THE SCHOOLS OF
CINEMATIC
MARTIAL ARTS
Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. • SCA 110

Professor:
René Thoreau Bruckner
rbruckne@usc.edu
Office Hours: Tues. 2 - 4 p.m.
Office Location: SCA 318

Teaching Assistants:
Elizabeth Littrell
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Joshua Richardson
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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):
• 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/](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](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:

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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:

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

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

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Week 4 • September 17 • THE SAMURAI CODE

* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period.

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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]

Week 6 • October 1 • TRANSMATIONAL 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.

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.

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)

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Screening homework: *Black Belt [Kuro-Obi]* (Shunichi Nagasaki, 2007).
* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period.

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**Week 12 • November 12 • DISCIPLINE and CONTROL**

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

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Reading homework:
(1) David West, 179-199.

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**Week 13 • November 19 • BODY, IMAGE, NATION**

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

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Screening homework: *Chocolate* (Prachya Pinkaew, 2008).
* Film report due on Blackboard before next class period.

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**Week 14 • November 26 • BODY, IMAGE, FANTASY**

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

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Reading homework:

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**Week 15 • December 3 • CONCLUSIONS: KNOWLEDGE IN FLUX**

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

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*Final Paper* due on Blackboard no later than 1:00 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 12.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN CLASS screenings (required)</th>
<th>HOMEWORK (required)</th>
<th>EXTRA CREDIT OPTIONS</th>
<th>DEEP CUTS (true dedication)</th>
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# THE MATRIX of EXCELLENT KUNG FU

CTCS 464: “The School of Cinematic Martial Arts” | Fall 2013 | Bruckner (p. 2)

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<td><strong>11. Drunken Master 2</strong></td>
<td>Black Belt [Kuro-Obi]</td>
<td>Challenge of the Masters</td>
<td>Drunken Master III</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12. Ashes of Time</strong></td>
<td>Read! (see syllabus)</td>
<td>Ip Man</td>
<td>Ip Man 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. Ong-Bak: The Thai Warrior</strong></td>
<td>Chocolate</td>
<td>Merantau</td>
<td>Arahan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>14. Besouro [a.k.a. The Assailant]</strong></td>
<td>Read! (see syllabus)</td>
<td>Once Upon a Time in High School: The Spirit of Jeet Kune Do</td>
<td>Volcano High</td>
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<td>(João D. Tikhomiroff, 2009)</td>
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<td>(Ha Yoo, 2004)</td>
<td>(Tae-gyun Kim, 2001)</td>
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<td><strong>15. Wu Xia [a.k.a. Dragon]</strong></td>
<td>WRITE! (Final paper due Thursday, Dec. 12, 1:00 p.m.)</td>
<td>Zebraman 2: Attack on Zebra City</td>
<td>Flying Swords of Dragon Gate</td>
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<td>(Peter Chan, 2011)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Takashi Miike, 2010)</td>
<td>(Tsui Hark, 2011)</td>
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## 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?!)

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