





Still from Love and Duty (Lianai yu yiwu, dir. Bu Wancang, 1931)

# Toolkit:

## When True Love Came To China

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This toolkit e-book contains a slightly modified version of a course syllabus designed by Panpan Yang, which she is sharing in the hopes that it might support teachers who are equally passionate about rethinking love in all its complexity.

### Background to the Course

*Love was such a new experience in China that a little of it went a long way.*

— Eileen Chang

I designed and taught this online course “When True Love Came to China” at the University of Chicago amidst the pandemic. The chilly, literally breathless winter in the year of 2021 was warmed up by a group of advanced undergraduate students, who were always willing to keep their camera on in my Zoom class. For me, seeing all class members – the teacher and students alike – in a grid layout on Zoom surprisingly decolonised the conventional spatial setting of a lecture theatre. (One of the many beautiful details that I learn from Lindiwe Dovey’s deeply personal article “On Teaching and Being Taught: Reflections on Decolonising Pedagogy”, which is published in the open-access journal PARSE, is to address students and myself as “class members” in emails and course announcements to set the tone and to facilitate that tone throughout a term.)

Since the time I taught the course, I have received numerous email and WeChat requests from researchers and teachers worldwide requesting access to the course syllabus. This is the reason why I want to share the syllabus in the form of a publicly accessible toolkit e-book. At the same time, the feeling of love at last sight lingers within me as I look back and reflect on my own teaching experience. During the pandemic, shortly after teaching this course, I was transplanted from the American academic system to the British one. In the UK higher education system, where a proposal for a new course takes much longer to get approval, I have come to realise, belatedly, how privileged I was to be trusted to design multiple new courses at the University of Chicago, even as a graduate student instructor.

The title of this course was borrowed from the subtitle of Eileen Chang’s short story “Stale Mate: A Short Story Set in the Time When Love Came to China,” originally published in English in 1956, so the aura of this course should be credited to her. In developing it, I referred to Usha Iyer’s syllabus for the course “Love in the Time of Cinema,” which shaped the implicit move from love in cinema to love of cinema in my

course design, and Paola Iovene's syllabus for the course "Revolutionary Romance in Socialist China," for which I was a teaching assistant. Paola's pedagogical practices that "flip" the classroom, her attentive listening to each of the class members, and her bold acknowledgement that the tailoring of a syllabus is often an arbitrary act all come into my mind in this moment of reflection.

A word about the structure of the syllabus: the course follows a loosely chronological structure with flexibility to explore diachronic themes. The notion of remediation — how one medium represents another medium and the transformations that are involved — becomes a thread that ties together the seemingly very different materials: women's magazines, fiction writing, love letters, photographs, films, and popular songs.

While the timeframe of this course is primarily from the 1910s to the 1940s, there are two flashforwards in the syllabus. Following *Love and Duty* (Lianai yu yiwu, dir. Bu Wancang, 1931, Session 2) and *The New Woman* (Xin nüxing, dir. Cai Chusheng, 1934/1935, Session 3), both starring the luminous silent film star Ruan Lingyu, Session 4 jumps to *Center Stage* (Ruan Lingyu, dir. Stanley Kwan, Hong Kong, 1991), a female star biopic that incorporates footage from Ruan Lingyu's silent films and features Hong Kong film star Maggie Cheung reenacting Ruan Lingyu. In Session Six, I pair *All-Consuming Love* (Chang xiangsi, dir. He Zhaozhang, 1947) with *In the Mood for Love* (Huayang nianhua, dir. Wong Kar-wai, 2000). The two stories of extramarital affairs share the song "Huayang nianhua", literally meaning "Age of Blossom," sung by Zhou Xuan. The song also lends itself to the Chinese title of the Wong Kar-wai film. Moreover, a highly stylised staircase sequence in *All-Consuming Love* where the camera follows Zhou Xuan's steps and lingers on her feet for minutes is picked up and brilliantly used in *In the Mood for Love*. In my teaching practice, *All-Consuming Love* functions as a key to unlock *In the Mood for Love*, and vice versa.

### **Course Overview**

What is love? What is attachment? Is the notion of romantic love a universal force, or should it be understood differently in different cultural contexts? Why did early twentieth-century Chinese writers claim that they had never known true love? How did the notion of romantic love shift its valences in Chinese translations (or recreations) of novels of Western origin? How did ideas of romantic love change from the early twentieth century to the 1940s, and how did cinema and print culture contribute to promoting them? This course invites you to rethink love in all its complexity.

We will examine a wide range of materials, including women's magazines, fiction writing, love letters, photographs, films, and popular songs, situate these works in their historical and social contexts, and analyse how they adapt elements from other cultures and media. We will also discuss some of the issues and problems involved in locating appropriate sources, gaining access to digital archives and collections, and choosing methods of investigation and analysis that pertain to studies of modern China.

This course includes a peer-review workshop, which will serve as a forum for developing innovative research projects.

### **Online Teaching**

One of my routine teaching practices is that, before each class, I play carefully selected music sequences related to the film that I am about to teach. If you share this routine with me, please don't forget to turn on the original sound while playing music over Zoom.

The Zoom environment also enables an inventive form of collaborative writing, a variation of the jigsaw learning model. Teaching *The New Woman* (Xin nǚxing, dir. Cai Chusheng, 1934/1935), for instance, I divided all class members into 3 breakout rooms, each assigned to write in the same Google doc for about 20 minutes, and each group would write on one different motif in the same film: the newspaper, the mirror, or the photograph. All class members were able to see the full text of the Google doc composed by the whole class. Just as in a jigsaw puzzle, each class member's writing was essential for a more complete understanding of the feature film. During the writing session, I highlighted the most thoughtful points in the Google doc. I then invited class members whose points had been highlighted to further elaborate on their thoughts to the whole class orally. While speaking, each class member could use the "share the screen" function over Zoom to show a segment from the film to aid in their explanation. This cooperative practice proved to be an effective way of motivating class members to write in a relatively short period and of giving almost simultaneous feedback.

The Zoom recording function also made it easier for me to record my own teaching sessions. Summoning the courage to watch these recordings was no small feat. At times, watching myself on the screen, a wave of embarrassment crashed over me. The gaze of the camera was unforgiving, every flaw magnified under its scrutiny.

By gathering my courage to continue doing so, I discovered another self and could tell myself what improvements I needed. It was a continuous cycle. Through watching these videos, I came to understand how important it is to pause, deliberately, while giving a lecture – to give class members time to think; to create a "breathing" moment; to make the words after the silence even more powerful. It is also by watching these videos that I learnt how to use my body language more effectively and to better control my facial expressions while teaching. The journey was humbling but transformative, each playback a step toward becoming a more thoughtful and impactful educator.

### **Methods of Assessment**

In the version of the course taught at the University of Chicago over 9 weeks, methods of assessment include attendance and participation, postings on the course online discussion board, one collaborative presentation, one research paper, and serving as a workshop discussant. I feel it is important to retain space for "breathing" also in methods of assessment. One detail that is worth mentioning is that while I task students to write "weekly" postings, starting in the second week, their marks on this assignment will not be affected if they miss one week throughout the term. This is beneficial for student's mental health at times of emergency or anxiety.

### **The Films**

Most of the Chinese films in this course are available and English-subtitled on the YouTube channel "Modern Chinese Cultural Studies," led by Christopher Rea. A link to the YouTube channel is included in the "Online resources" section of the toolkit e-book. If you want to access a higher-definition version of any of these films for research or educational purposes, please get in touch with Panpan at [panpanyangpanpan@gmail.com](mailto:panpanyangpanpan@gmail.com)

### Session One: Introduction to the Course

**Viewing:**

Laborer's Love (Laogong zhi aiqing, dir. Zhang Shichuan, 1922)

**Reading:**

Eileen Chang, "Stale Mates: A Short Story Set in the Time When Love Came to China" (1956)

### Session Two: Love and Morality

**Viewing:**

Love and Duty (Lianai yu yiwu, dir. Bu Wancang, 1931)

**Reading:**

Perry Link, "Jade Pear Spirit," "The Love Story Wave," and "The Romantic Route" in *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-century Chinese Cities*, 40-78

Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*, Chapter 1 and 3

Patrick Hanan, "Romance," in *Chinese Vernacular Story*, 49-50

Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 4-5, 11-17

Roland Barthes, "I am Engulfed, I Succumb...", "The Intractable," "Catastrophe," "The Heart," "In the Loving Calm of Your Arms," "I am Crazy," "Looking Embarrassed" "The Ribbon" and "In Praise of Tears" in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 92-97

### Session Three: The New Woman

**Viewing:**

The New Woman (Xin nüxing, dir. Cai Chusheng, 1934/1935)

**Reading:**

Kristine Harris, "The New Woman Incident: Cinema, Scandal, and Spectacle in 1935 Shanghai" in *Transnational Chinese Cinemas*, edited by Sheldon Lu

Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937*, 244-297, especially 261-266

Browse: *Modern Sketch, 1934-1937* <https://digitalcollections.colgate.edu/node/6628>

Browse: *Ling long Women's Magazine, 1931-1937* <https://archive.org/details/cullinglong>

Familiarise yourself with the following digital databases:

- Chinese Periodicals Database for the Republican Period 1911-1949
- Tabloids 1887-1949
- Shen Bao 1872-1949

### Session Four: Recreating The New Woman

**Viewing:**

Center Stage (Ruan Lingyu, dir. Stanley Kwan, Hong Kong, 1991)

**Reading:**

Richard J. Meyer, Ruan Lingyu: The Goddess of Shanghai, 41-58, 72-77

Ackbar Abbas, "The New Hong Kong Cinema & the Déjà Disparu," 72-99 Mette Hjort, Stanley Kwan's Center Stage, Chapters 1 and 2

### Session Five: Wherever There is Music, There is Love

**Viewing:**

Street Angel (Malu tianshi, dir. Yuan Muzhi, 1937)

**Reading:**

Andrew Jones, "The Gramophone in China," "Sing-song Girls and 'Mass Ornaments'" in *Yellow Music*, 53-72, 96-101

Yueh-yu Yeh, "Historiography and Sinification: Music in Chinese Cinema of the 1930s," *Cinema Journal*, 41, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 78-97

Jean Ma, *Sounding the Modern Woman: The Songstress in Chinese Cinema*, 54-70

### Session Six: In the Mood for Love

**Viewing:**

All-Consuming Love (Chang xiangsi, dir. He Zhaozhang, 1947)

In the Mood for Love (Huayang nianhua, dir. Wong Kar-wai, 2000)

**Reading:**

Giorgio Biancorosso, "Song of Delusion: Popular Music and the Aesthetics of the Self in Wong Kar-wai's Cinema," in *Popular Music and the New Auteur*

Roland Barthes, "The Absent One," "When my Finger Accidentally..." and "Talking" in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*

Giuliana Bruno, "Surface, Texture, Weave: The Fashioned World of Wong Kar-wai," in *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media*

Yomi Braester, "Cinephiliac Engagement and the Disengaged Gaze in *In the Mood for Love*," in *A Companion to Wong Kar-wai*

### Session Seven: Peer-Review Writing Workshop

One class member's paper fragment will be discussed by two other class members. About 15 minutes will be devoted to each fragment: about 5 min for each response and about 3-5 min for author's reaction and general discussion.

Feedback should address the following questions:

(1) What is the main argument of the fragment, in your reading? (Note that what you read may be different from what the author intended.) (2) What can the author do to strengthen the argument? (3) What is the section/sentence/term that you found the most interesting? Which section/point did you find the least interesting? (4) If possible, raise a question or offer a suggestion on the direction that the paper might take.

### Session Eight: Love in Ruins

#### Viewing:

Spring in a Small Town (Xiaocheng zhi chun, dir. Fu Mu, 1948)

#### Reading:

Eileen Chang, "Love in a Fallen City" (1943)

Eileen Chang, "Writing of One's Own" (1944)

"Eileen Chang at the University of Hong Kong," curated by Nicole Huang, Florian Knothe and Kenneth Chan - Link Here [https://www.virtual.umag.hku.hk/eileenchang100?](https://www.virtual.umag.hku.hk/eileenchang100?fbclid=IwAR3RbBI1q6rKXMiEkMEjdBIYnJNq0mT2jfY49rVUYiuBjWsoqSMXCDBDzdU)

[fbclid=IwAR3RbBI1q6rKXMiEkMEjdBIYnJNq0mT2jfY49rVUYiuBjWsoqSMXCDBDzdU](https://www.virtual.umag.hku.hk/eileenchang100?fbclid=IwAR3RbBI1q6rKXMiEkMEjdBIYnJNq0mT2jfY49rVUYiuBjWsoqSMXCDBDzdU)

Nicole Huang, "Introduction: Writing in the Ruins," in *Women, War, Domesticity: Shanghai Literature and Popular Culture of the 1940s*, 18-49

Li Jie, "Home and Nation Amid the Rubble: Fei Mu's *Spring in a Small Town* and Jia Zhangke's *Still Life*," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 21, 2 (Fall 2009), 86-125.

Wu Hung, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture*, 173-186.

### Session Nine: Falling in Love Again

#### Viewing:

Long Live the Wife (Taitai wansui, dir. Sang Hu, 1947)

The Sorrows and Joys of Middle Age (Ai le zhongnian, dir. Sang Hu, 1949)

#### Reading:

Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*, Introduction



### **Books for general reference**

Alain Badiou, *In Praise of Love* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2012)

Lee Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2006)

Pan Lynn, *When True Love Came to China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015)

Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006)

### **Online resources**

For formal analysis of film:

<https://filmanalysis.coursepress.yale.edu/>

The Modern Chinese Literature and Culture (MCLC) Resource Center bibliographies:

<https://u.osu.edu/mclc/bibliographies/>

Modern Chinese Cultural Studies YouTube channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-Xdirs4\\_JYpeyWi46h8kdA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-Xdirs4_JYpeyWi46h8kdA)

### **About the Toolkit author**

Dr Panpan Yang is currently a faculty member at SOAS University of London in both the Department of History of Art and Archaeology and the Centre for Creative Industries, Media and Screen Studies (CCIMSS), in the School of Arts, College of Humanities. She received her PhD degree from the University of Chicago, where her teaching was awarded the Course Arts Resource Fund and the Title VI grant for East Asian media and pedagogy development. She has also been recognised as a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA).