

China Cultural Odyssey

Last Updated: Sat, 01/03/2026

Course prefix: CHIN

Course number: 3400

Section: A

CRN

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.

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