Studies, 2010). (Impt gen & historical background on Japan and the region) DS882.6 H889
- Jonathan D. Spence. *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999) (Impt gen, historical and literary-cultural background on China, including the May 4th Movement) DS754.S744
- ‘What is Modernity? (The Case of Japan and China)’, ‘Overcoming Modernity’ and ‘Asia as Method’, from Takeuchi Yoshimi, *What is Modernity: Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, ed. and trans. Richard F. Calichman (New York: Columbia UP, 2005). (See sections/chapters on Lu Xun) (DS822.25.T136)
- Eva Shan Chou, *Memory, Violence, Queues: Lu Xun Interprets China* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Association of Asian Studies, 2012) (PL2754.S5 C552)
- Karatani Kojin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1993) (Sections on Soseki; check index.) PL726.6 K18
- Jay Rubin (ed.), *Modern Japanese Writers* (New York : Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2001) (inc discussion of Soseki Natsume) PL723.M689
- Angela Yiu, *Chaos and Order in the Works of Natsume Sōseki* (U of Hawai’i Press, 1998) PL812.A8Y51
- Doris G. Bargen, *Suicidal Honor: General Nogi and the Writings of Mori Ogai and Natsume Soseki* (Honolulu: U of Hawai’i Pr, 2006) DS884 N7.B251
- William N. Ridgeway, *A Critical Study of the Novels of Natsume Soseki (1867-1916)* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004) PL812 A8.R544
- Brij Tankha (ed.), *Okakura Tenshin and Pan-Asianism* (Folkestone: Global Orient, 2007) PL813.K285 K41
- Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1995) (See sections on Lu Xun; check index) PL2302.L783
- Liu Kang, *Aesthetics and Marxism: Chinese Aesthetic Marxists & their Western Counterparts* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000) (Section on Lu Xun; check index) BH39.L783A
- Leo Ching, ‘Taiwan in Modernity/Coloniality: Orphan of Asia and the Colonial Difference’, in Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (eds.), *The Creolization of Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011) HM1272 C916r
- Leo Ching, *Becoming ‘Japanese’: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (U of California Pr, 2001) (chapter on *Orphan of Asia*) DS799.7.C539
- Leo Ching, Review of *Orphan of Asia*, <<http://mlc.osu.edu/rc/pubs/reviews/ching.htm>>
- Xiaobing Tang, *Chinese Modern: The Heroic and the Quotidian* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000) (Sections of Lu Xun; check index) HM621.T164
- Kam Louie (ed.), *Eileen Chang: Romancing Languages, Cultures and Genres* (Hong Kong UP, 2012). PL2837.E35E34

Notes:

1. Students are expected to take the initiative to look for their own secondary reading material – one good place is either the footnotes or endnotes of books or article you are already reading to look for other pertinent chapters/books/essays dealing with the author/playwright/topic at hand; or look at the end of the book or article & see if there is a bibliography.
2. Also, just search author names on <https://www.ntu.edu.sg/education/libraries>. This’ll also lead you to articles. There aren’t really substantial works in English on Eileen Chang, for instance, but articles exist. Also use: <http://opac2.ntu.edu.sg/uhtbin/cgiisirs.exe/8nTFGT640H/0/134900036/60/8/X>

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MEETING ONE:

Introduction

MEETING TWO:

Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills*

The British and the confrontation between the primitive and the modern – the dangerous lure of the ‘other’, racially and sexually

MEETING THREE:

Kipling, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (cont’d); and *The Day’s Work*

Masculinity and the ‘other’ – on becoming like the natives – colonial kingship, imperial male homosociality and the intimate (and dangerous) knowledge of natives

MEETING FOUR:

Lawrence of Arabia (Dir. David Lean)

The barbarous ‘other’ and the modern – the lure of the ‘other’, and the dangers to English national interests – masculinity and the ‘other’ – on becoming like natives – colonial rulership, imperial male homosociality: the *deliberately ambiguous* perspective from a *decolonising* Great Britain in the 1960s, and the sense of decline.

MEETING FIVE:

Rurouni Kenshin (Dir. Ōtomo Keishi) Variant title: *Samurai Rurouni Kenshin Live Action Movie*

Introduction: modern culture as viewed from the ‘other’ side of the colonial divide – the old and the new in post-Meiji Restoration Japan – ‘good’ violence and cultural identity – the national obligations to the new Asian nation-state

Required background reading (*essential to understand East Asian culture; references to historical background will be made for both the Japanese and the Chinese texts. Students must have familiarity with the history*): Huffman selection from *Japan and Imperialism*, chap. 1, ‘Threatened by Imperialism (1853-1868), pp.5-10; chap. 2, ‘The Meiji Order: Establishing Borders (1868-1890), pp.11-18; & chap. 3, ‘The Imperialist Turn’ (1890-1905), pp.19-26. Read in advance of Meeting Five. (Will be available as a PDF uploaded on Blackboard.)

MEETING SIX:

Introduction: Fukuzawa, ‘On De-Asianization’ (1886)

[Western] Civilisation as necessary ill for national protection in an age of Western colonialism in East Asia

Natsume, *Kokoro* (心, or in *hiragana*: こころ)

Changing values in Meiji-era Japan – the idea of the individual and the self – the changing roles of inter-generational values and women – the cost of weakness and individual identity – the mystery in one’s heart of motives and identity

MEETING SEVEN:

Natsume, *Kokoro*, cont’d

RECESS WEEK

MEETING EIGHT:

Tanizaki, *Some Prefer Nettles*

Changing values in post-Meiji Japan (novel published 1928) – ‘progressiveness’ in Western-style marriage – modernity and tradition cont’d from *Kokoro*

MEETING NINE:

Tanizaki, *Some Prefer Nettles*, cont’d

MEETING TEN:

Lu Xun, selection from *Real Story of Ah-Q*

The problems of ‘backward’ Chinese culture and norms – feudalism, and the ignorance and exploitation of the masses – the impact (or otherwise) of the 1911 Revolution and capitalist modernity – the need for Enlightenment of the people, the question of revolution and the role of the writer of a modernised Chinese literature: ambivalent responses – scientific thinking and traditional culture

MEETING ELEVEN:

Lu Xun, *real Story of Ah-Q*, cont’d.

MEETING TWELVE:

Chang, selection from *Love in a Fallen City*

The pain of a society in transition – independence for women and love – the freedom of the modern for the woman – Shanghai and Hong Kong as modern urban spaces

MEETING THIRTEEN:

Chang, selection from *Love in a Fallen City*, cont’d

Review and conclusion