

SYLLABUS

CTCS 464: Film and/or Television Genres • Spring 2013

THE SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC MARTIAL ARTS

Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. • SCA 110

Professor:

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Office Hours: Tues. 2 - 4 p.m.

Office Location: SCA 318

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to the School of Cinematic Martial Arts, devoted to the study of one of the most popular film genres of all time. Martial arts cinema has often pushed filmmakers to expand the boundaries of cinematic form and technique. Is this commercial moviemaking or *avant-garde* cinema? In either case, the genre continues to adapt, diversify, and thrill audiences with its balanced mixture of **discipline and fun**. This course surveys martial arts movies from around the world (Hong Kong/China, Japan, the U.S., Thailand, Korea, Brazil, Norway, etc.) to investigate the seemingly inexhaustible global appeal of cinematic/martial arts.

This class emphasizes the “traditional” art of critical **film analysis**, as applied to martial arts cinema. Course requirements include attendance for weekly class meetings/screenings, quizzes, completion of weekly homework tasks (including readings, home film viewings, and written reports), and a final paper, to be assigned midway through the term. Each student must exercise discipline in order to become a cinematic martial artist with a black belt in critical analysis!

REQUIREMENTS:	Attendance/Participation	10%
	4 reading quizzes	20% (5 points each)
	5 film reports	50% (10 points each)
	Final paper (due 12/12)	20%
	[Optional extra credit]	??% (up to 5 points)

REQUIRED READINGS

Readings are listed on the course schedule; students must finish all required readings by the date under which they are listed. All readings listed are required.

- **TEXTBOOK** (available at University bookstore):
West, David. *Chasing Dragons: An Introduction to the Martial Arts Film* (NY: Tauris, 2006).
- All additional readings can be found on **Blackboard** under “Course Readings.”

READING QUIZZES

Four times during the semester, reading quizzes will be given in class. They will not be announced in advance. Each quiz covers the reading(s) for the day on which the quiz is given, testing whether you read the assigned material. Each quiz is worth 5 points (5% of your grade).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILM REPORTS:

Starting on Week 2, there are “Screening homework” films listed approximately every other week on the Course Schedule (also listed in the second column of the **Matrix of Excellent Kung Fu** found at the end of this document). Students are required to watch all 7 of these films, and to **submit a written report on any 5 of them**. Reports should be **2-3 pages long**, and must include the following three components:

- (1) A one paragraph **summary of the film** (focus on story);
- (2) A one paragraph **critical response**, conveying your general opinion of the film; and
- (3) A **shot-by-shot description of one of the film’s action sequences**—not the entire scene, only a 5 – 30 second-long portion of it. This description must address each shot’s image composition, movement within the shot, camera movement, and sound. Choose a sequence you find interesting and work on your skills in the art of description. Do not draw conclusions or make an argument. Just describe.

Film reports must be **submitted online (on Blackboard) before the next class meeting**.

Extra Credit Film Reports: Every week, there is an extra credit film listed in the third column of the Matrix. These are recommended viewings for all students, every week. As a way to add points to your score, you may also opt to write a short film report on any of these, up to 5 total for the entire semester. A complete report is worth one point (1% of your grade). It should consist of: a **summary** and **critical response** (just follow instructions 1 and 2 in the film report instructions above; not instruction 3). Length should be **one page** maximum.

Blackboard (Bb) will be used to distribute course information and course readings, and to collect coursework. To access Bb, go to: <https://blackboard.usc.edu/>, log in, and click the link for this class. Please check the site often for announcements, etc.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance and participation in class discussions are required. One unexcused absence is allowed; additional missed classes will result in point deductions, and will only be excused under extenuating circumstances with documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note). Whenever possible, please inform the professor or TA at least 24 hours before any absence.

DISABILITY SERVICES: Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. Obtain letter of verification for approved accommodations, and please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor or TA as early in the term as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open from 8:30am – 5:00pm, Monday through Friday. DSP’s phone number is (213) 740-0776.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All students will be held accountable to USC’s Policy on Academic Integrity. Please familiarize yourself with these policies, available online at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/pages/students/community_standards.html

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 • August 27 • INTRODUCTIONS: DISCIPLINE AND FUN

Class screening: *Tai Chi Zero* (Stephen Fung, 2012)

Reading homework:

Aaron Anderson, “Kinesthesia in martial arts films: Action in motion,” *Jump Cut* #42 (Dec. 1998). [Online: access via Bb]

Week 2 • September 3 • KINAESTHETICS

Class screening: *Out for Justice* (John Flynn, 1991)

Screening homework: *Rumble in the Bronx* (Stanley Tong, 1995).

* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period (Sept. 10th).

Reading homework:

Aaron Anderson, “Violent Dances in martial arts films,” *Jump Cut* #44 (Fall 2001). [Online: access via Bb]

Week 3 • September 10 • QUESTIONS OF STYLE: NATIONAL and INDIVIDUAL

Class screening: *Harakiri* [a.k.a. *Seppuku*] (Masaki Kobayashi, 1962)

Reading homework:

(1) **David West**, *Chasing Dragons*, “Introduction” and “Japan,” up to and including the section on Gosha Hideo. [pp. 1-60]

(2) **Alain Silver**, “Hara-kiri and Rebellion,” in *The Samurai Film* [1977] (Woodstock & New York: Overlook Press, 2004) 92-103. [Bb]

Week 4 • September 17 • THE SAMURAI CODE

Class screening: *Zatoichi* [a.k.a. *The Blind Swordsman: Zatoichi*] (Takeshi Kitano, 2003)

Screening homework: *Kill Bill, vol. 1* (Quentin Tarantino, 2003).

* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period.

Week 5 • September 24 • BLADES and BLINDNESS

Class screening: *Norwegian Ninja* (Thomas Cappelen Malling, 2010)

Reading homework:

(1) **David West**, “Japan,” remainder of section [pp. 60-86]

(2) **Kacem Zoughari**, “What Is Ninjutsu?” in *The Ninja: Ancient Shadow Warriors of Japan* (Vermont: Tuttle, 2010), 9-28. [Bb]

Week 6 • October 1 • TRANSNATIONAL NINJITSU: Espionage, Sabotage, Mayhem

Class screening: *Come Drink With Me* (King Hu, 1966)

Screening homework: *Lady Snowblood* (Toshiya Fujita, 1973).

* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period.

Week 7 • October 8 • KING

Class screening: *Executioners from Shaolin* (Lau Kar-leung, 1977)

Reading homework:

(1) **David West**, 87-120.

(2) **Bérénice Reynaud**, “The Book, the Goddess and the Hero: Sexual Politics in the Chinese Martial Arts Film,” *Senses of Cinema* 26 (May 2003). [Online: access via Bb]

Week 8 • October 15 • MASCULIN

Class screening: *Fist of Fury* [a.k.a. *The Chinese Connection*] (Lo Wei, 1972)

Screening homework: *Enter the Dragon* (Robert Clouse, 1973).

* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period.

Week 9 • October 22 • BRUCE

Class screening: *Fist of Legend* (Gordon Chan, 1994)

Reading homework:

(1) **David West**, 121-178.

(2) **Bruce Thomas**, “Bruce Lee—Philosopher?” in *Bruce Lee: Fighting Words* (Berkeley, CA: Frog Ltd., 2003), 135-43. [Bb]

Week 10 • October 29 • NEW STARS, NEW WAVE

Class screening: *Seven Swords* (Tsui Hark, 2005)

Screening homework: *Once Upon a Time in China* (Tsui Hark, 1991).

* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period.

Week 11 • November 5 • TRADITION and INVENTION

Class screening: *Drunken Master 2* (Lau Kar-leung, 1994)

Screening homework: *Black Belt [Kuro-Obi]* (Shunichi Nagasaki, 2007).

* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period.

Week 12 • November 12 • DISCIPLINE and CONTROL

Class screening: *Ashes of Time* (Wong Kar-wai, 1994; “redux” 2008)

Reading homework:

(1) **David West**, 179-199.

(2) **Adrian Martin**, “At the Edge of the Cut: An Encounter with the Hong Kong Style in Contemporary Action Cinema,” in *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema*, eds. Meaghan Morris et al (Durham, NC: Duke, 2006), 175-88. [**Bb**]

Week 13 • November 19 • BODY, IMAGE, NATION

Class screening: *Ong-Bak: The Thai Warrior* (Prachya Pinkaew, 2003)

Screening homework: *Chocolate* (Prachya Pinkaew, 2008).

* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period.

Week 14 • November 26 • BODY, IMAGE, FANTASY

Class screening: *Besouro* [a.k.a. *The Assailant*] (João D. Tikhomiroff, 2009)

Reading homework:

Paul Bowman, “The Fantasy Corpus of Martial Arts, or, the ‘Communication’ of Bruce Lee,” in *Martial Arts as Embodied Knowledge: Asian Traditions in a Transnational World*, eds. Farrer & Whalen-Bridge (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011), 61-96. [**Bb**]

Week 15 • December 3 • CONCLUSIONS: KNOWLEDGE IN FLUX

Class screening: *Wu Xia* [a.k.a. *Dragon*] (Peter Chan, 2011)

