

Popular Culture in China: Creative Voices from the Underground to the Internet

Course Syllabus

Date and Instructor

OLLI Program, UC Berkeley, Winter 2019
Instructor: Anna Sophie Loewenberg

Course description

Whether they are belting out rock tunes or painting portraits, Chinese artists are bold and innovative. This course explores the significance of China's arts and culture scene post-1989 through the Internet era.

Course outline

Week 1: *The Power of the Powerless*

Introduction to contemporary China and the Sexy Beijing project. Discussion of working as a journalist and filmmaker in Beijing. Overview of the impact of the arts and youth culture in China and the current climate as it relates to creative expression and censorship.

Week 2: *Rock'n roll with Chinese Characteristics*

Musician Cui Jian; 1989 and Tiananmen; an introduction to basic Mandarin pronunciation.

Week 3: *AK-47*

Artist Zhang Dali, novelist Wang Shuo, Modern Sky publishing; cultural expression before and after the rise of the Internet.

Week 4: *I'm Not Your Baby*

Women in the arts; musicians Cobra and Hang on the Box; novelist Sheng Keyi; activist Li Tingting and the Feminist 5.

Week 5: *Like a Siberian Butterfly*

LBGTQ voices in the arts; Queer Comrades, Fan Popo; performance art.

Week 6: *Through my Lens*

Chinese filmmakers and social media; Ai Weiwei; future voices.

Suggested Readings, Websites and Listening

There are no required readings for this course. A reading list is provided for students who would like to explore the authors, artists and topics discussed in class in more depth.

Novels and Non-Fiction

Sheng, Keyi. *Northern Girls: Life Goes On*. Translated by Shelly Bryant, Penguin Group (Australia), 2012.

Amazon link: <https://www.amazon.com/Northern-Girls-Life-China-Library/dp/0670076163>

Jianning, Zha. *China Pop: How Soap Operas, Tabloids and Best Sellers are Transforming a Culture*. The New Press, New York, 1995.

Amazon link: <https://www.amazon.com/China-Pop-Tabloids-Bestsellers-Transforming/dp/1565842502>

Wang, Shuo. *Playing for Thrills: a Mystery*. Translated by Howard Goldblatt, No Exit, 2008.

Amazon link: https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/0688130461/ref=tmm_hrd_used_olp_0?ie=UTF8&condition=used&qid=&sr=

Music and Podcasts

Cui Jian. *The Power of the Powerless*. Cui Jian, 1998.

Amazon link:

https://www.amazon.com/Power-Powerless-Cui-Jian/dp/B000038IBO/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1539896004&sr=1-1&keywords=cui+jian+power+of+the+powerless

Nv Voices Podcast

<https://supchina.com/series/nuvoices/>

Sinica Podcast

<https://supchina.com/series/sinica/>

China-related Websites

Sixth Tone

<http://www.sixthtone.com>

Supchina

<https://supchina.com>

China File

<http://www.chinafile.com>

Instructor Information

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Instructor Bio:

Anna Sophie Loewenberg is a journalist and filmmaker who has been documenting cultural movements in China for more than two decades. Her work is featured by media outlets such as NPR, Associated Press, and Danwei TV. She is the co-founder of *Sexy Beijing* and her documentaries have been reviewed online by CNN.com, Newyorker.com and Timesonline and have over 15 million views worldwide. She has a Master's Degree from the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism and won an Overseas Press Foundation award for her print reporting on China.