

## The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

### Subject Description Form

*Please read the notes at the end of the table carefully before completing the form.*

<b>Subject Code</b>	CHC2M50
<b>Subject Title</b>	<b>The Aesthetics and Politics of the Virtual World: Science Fiction and Digital Culture in Contemporary China</b>
<b>Credit Value</b>	3
<b>Level</b>	2
<b>Pre-requisite/ Co-requisite/ Exclusion</b>	Nil
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Science fiction is the most important phenomenon of Chinese literature in the 21st century, and new media technologies have penetrated almost every aspect of everyday life in twenty-first-century China. The growing popularity of science fiction coincided with the rise of new media in contemporary China because these two forms of culture address and respond to the emergence of many new technologies in the past decades. Moreover, reading science fiction and engaging in digital culture have become part of the culture of the new millennials or the Z generation. This course constitutes two parts: it will first introduce and discuss the works by prominent contemporary Chinese science fiction writers such as Ye Yonglie (1940-2020), Liu Cixin (1963- ), Han Song (1965-), Hao Jingfang (1984- ), Chen Qiufan (1981- ) and Xia Jia (1984- ) as part of the world literature; then it will turn to the widespread digital culture phenomena such as dating apps, influencer culture, internet fantasy fiction, Zhai culture, and trending topic (<i>resou</i>). These two types of contemporary culture constituted a spectacular virtual world that staged not only various technological wonders and excitement, imaginaries of future possibilities, but also the dilemma, predicament, and social inequality facing human beings in the age of artificial intelligence. The students would be encouraged to think and discuss the extraordinary, uninhibited imagination and creative power in science fiction but also reflect upon the paradox between technological advancements and human limitations, between techno-utopianism and techno-pessimism, between freedom and restrictions, and between liberation and repression, and between</p>

	<p>visibility and invisibility, and finally between utopian hopes and dystopian fears. The uniqueness of this course lies in the intersection of two separate subjects, namely, literature and media, which will inspire new thinking about how they mutually mirror each other and are closely connected in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Taking an <i>interdisciplinary</i> and <i>multimedia</i> approach, the course encompasses a variety of genres and media and provides the students with diverse experiences about contemporary Chinese culture. Therefore, learning to appreciate and analyze these written and audio-visual materials will enrich their ways of experiencing the world.</p>
<p><b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b> (Note 1)</p>	<p>Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) comprehend the close relationship between the rise of science fiction and the new media in contemporary China;</li> <li>b) appreciate the extraordinary imaginative and creative power of Chinese science fiction and understand how much our everyday life has been dictated by various forms of new media;</li> <li>c) obtain multiple perspectives on the richness and uniqueness of contemporary Chinese culture and the global culture in general;</li> <li>d) master the basic skills to analyse a series of literary works, films and new media culture;</li> <li>e) demonstrate a critical thinking ability to understand the diversity of science fiction and digital culture</li> <li>f) incorporate the above skills into their academic writing; fulfill Reading and Writing Requirements. Students who take this subject will be able to fulfil English Reading and Writing Requirements.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus</b> (Note 2)</p>	<p><b>Week 1 Introduction:</b> The rise of science fiction and digital culture in contemporary China</p> <p><b>Week 2 The Beginning Years of China’s Entering the Information Age</b></p> <p>“<a href="#">Little Smarty Travels to the Future</a>” [小灵通漫游未来]. Trs. Lena Henningsen, et al. MCLC Resource Center Publication (Sept. 2020).</p> <p>In-class film screening: clips from the film titled <i>Wonder Boy</i> (Dir. Song Chong and Weng Luming, 1988 )</p> <p><b>Week 3 The Posthuman Universe: Liu Cixin</b></p> <p>“The Poetry Cloud.” Trs. Chi-yin Ip and Cheuk Wong. In Mingwei Song and Theodore Hutters, ed., <i>The Reincarnated Giant: An</i></p>

*Anthology of Twenty-First-Century Chinese Science Fiction*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2018, 143-173.

In-class film screening: clips from the film *The Wandering Earth* (Dir. Guo Fan, 2019) and two TV series *Three-Body Problem* (2023 Tencent and 2024Netflix)

**Week 4 Future Illness: Chen Qiufan**

“The Flowers of Shazui.” Tr. Ken Liu. In Ken Liu, ed., *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*. NY: Tor Books, 2016, 69-87.

**Week 5 Space and Social Justice: Hao Jingfang**

“[Folding Beijing](#).” Tr. Ken Liu. In Ken Liu, *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese SF in Translation*. NY: Tor Books, 2016, 219-261.

**Week 6 Affective Labor and the Problem of Love: Xia Jia**

“Tongtong’s Summer.” Tr. Ken Liu. In Ken Liu, ed., *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese SF in Translation*. NY: Tor Books, 2016, 111-130.

“What Makes Chinese Science Fiction Chinese?” Tr. Ken Liu. In Ken Liu, ed., *Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese SF in Translation*. NY: Tor Books, 2016, 377-383.

**Week 7 Apocalyptic is the Future? Han Song**

“Regenerated Bricks.” Tr. Theodore Hutters. In Mingwei Song and Theodore Hutters, eds., *The Reincarnated Giant: An Anthology of Twenty-First-Century Chinese Science Fiction*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2018, 3-44.

**Week 8 China’s Influencer Culture**

Youtube videos of the rural vlogger Li Ziqi:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoC47do520os\\_4DBMEFGg4A](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoC47do520os_4DBMEFGg4A)

In-class film screening: clips from *The Truman Show* (Dir. Peter Weir, 1998)

**Week 9 Dating in the Cyberspace**

	<p>Examine two of the most popular dating apps in China: Tantan 探探 and Tinder</p> <p>In-class screening: Short Videos from The Boss of the Matchmaker 風流媒老闆</p> <p><b>Week 10 Digital Culture and China’s Zhai Generation</b> In-class film screening: <i>Her</i> (Dir. Spike Jonze, 2013)</p> <p>In-class animation screening: clips from <i>EVA</i> (Neon Genesis Evangelion, 1995-1996)</p> <p>Jinying Li. “Knowledge Is Power: From Astro Boy to China’s Zhai Generation,” <i>Anime’s Knowledge Cultures: Geek, Otaku, Zhai</i>. University of Minnesota Press, 2024. Pp. 43-80</p> <p><b>Week 11 Internet Literature: Xuanhuan Fantasy Fiction and AI translation</b> Browsing the website Wuxia World Selections from <i>Battle Through the Heavens</i></p> <p><b>Week 12 End-of-Year Film Screening</b> In-class film screening: <i>Trending Topic</i> (Dir. Capa Xin, 2023)</p> <p><b>Week 13 Final Exam</b></p>
<p><b>Teaching/Learning Methodology</b> <i>(Note 3)</i></p>	<p>This course will include lectures, classroom discussions, group oral presentations and a final paper. Before the class, students should complete the assigned readings, watch the films, and write down their thoughts and questions to be raised during class discussions. Lectures will provide key concepts, themes, and social contexts and demonstrate how to analyze the texts. Moreover, the course materials are interdisciplinary and multimedia; therefore, the course will provide the students with diverse experiences through listening, watching, and reading and then further train the student’s critical thinking abilities. Students are encouraged to find materials related to that week’s subject and readings, independently share their findings, thoughts, and analysis with the other students, and raise questions during their oral presentations. They will have opportunities to exercise their critical thinking and voice their opinions during the tutorials. And their presentations will further diversify the students’ understanding and enrich the course content.</p>

**Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes**

(Note 4)

Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)					
		a	b	c	d	e	f
1. Final Exam	10	√	√	√	√		
2. In-class Assessment (include regular class participation and contribution to the class discussion)	20	√	√	√	√		√
3. Oral Presentation	20	√	√	√	√		√
4. Final paper (10% graded by ELC and 40% by the subject instructor)	50	√	√	√	√	√	√
Total	100 %						

Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:

A final exam (mainly in the form of fill-in-the-blanks) will test students' grasp of the subject's content. Oral presentations will test students' ability to find materials independently and their skills in articulating and analyzing their thoughts. A term paper will test the student's ability to incorporate what they learned from the class and their analytical skills into the written assignments. In-class assessments will encourage the students to learn how to express their thoughts and ideas in public and how to behave as good citizens who can contribute to an intellectual community. Each week's required readings and supplementary readings will fulfill the English reading requirements. A reading of an extensive text (100,000 words or 200 pages) include items in the subject assessments, counting no less than 10% of the total assessment, that can only be answered successfully upon completion of that reading, without relying on exposition by the instructors before the assessments.