***Final Paper** due on Blackboard no later than 1:00 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 12.

THE MATRIX of EXCELLENT KUNG FU

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IN CLASS screenings (required)	HOMEWORK (required)	EXTRA CREDIT OPTIONS	DEEP CUTS (true dedication)
1. <i>Tai Chi Zero</i> (Stephen Fung, 2012)	Read! (see syllabus)	<i>Salvage Mice</i> (Ryuta Tazaki, 2011)	<i>Tai Chi Hero</i> (Stephen Fung, 2012)
2. <i>Out for Justice</i> (John Flynn, 1991)	<i>Rumble in the Bronx</i> (Stanley Tong, 1995) + Reading	<i>Drunken Master</i> (Yuen Woo-ping, 1978)	<i>Snake in Eagle’s Shadow</i> (Yuen Woo-ping, 1978)
3. <i>Harakiri</i> (Masaki Kobayashi, 1962)	Read! (see syllabus)	<i>Seven Samurai</i> (Akira Kurosawa, 1954)	<i>The Tale of Zatoichi</i> (Kenji Misumi, 1962)
4. <i>Zatoichi: the Blind Swordsman</i> (Takeshi Kitano, 2003)	<i>Kill Bill vol. 1</i> (Quentin Tarantino, 2003)	<i>Shogun Assassin</i> (Robert Houston, 1980)	<i>Lone Wolf and Cub: Sword of Vengeance</i> (Kenji Misumi, 1972)
5. <i>Norwegian Ninja</i> (Thomas C. Malling, 2010)	Read! (see syllabus)	<i>Enter the Ninja</i> (Menahem Gbœolan, 1981)	<i>American Ninja</i> (Sam Firstenberg, 1985)
6. <i>Come Drink With Me</i> (King Hu, 1966)	<i>Lady Snowblood</i> (Toshiya Fujita, 1973)	<i>Kill Bill vol. 2</i> (Quentin Tarantino, 2004)	<i>Touch of Zen</i> (King Hu, 1971)
7. <i>Executioners from Shaolin</i> (Lau Kar-leung, 1977)	Read! (see syllabus)	<i>The One Armed Swordsman</i> (Chang Cheh, 1967)	<i>Zatoichi Meets the One-Armed Swordsman</i> (Hung/Yasuda, 1971)
8. <i>Fist of Fury</i> (Lo Wei, 1972)	<i>Enter the Dragon</i> (Robert Clouse, 1973)	<i>Black Belt Jones</i> (Robert Clouse, 1974)	<i>They Call Me Bruce?</i> (Elliott Hong, 1982)
9. <i>Fist of Legend</i> (Gordon Chan, 1994)	Read! (see syllabus)	<i>Legend of the Fist: The Return of Chen Zhen</i> (Andrew Lau, 2010)	<i>Fearless</i> [a.k.a. <i>Jet Li’s Fearless</i>] (Ronny Yu, 2006)
10. <i>Seven Swords</i> (Tsui Hark, 2005)	<i>Once Upon a Time in China</i> (Tsui Hark, 1991)	<i>Swordsman 2</i> (Ching Siu-tung, 1992)	<i>Wing Chun</i> (Yuen Woo-ping, 1994)

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IN CLASS screenings (required)	HOMEWORK (required)	EXTRA CREDIT OPTIONS	DEEP CUTS (true dedication)
11. <i>Drunken Master 2</i> (Lau Kar-leung, 1994)	<i>Black Belt [Kuro-Obi]</i> (Shunichi Nagasaki, 2007)	<i>Challenge of the Masters</i> (Lau Kar-leung, 1976)	<i>Drunken Master III</i> (Lau Kar-leung, 1994)
12. <i>Ashes of Time</i> (Wong Kar-wai, 1994/2008)	Read! (see syllabus)	<i>Ip Man</i> (Wilson Yip, 2008)	<i>Ip Man 2</i> (Wilson Yip, 2010)
13. <i>Ong-Bak: The Thai Warrior</i> (Prachya Pinkaew, 2003)	<i>Chocolate</i> (Prachya Pinkaew, 2008)	<i>Merantau</i> (Gareth Evans, 2009)	<i>Arahan</i> (Seung-wan Ryoo, 2004)
14. <i>Besouro</i> [a.k.a. <i>The Assailant</i>] (João D. Tikhomiroff, 2009)	Read! (see syllabus)	<i>Once Upon a Time in High School: The Spirit of Jeet Kune Do</i> (Ha Yoo, 2004)	<i>Volcano High</i> (Tae-gyun Kim, 2001)
15. <i>Wu Xia</i> [a.k.a. <i>Dragon</i>] (Peter Chan, 2011)	WRITE! (Final paper due Thursday, Dec. 12, 1:00 p.m.)	<i>Zebaman 2: Attack on Zebra City</i> (Takashi Miike, 2010)	<i>Flying Swords of Dragon Gate</i> (Tsui Hark, 2011)



WINTER BREAK RECOMMENDATION:

- *Seven Swordsmen* (2006 television series produced by Tsui Hark—a 34 episode extension of *Seven Swords*!)

IN 2014, DON'T MISS:

- *Monkey King* (starring Donnie Yen as the Monkey King!)
- *A Man Will Rise* and *Skin Trade* (2 movies pairing Tony Jaa with Dolph Lundgren?!)