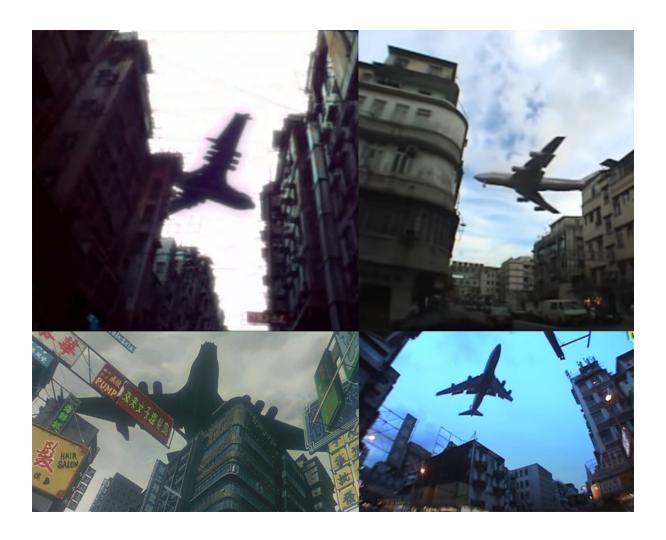**CULS5415: City Imaginaries & Cinema Poetics**
The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)
2nd Term 2023-2024
Prof. Katrien Jacobs
Division of Cultural Studies
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Venue: KKB 101
Time: Thursdays 2:30pm-5:15pm
Medium of instruction: English

This course (which follows the trajectory of a course taught before by Prof. Elmo Gonzaga and Prof. Dietrich Neumann) will examine the intersection of urban and cinematic experiences, while also investigating art works and digital cultures that define and brand cities, and their implications to our future life. In this course, we will look at different genres that feature the spatial environment of the metropolis as their setting such as social realist documentary, (neo) noir movies, contemporary art, essay films, manga/anime and science fiction. Examining their characteristic tropes, we will explore how urban imaginaries and poetics are produced,

disseminated, consumed, and reproduced through various platforms for audiovisual representation including, but not limited to, cinema, photography, art, architecture, maps, video games, and social media. The questions are: How are the social, political or environmental issues and inequalities that characterize the city brought forward by artists and activists, who conjecture alternative maps and city histories and reimagine its future goals. And specifically, how is Hong Kong represented within different cinematic genres and within its recent histories of "Artivism". The course will also focus on how the gentrification of working class districts by means of social media contributes to "hot spots" and "forgotten spots" for leisure and wealth, as well as exclusion and marginalization.

The class will be a dynamic and interactive learning environment, as students will be asked to partake in ample discussions and submit weekly short reflections, while also giving one oral presentations on a weekly topic. Students are also **expected to partake in several mandatory in-class workshops and outdoor fieldtrips.**

While the first half of the semester consists of weekly lectures and discussion on a theme, the second half of the semester will be devoted to a final project **on visual ethnography and reenchantment of the city.** This group project allows students to carefully research one specific neighborhood, an outlying island, a city monument or building of their choice and reimagine/reenchant it in a 5-minute movie. In this project, the urban environment will be documented and rethought by means creative and poetic/artistic techniques such as cinematography and editing, music and found-footage collage, storytelling about actual or fictional inhabitants, documentary performance, interviewing inhabitants, film editing with voice-over. In this way students are encouraged to record and decipher their own experiences and imagine their living cities with self-produced short films essay that counteract emerging global cityscapes. Cinematic images and digital media will be used as a thinking tool that is used to see and reflect on the world and the experience of it.

Assessment Details:

1. Class participation, attendance and in-class discussion 10%
2. Oral presentation on a weekly topic as part of a group of "mini-teachers" 20% (Individual Assignment)
3. Short reflections to weekly readings posted on Blackboard 30%. (Individual Assignment)
4. Final Group Assignment 50% (Project proposal, Group Presentations and Essay Due week 13/14)

Learning activities

The course combines theoretical lectures with the viewing of film clips and art works that support and reinforce the topic of discussion for each week.

Students are asked to actively respond to the weekly readings and course materials. Besides the lecture slots, there will be designated discussion periods in which all students should participate.