	<p>Final paper requirement: Write a paper on a topic of your choice and in consultation with the instructor. Manuscripts must be double-spaced with 12-point type and 1-inch margins and formatted for letter-size (8.5 x 11 in.) paper if possible. The paper should be between 1500-2500 words). Your paper must discuss at least one primary text or film from the course while engaging relevant critical issues. Your paper must be word-processed, double-spaced, page-numbered, and spell-checked. It should have standard margins and a readable font. The quotation style follows the Chicago style. You should always back up your argument with evidence from the texts through judicious use of quotations and paraphrases (keep plot summaries to a minimum and avoid lengthy quotations). You are expected to use the course's scholarly texts to the best of your ability. In addition, please also include 2-3 scholarly articles to support your analysis and argument.</p> <p>Students need to obtain a D or above on the Writing Requirement assignment to pass the subject. The required reading should be an extensive text of about 200 pages.</p>	
<b>Student Study Effort Expected</b>	Class contact:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lectures</li> </ul>	26 Hrs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tutorials</li> </ul>	13 Hrs.
	Other student study effort:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Readings</li> </ul>	48 Hrs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Written Report</li> </ul>	43 Hrs.
	Total student study effort	130 Hrs.
<b>Reading List and References</b>	<p><b>Required Readings</b> (Total 200 pages)</p> <p>Tr. Ken Liu. In Ken Liu, ed., <i>Invisible Planets: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation</i>. NY: Tor Books, 2016, 69-87, 111-130, 219-261, 377-383.</p> <p>Mingwei Song and Theodore Hutters, ed., <i>The Reincarnated Giant: An Anthology of Twenty-First-Century Chinese Science Fiction</i>. NY: Columbia University Press, 2018, 3-44, 143-173.</p>	

Ye Yonglie. "[Little Smarty Travels to the Future](#)" [小灵通漫游未来]. Trs. Lena Henningsen, et al. MCLC Resource Center Publication (Sept. 2020).

Li, Jinying. "Knowledge Is Power: From Astro Boy to China's Zhai Generation," *Anime's Knowledge Cultures: Geek, Otaku, Zhai*. University of Minnesota Press, 2024, 43-80.

### **Supplementary readings in English**

Chan, Lik-Sam. *The Politics of Dating Apps: Gender, Sexuality and Emerging Publics in Urban China*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2021.

Chen, Qiufan. "The Torn Generation: Chinese Science Fiction in a Culture in Transition." Translated by Ken Liu. *Reactor*, 15 May. 2014, <https://reactormag.com/the-torn-generation-chinese-science-fiction-in-a-culture-in-transition/>.

Hao, Jingfang. "I Want to Write A History of Inequality" Translated by Ken Liu. *Uncanny*, 8 Aug. 2016, <https://www.uncannymagazine.com/want-write-history-inequality-hao-jingfang-translated-ken-liu/>.

Hockx, Michel. *Internet Literature in China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Ma, Shaoling. "The Farmer, the Influencer, and the Labors of Rural Self-Media," *Comparative Literature Studies*, Special Issue on "Redesigning Modernities," 2023. July/August 2023.

Imbach, Jessica ed. *Digital China: Creativity and Community in the Sinocybersphere*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2024.

Liu, Ken ed. *Invisible Planets: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*. Tor Books, 2016.

Liu, Ken ed. *Broken Stars: Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction in Translation*. Tor Books, 2019.

Song, Mingwei and Theodore Hutters eds. *The Reincarnated Giant: An Anthology of Twenty-First-Century Chinese Science Fiction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

	<p><b><u>Supplementary readings in Chinese</u></b></p> <p>劉維佳，《大地的年輪：中國都市科幻小說佳作選》，北京：新星出版社，2023。</p> <p>羅小茗，《解鎖未來：當代中國科幻小說中的城市想象》，上海：上海書店出版社，2023。</p> <p>宋明煒，《中國科幻新浪潮：歷史·詩學·文本》，上海：上海文藝出版社，2020。</p> <p>王洪喆，〈冷戰的孩子——劉慈欣的戰略文學密碼〉，《藝術評論》，期8，2016年8月，頁3-7。</p> <p>王瑤，《未來的坐標：全球化時代的中國科幻論集》，上海：上海文藝出版社，2019。</p> <p>吳岩，《科幻文學論綱》，重慶：重慶出版社，2011。</p> <p>吳岩、姜振宇，《中國科幻文論精選》，北京：北京大學出版社，2021。</p> <p>嚴鋒，〈創世與滅寂——劉慈欣的宇宙詩學〉，《南方文壇》，期17，2011年5月，頁73-77。</p> <p>嚴鋒，〈科幻的現實與神話——作為一種文化現象的科幻景觀〉，《探索與爭鳴》，期8，2019年8月，頁38-40。</p>
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**Note 1: Intended Learning Outcomes**

Intended learning outcomes should state what students should be able to do or attain upon subject completion. Subject outcomes are expected to contribute to the attainment of the overall programme outcomes.

**Note 2: Subject Synopsis/Indicative Syllabus**

The syllabus should adequately address the intended learning outcomes. At the same time, overcrowding of the syllabus should be avoided.

**Note 3: Teaching/Learning Methodology**

This section should include a brief description of the teaching and learning methods to be employed to facilitate learning, and a justification of how the methods are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the subject.

**Note 4: Assessment Method**

This section should include the assessment method(s) to be used and its relative weighting, and indicate which of the subject intended learning outcomes that each method is intended to assess. It should also provide a brief explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes.