

ACS Environmental Initiative Curriculum Development Proposal

Submitted by Chia-ju Chang
Assistant Professor of Chinese
Dept. of East Asian Languages and Literatures
Washington and Lee University

July 2007

Proposed Course title: The Environment in Modern Chinese Literature and Film

Introduction:

a. Goal: I propose an upper level special topic course on modern Chinese literature and film. This course will examine human's relationship to the physical environment and develop a reading strategy from a non-human centered viewpoints or a "humanistic-ecological" perspective. It aims to bring an ecological awareness by examining some ecological, ecofeminist, animal or environmental themes and gaining a better understanding of modern Chinese environmental history. It also encourages students to creatively explore what "ecocriticism" means in a modern Chinese context and/or a lack of such a concept.

b. Justification: I have taught one course on "Nature in Chinese Thought," which conventionally examined nature in Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist traditions as well as classical poetry and paintings. As China has modernized so rapidly and faces unprecedented environmental challenges, a new literature or cultural course that addresses modern Chinese culture and ecological problems needs to be developed. Currently I plan to develop a new course and teaching pedagogy to read modern and contemporary Chinese literature and cinema (to some degree popular culture) from a non-anthropocentric viewpoint. There is so far no such a course that specifically uses "ecocriticism" as a critical tool in the study of modern Chinese literature and film. Indeed, it does seem culturally and politically inappropriate if ecocriticism is only confined to the study of nature-oriented literature in the Western tradition or conceived as an opposing category from other humanistic critical apparatus such as feminism and gender studies. However, I argue that it would seem more wrong to exclude ecocriticism from Modern Chinese literature classroom teaching. What this means is that the definition of ecocriticism needs to be recontextualized and an examination of place, nature and animals needs to be integrated with humanist discourses. And this proposal will be pioneering in this regard.

c. Matching of listed priorities:

- No. 1 Environmental literature (more specifically—the environment in literature)
- No. 2 Courses in foreign countries (a foreign literature course taught in the US; bringing environmental/ecological awareness to Chinese majors/minors in the US)

- No. 3 Courses that create or improve an interdisciplinary course: literature, film, environmental history and ecocriticism
- No. 5 New courses that have not previously received funding
- No. 6 Professors who have not previously received a grant from the CFD alliance

2. Project description:

a. activities: Researching, collecting materials, course preparation including developing a syllabus and perhaps a course webpage. I shall also converse with some colleagues in the fields of ecocriticism and Chinese environmental history.

b. timetable: Basically, my activity will spread out throughout the whole Fall and Winter terms from September through late April.

c. Budget

The course will be taught in Spring 2007 as an upper level Special Topic course.

Item	Amount
Book purchase	\$1,000
Stipend	\$ 500
Total	\$1,500

3. Evaluation and Dissemination

- a. state how the success of the project will be evaluated—by way of student evaluation
- b. state how the project will be publicized within the ACS for possible use as a model—the results and final report will be posted on the CFD web site)

4. Institutional Approval: I shall ask the Associate Dean Elizabeth Knapp to send a letter of approval to Dr. Allen Barry since she is the budget unit head.

5. Disclosure Statement: n/a

6. Curriculum vitae: see the attached file