Students are required to complete the readings and post a weekly response <u>before each class.</u>

In addition to the weekly readings, students will conduct research and planning for their final projects and oral presentations independently and in groups. Some of the class sessions will be devoted to guided workshops to prepare these assignments

Special aspects of this course:

1. Students are asked to <u>turn off their cellphones</u> in class and to refrain from private activities on tablets, laptops and other computer devices. Students will only be allowed to use electronic devices for preparing groupwork or for note-taking.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To become acquainted with genres of films of art commenting and impacting the city such as social realist documentary, neo-noir cinema, manga/anime, city symphonies, Instagram hotspot and forgotten spots.

2. To reflect on theories of urban cinema, art and media cultures by means of weekly oral discussions and written reflections.

3. To identify the characteristic tropes of films, artworks and social media about cities and know about key examples.

4. To explore how city neighborhoods can be documented and re-imagined by means of visual ethnography and artistic representations.

GRADING RUBRIC

A (Exceptional) – The paper or project greatly exceeds the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented not only about the chosen example but also about the concepts used. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of the chosen example and the concepts used that goes beyond the scope of the class discussion. The language used to explain the concept and its application is complex yet lucid. The writing is grammatically correct and coherently organized. The chosen example is unique for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

A- (Outstanding) – The paper or project exceeds the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented about the chosen example. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of either the chosen example or the theory used that goes beyond the scope of the class discussion. The language used to explain the theory and its application is complex yet lucid. The writing is grammatically correct and coherently organized. The chosen example is unique for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B+ (Very Good) – The paper or project more than meets the expectations for this requirement. Fresh insights are presented about the chosen example. The paper or project displays a comprehensive understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is lucid. The writing is coherently organized. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B (Good) – The paper or project more than meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example could have been developed further. The paper or

project displays a sufficient understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is lucid. The writing is moderately coherent. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project was submitted by the deadline.

B- (More than Satisfactory) – The paper or project meets the expectations for thi requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used lack elaboration or development. The paper or project displays a sufficient understanding of either the chosen example or the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is understandable. The writing is moderately coherent. The chosen example is suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

C+ (Satisfactory) – The paper or project meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used lack elaboration or development. The paper or project displays a basic understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is understandable. The writing is slightly coherent. The chosen example may not be suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

C, C- (Fair) – The paper or project barely meets the expectations for this requirement. The insights presented about the chosen example or theory used are vaguely elaborated. The paper or project fails to display a sufficient understanding of the chosen example and the theory used. The language used to explain the theory and its application is virtually understandable. The writing is incoherent. The chosen example may not be suitable for the topic. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

D+, D (Pass) – The paper or project does not meet the expectations for this requirement. No additional insights are presented about the chosen example or the theory used on top of what was discussed in class. The language used to explain the theory and its application are almost incomprehensible. The writing is incoherent. The chosen example is irrelevant. The paper or project may have been submitted late.

F (Fail) – The paper or project does not meet the expectations for this requirement. The language and writing are poor. The chosen example is irrelevant. The theory used was not covered in class. The paper or project may have been submitted long past the deadline.

ACADEMIC ETHICS
You are expected to abide by the university's principles and regulations on academic honesty. Please take some time to familiarize yourself with the information on the following webpage: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/ .

Violations such as plagiarized papers or multiple submissions will not be tolerated in any form. These will be subject to disciplinary action. Remember that all words, phrases, or ideas taken from sources other than your own submitted assignment must be properly cited. When in doubt about an assignment with a possible violation, please feel free to consult me. All written assignments must be accompanied by a VeriGuide receipt, a signed declaration acknowledging your awareness of and subscription to the university's policies and regulations on academic integrity. Written assignments submitted without a VeriGuide receipt will not be accepted and graded.

Weekly topics and activities

Week 1. Jan 11. Introduction

Week 2. Jan 18. City Symphonies and the Noir City

The first class focuses on two genres of cinema that are intertwined with euphoric and dystopic city life: city symphonies and the noir city.

Homework: 300-word reflection based on the theory of E. Cheung (Posted on blackboard on the evening before class)

Required reading:

Ester Cheung, *Fruit Chan's Made in Hong Kong*, University of Hong Kong Press, Ch. 6 "In search of the Ghostly urban spaces."

Movie to watch at home
● Fruit Chan, *Made in Hong Kong*

Mini-teachers: Group 1

Week 3. Jan 25. Observational Documentary and Photo-Diaries

Critical depictions of social and economic divisions and identity by documentary filmmakers.

Homework: 5 photos and a 300-word narrative as autoethnographic research based on the theory of E. Chaplin (Posted on blackboard on the evening before class)

Required Reading:

Elizabeth Chaplin, "The Photo Diary as Autoethnographic Method." In Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods," Ch. 13

Optional Reading:

Chris Berry: Hong Kong Watcher: Tammy Cheung and the Hong Kong Documentary. In Kam. L. Kam, L. (2010). Hong kong culture : Word and image. Hong Kong University Press.

Screening: Documentaries by Tammy Cheung: *Rice Distribution* and *Secondary School*

Mini-teachers: Group 2

Week 4. Feb 1. Hong Kong Sex City: Hollywood, the Shaw Brothers and 3D porn

Depictions of sex districts in historical Hollywood, Cantonese cinema and contemporary 3d porn.

Homework: 300-word reflection based on the theory of Yau Ching (Posted on blackboard on the evening before class

Required reading:

Yau, Ching (2010) "Porn Power: Sexual and Gender Politics in Li Han-Hsiang's *Fengyue* Films," in Yau Ching (ed) *As Normal as Possible: Negotiating Sexuality and Gender in Mainland China and Hong Kong,* Hong Kong University Press.

Kenneth Brorson Film Review *My Name Ain't Suzie*
http://www.sogoodreviews.com/reviews/mynameaintsuzie.htm

Mini-teachers: Group 3

Week 5. Feb 8 Cities and Bodies in Manga and Anime, Techno-Orientalism

Philosophical questions about orientalism/occidentalism and technology's effect on Asian cities, bodies and the nation.

Homework: 300-word reflection based on one of the two required readings (Posted on blackboard on the evening before class)

Resource:
Eric Stimson
https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/feature/2022-12-16/orientalism-and-occidentalism-in-anime/.191391

Required reading:

Rebecca Suter, "Orientalism, Self-Orientalism, and Occidentalism in the Visual-Verbal Medium of Japanese Girls' Comics."

David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu, "Technologizing Orientalism: An Introduction," in Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 1-19

Mini-teachers: Group 4

Week 6. Feb 15 Chinese New Year

Week 7. Feb 22 City occupations and the "Artivist" imagination

The focus is on how contemporary artists and activists or "artivists" have represented the city in the last decade. There will also be questions about "city walking" and "psychgeography" as a critical enquiry.

Homework: 300-word reflection based on the K. Jacobs reading (Posted on blackboard on the evening before class)

Required reading

Katrien Jacobs (2017): Out of thousands and thousands of thoughts:
Wandering the streets of the Hong Kong umbrella movement, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*

Mini-teachers: Group 5

Week 8. Feb 29. Workshop I: Final projects: Visual Ethnography

500-word project proposal is due before class (Poste on blackboard)

In this workshop student learn the basics of urban ethnography and how to prepare audio-visual documentation and interactions with inhabitants of a neighborhood.

Week 9. March 7. Walk and Talk: Fieldtrip 1: Northeastern New Territories

Students engage in a long walk amongst rural landscapes of the Northeastern New Territories. They carry out exercises in exploring the area while communicating together in small teams and taking audio-visual documentation.

Week 10. March 13. Social Media Research and Urban Hotspots/Forgotten Spots

This class gives an overview of how to do qualitative social media research in regards to urban culture, with a specific focus on the impact of Instagram on urban "hot spots."

Homework: 300-word reflection based on one of the two readings (Posted on blackboard on the evening before class)

Required reading

Reading: Boy, J. D., & Uitermark, J. L. (2017). "Trending #hijabfashion: Using Big Data to Study Religion at the Online–Urban Interface

Reading, Marwick, Alice E. (2015) "Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy" In Public Culture 27 :137-160.

Mini-teachers group 6

Week 11. March 27. Workshop II: From Visual Ethnography to Reconstruction/Reenchantment

In this workshop student learn how to storyboard a 5-minute video about their selected neighborhood.

In this video they will use different manners to **process and re-enchant** their research materials about a neighborhood, using voice, music, sound, acting, storytelling, and/or editing techniques.

Week 12: April 4 Ching Ming Holiday—no class

Week 13/ 14 April 11/18 Consultations and Presentations final projects