UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Cultura cinese contemporanea

2627-1055-CONTEMP

Course title

Contemporary Chinese Culture

Topics and course structure

The course explores various dynamics of contemporary Chinese culture in the global context, with particular attention to its most prominent features in international diffusion. The teaching is structured into two modules.

MODULE A: Emerging Aesthetics and Soft Power: Consumer Culture in Contemporary China
Lesson 1 - Consumption, Imagery, and Symbolic Power
In the first lesson, we will focus on the spread of contemporary Chinese aesthetic sensibility, which reinterprets traditional cultural elements through current visual and stylistic languages, helping to redefine what is perceived as "cool" globally. We will analyze emerging trends in the world of fashion, design, and lifestyle, and reflect on how these manifestations become vehicles of cultural recognition and identity affirmation in the international context.
Lesson 2 - Aesthetics of Innovation and Technological Imagery
In the second lesson, we will explore the construction of a future imaginary "made in China," through the increasingly central role of technology and innovation in cultural processes. We will investigate products, environments, and narratives that illustrate how China is proposing its own vision of the future – technological, urban, and creative – capable of influencing global discourse. We will also reflect on the ways in which this vision translates into instruments of soft power and cultural positioning.

MODULE B: Chinese Literature and Transmediality - A Global Success Phenomenon
This module analyzes the Chinese interpretation of two literary genres that have recently captured a vast international audience: science fiction and Boys' Love. Through the presentation of some emblematic cases, we will see how new technologies and the transmedial approach have renewed traditional Chinese narrative, allowing it to establish itself as a cultural product of global relevance (not unlike what has already occurred with American blockbusters, Japanese manga and anime, and Korean K-pop), while also offering a contemporary reinterpretation

of themes and archetypes from the Chinese fantastic tradition.

Objectives

Module A aims to offer a critical understanding of contemporary Chinese culture through the analysis of consumption, emerging aesthetics, and soft power strategies. Visual languages and neologisms of mainstream culture will be explored to capture the transformations taking place in Chinese identity and its global projection. The objective is to provide students with tools to interpret consumption as a cultural expression and to refine their skills in intercultural and visual analysis.
Module B aims to promote a better understanding of Chinese culture, particularly in its most contemporary aspects related to pop culture, in order to comprehend its success factors and its connection with new technologies. This will enable students to effectively apply knowledge about new media learned in other courses to the Chinese context.

Methodologies

Lectures, interactive engagement with the class.

Online and offline teaching materials

Slides used during the lesson, articles and materials provided by the professors and uploaded to e-learning.

Programme and references

MODULE B

- Alessandro De Toni, Chinese style. Senso del bello con caratteristiche cinesi, Armando Editore, 2023
- Articles and materials provided by professor De Toni and uploaded to e-learning.

MODULE B
Podcast:
Møller-Olsen, Astrid. 2021-22. *Sinophone Unrealities*. https://nettop.guru/wordpress/category/sinophone-unrealities/.

Articles:
Science-fiction

- Chau, Angie. 2018. ‘From Nobel to Hugo: Reading Chinese Science Fiction as World Literature’. *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 30 (1): 110–35.
- Lynn, Daniel. 2005. ‘The Long and Winding Road to Science Fiction: A Brief Overview of SF Development in Taiwan’. Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction 94 (June):1–29.
- Ken Liu's short story "The paper menagerie"

Danmei

- Yang Ling and Xu Yanrui. 2017. ‘Chinese Danmei Fandom and Cultural Globalization from Below’. In *Boys’ Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer Fan Cultures in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan*, edited by Maud Lavin, Ling Yang, and Jing Jamie Zhao. https://academic.oup.com/hong-kong-scholarship-online/book/21441/chapter/181205894.
- Zhao, Jin. 2022. ‘Danmei, a Genre of Chinese Erotic Fiction, Goes Global’. *The China Project*. 24 February 2022. https://thechinaproject.com/2022/02/24/danmei-a-genre-of-chinese-erotic-fiction-goes-global/.
- Zhang, Lin. 2024. “Boys’ Love in the Chinese Platformization of Cultural Production.” Transformative Works and Cultures 42 (March). https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2024.2445.
- Cella, Gloria. «Il paratesto del romanzo web in Cina: il caso Punto di partenza». ENTHYMEMA, fasc. 30 (gennaio 2023): 52–69. https://doi.org/10.54103/2037-2426/19550.

Suggested readings (novels can be read in any language, Italian editions are taken as a reference only):
Science fiction
Chi Ta-wei. 2022. *Membrana*. Torino: ADD Editore.
Hao, Jingfang. 2020. *Pechino Pieghevole*. Torino: ADD Editore.
Ken Liu's short story "The paper menagerie".
Danmei
Mo Xiang Tong Xiu. 2024. *Il Sistema Di Salvataggio Del Peggiore Dei Cattivi*. Milano: Mondadori. OPPURE Mo Xiang Tong Xiu. 2024. *Sua Venerabilità Muore. L’husky e Il Suo Gatto Bianco Shizun*, Vol. 1. Milano: Mondadori. OPPURE priest. 2025. *Guardian*, Vol. 1. Milano: Mondadori

For further theoretical insights, see the bibliography at the end of the slides.

Assessment methods

Final test to be conducted online on the platform at the conclusion of the course.

Office hours

Please contact the professors directly via e-mail to schedule an appointment.

Programme validity

Two years

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION