Narrative Ethics in Asian Literature and Film

**Time:** MWF 3:00 pm - 3:50 pm, Engineering 204  
**Instructor:** Dr. Li Guo. (li.guo@usu.edu)  
**Office hrs:** Wed. 10:30-11:30, Main 002B.

**Course Description:**
When reading fiction, poetry, and drama, we are exposed to the contingencies and aesthetic features in the texts, and also the importance of the context and circumstances in evaluating and resolving moral questions projected by the authors. Traditional and modern Asian literatures for readers open windows to multivalent understandings of people’s emotions, culture, faith, social realities and life histories in a global context. Narrative ethics extends our compassion to other cultural, historical and social communities, and thereby empowers us with deepened visions of the past and hopes for the moral progress of the society.

In this class, we will study the representation of narrative ethics in Asian literature, by visiting a broad array of texts of genres, including fiction, drama, poetry, prose, and film adaptations of literature. How do different trends of literature in Asia imagine the relationship between ethics and community? How do traditional philosophical and ethical systems for living influence people’s perceptions of the world? What universal ethical values could be found in the myriad stories of the personal and the particular in various contexts in Asia? How do narratives about trauma and memory project nascent meanings of narrative responsibility, as exemplified in
China’s post-Cultural Revolution Scar Literature, or in Japanese post World-War-II literature about the impact of the Atomic Bomb? How does the process of modernization reveal man’s experience of social and religious conflict, and the balance between personal sacrifice and societal loss? Ultimately, how do traditional and modern Asian literatures collectively help us understand the process of globalization in a more nuanced, thematized, and contextualized form?

**Textbooks:**

**Course requirements:**
6 quizzes (every other Friday, I take best 5 out of 6) 2% each, 10% total.
3 essays (5 pages each) 20% each, 60% total.
10 reading posts (100-150 words, every Monday before class) 1% each, 10% total.
1 oral presentation 10% total.
1 final 10% total.

**Language:**
Because of the broad cultural contexts of the literature selected in this course, the course will be taught in English. Students are not required to know an Asian language. Literary texts in the original language, however, will be provided as supplementary materials for those who may be interested in conducting a comparative study of the original text and the English translation.

**Grading:**

End of semester grades will be assigned based upon the following percentages of the total number of points:

- **A = 93 - 100%**
- **A- = 90 - 92%**
- **B+ = 87 - 89%**
- **B = 83 - 86%**
- **B- = 80 - 82%**
- **C+ = 77 - 79%**
- **C = 73 - 76%**
- **C- = 70 - 72%**
- **D+ = 65 - 69%**
- **D = 60 - 64%**
- **D- = 55 - 59%**
- **F = 54% or less**

Students with ADA-documented impairments may be eligible for reasonable accommodations. Veterans may also be eligible for services. Accommodations are coordinated through DRC in Rm 101 of the University Inn, 7-2444 voice, 7-0740 TTY, or toll free at 1-800-259-2966. Please contact DRC as early as possible. Alternate format materials (Braille, large print or digital) are available with advance notice.
**Attendance:**
Regular attendance of the class is important and highly related to a student’s performance in class. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences. If you have more than 3 unexcused absences, whether excused or unexcused, you will lose 2% for each additional absence. In case of illness, emergency, or university activities, please notify me by email in advance, and submit an official university excused absence sheet when you return to class.

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism includes knowingly "representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged used of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials." The penalties for plagiarism are severe. They include warning or reprimand, grade adjustment, probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, and referral to psychological counseling.

**Civility Guidelines:**
A University is a community of scholars. We learn from one another. For a community to survive and function properly its members must treat one another with a modicum of mutual respect. Optimally, respect includes simple, human courtesy.

- All classroom participants should behave toward one another with appropriate respect.
- Alert, active participation is expected from all participants. Learning is not a passive enterprise. Attention should be focused exclusively on class material. Advance preparation by all participants is presumed.
- Participants should arrive on time and remain for the entire class period. In cases of unavoidable absence, faculty and students should notify each other in advance.
- No conversations or activities unrelated to organized class discussions should be conducted.
- Only electronic devices approved by the instructor (such as calculators and lap top computers) or devices required for multi-media presentations should be used during classes.
- No recording devices should be used without advance permission.
- Fairness must apply to all participants; no single individual should expect exceptional treatment in terms of adherence to due dates, class attendance, grading, or university rules.

**Sexual Harassment**
Sexual harassment is defined by the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as any "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature." If you feel you are a victim of sexual harassment, you may talk to or file a complaint with the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Office located in Old Main, Room 161, or call the AA/EEO Office at 797-1266.
Course schedule:

Week 1: Ancestral Wisdoms

Week 2: Monkey King: Hero or Trickster?
9/1: Labor Day; No class.
9/5: Monkey, Chapters 4&5: “Havoc in Heaven” (44-62)
Film screening: animation Havoc in Heaven.

Week 3: The Pilgrim’s Journey
9/10: Monkey: Chapters 16-17: “Pigsy is Taken On” (146-159)
9/12: Monkey: Chapter 19: “The Lion Demon in the Kingdom of Crow-cock” (166-180) Quiz 1.

Week 4: The Journey as an Allegory
Film screening: Journey to the West (2014)

Week 5: From Traditional to Modern
9/22 Hattori Bushō: “The Western Peep Show.” (Keene, 34-37)
9/24 Modern Haiku: 1(Keene 122-123); Modern Waka (Keene 207-211)

Week 6: Rethinking Meiji Modernity
9/29 Nagai Kafū “The River Sumida” (Keene 159-178) Post 5.
10/1 Nagai Kafū “The River Sumida” (Keene 179-200)
10/3 Film screening: Kitchen (1989), directed by Yoshimitsu Morita.
Essay 1 due.
Week 7: In Search of Identity
10/6 Banana Yoshimoto: *Moonlight Shadow* (107-127) **Post 6.**
10/8 Banana Yoshimoto: *Moonlight Shadow* (128-150)
10/10 Tayama Katali: “One Soldier.” (Keene 142-159)
**Quiz 3.**

Week 8: Narrative Point of View
10/13 Lu Xun and his *Preface to Call to Arms* (pp. 3-7) and *Madman Diary* (8-16) **Post 7.**
10/15 Zhang Ailing: “Sealed Off” (174-184); “Xi Xi: A Woman Like Me” (303-313)
10/16 (Friday schedule): Cho Se-Hui, *The Dwarf*, “The Möbius Strip” (1-12)

Week 9: Power and Realism
10/20 Film Screening: *Peppermint Candy*. Dir. Lee, Changdong. 1999. **Post 8.**
10/22 *The Dwarf*, “Knifeblade” (13-33)
10/24 *The Dwarf*, “Space Travel” (33-47)
**Quiz 4**

Week 10: The Fantastic Narrative
10/27 *The Dwarf*, “A Little Ball Launched by the Dwarf” (47-70) **Post 9.**
10/29 *The Dwarf*, “A Little Ball Launched by the Dwarf” (71-91)
10/31 *The Dwarf*, “On the Footlodge” and “Orbital Rotation” (92-116)
**Essay 2 due.**

Week 11: Industrialization and Scientific Symbols
11/3 *The Dwarf*, “City of Machines” & “Cost of Living” (117-140) **Post 10.**
11/5 *The Dwarf*, “The Fault Lies” (141-159)
11/7 *The Dwarf*, “The Klein Bottle” (159-178)
**Quiz 5**

Week 12: Human and Environment
11/10 *The Dwarf*, “The Spinyfish” (179-209)
11/12 *The Dwarf*, “Epilogue” (209-220)
11/14 Hayashi Fumiko, “Tokyo” (Keene, 415-428)

Week 13: Perceiving Asia through Film I
11/17 Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon* and *Throne of Blood*
11/19 Su Tong, Zhang Yimou and *Raise the Red Lantern*
11/21 Writing Workshop
**Quiz 6.**
Week 14: Perceiving Asia through Film II
   11/24 Zhu Tianwen: Politics and Poetics in *A Time to Live, A Time to Die*
   11/16-28 Thanksgiving Break; No class.

Week 15: Review and Oral presentations
   12/1-12/3 Oral Presentations; 12/5 Final Review, Q&A.
   12/1: Essay 3 due.

Final Exam: December 10, Wed., 1:30-3:20pm.