

China Cultural Odyssey

Last Updated: Sat, 01/03/2026

Course prefix: CHIN

Course number: 3400

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
32781

Instructor First Name: Lu

Instructor Last Name: Liu

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course explores Chinese history through its vibrant popular culture—the myths, customs, media, and artistic expressions that inform daily life. Rather than treating culture as a static inheritance, we examine its dynamic and multifaceted nature, where tradition and modernity intersect, contest, and reimagine each other. From timeless stories like *Journey to the West* to contemporary internet phenomena, these cultural forms reveal not only the values and tensions within Chinese society but also its broader global entanglements. Students will engage with these topics to uncover how popular culture evolves as a site of resistance, adaptation, and creativity.

The course's interdisciplinary approach combines cultural and historical analysis with critical engagement with primary sources, including films, music, literature, and visual arts. By examining themes such as religion, gender, revolution, and urbanization, students will investigate the ways in which cultural artifacts both mirror and shape collective memory, identity, and sociopolitical change. Through class discussions, collaborative presentations, and creative projects, students will develop analytical tools to assess cultural production as a relational process that connects aesthetics, ethics, and lived realities. By the end of the semester, participants will be encouraged to think critically about their own positions in relation to the global flows of culture and ideas that shape the modern world.

Course learning outcomes:

- Become familiar with major aspects of Chinese culture and important events, themes, and concerns in modern Chinese history;
- Engage with literary, historical, sociopolitical, and theoretical readings of primary and secondary sources;

- Recognize and evaluate culture as a dynamic set of relationships;
- Demonstrate critical thinking abilities, supported by question-centered inquiry and discussion;
- Improve written and oral communication in the form of presentation, analytical writing, and a creative final project

Required course materials:

All reading materials will be uploaded to Canvas.

Grading policy:

Attendance and Participation 20%

Weekly Online Discussion 15%

Group Presentation and Individual Report 20%

Website Project 15%

Final Project: 30%

Attendance policy:

Students are expected to come to all classes on time, complete reading assignments and homework before each week's classes, and contribute positively to class discussion.

- An accommodating attendance policy is maintained under the condition that students communicate honestly, inform the instructor beforehand, and take responsibility for making up missed content or announcements.
- Arriving more than 15 minutes late or leaving more than 15 minutes early without instructor permission will result in being marked absent.
- Three unexcused latenesses will be treated as one missed class. Three unexcused absences will automatically lower your grade from A to B or from B to C.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance, and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence