

CHN 1651F – HUC
Chinese Symbols and Icons
Fall term 2021

Class Time: Wednesday, 9:30-11:30; Friday 10:30-11:30
Huron University College H221

Instructor: Dr. Guoyuan Liu

Office: A104

Email address: gliu23@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Monday 14:30-15:30 or by appointment

Course prerequisite: NONE

Course description:

This entry-level, essay-type course aims to offer an overview of Chinese culture to students with a general interest in China. The course surveys traditional symbols and icons still prevalent in China's everyday life, ranging from "yin-yang," "dragon" "mandarin ducks" and "the double-happiness," to "the Three Stars," "Lord Guan" and "Avalokitesvara" (*Guanyin*). Treating these symbols and icons as image-signifiers, the course illustrates the socio-historical contexts that have shaped major symbolism in China. Thus with symbols and images examined comparatively in various contexts: pre-modern China, modern China, overseas Chinese communities and non-Chinese cultures, the course will demonstrate that symbolism is socially constructed and should not be taken for granted. By this means, the course will not only help students gain a basic understanding of Chinese culture, but will also prepare them in critical thinking skills and cross-cultural perspectives for university studies at a higher level. Taught in English.

Course objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students are expected to

1. recognize important symbols and icons in Chinese culture;
2. understand the role of symbols and icons in cultural interactions,
3. demonstrate basic critical thinking skills for observing cultural phenomena.

Textbooks and required resources: available on OWL.

Class Methods: Lecture, in-class discussion and written assignments

Method of evaluation and assessment:

Attendance	10%
Participation/Discussion	10%

Short written assignment	5%
Midterm test	30%
Long written assignment	45%

Schedule of classes:

September 8 Course introduction

How to study this course; how learning activities are scheduled, organized and assessed.

September 10 What is a symbol?

Understanding the grammar of symbolism

September 15 How to read symbols: examples and discussion

What we can learn from the official logo of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games

Images to be shown in class

September 17 Chinese symbols and Chinese culture

Understanding Chinese symbols in the cultural context

Readings:

“Yin and Yang” from *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery* by P. B. Welch.

“The Yin-Yang Principle in Chinese Culture” in *The Chinese Mind* by Boyé Lafayette Mente. North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2009. 19-21.

Short written assignment to be explained

September 22 The power of Yin-Yang

Chinese symbols and the Chinese cosmic view

Readings:

“Taiji” in *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols* by Wolfarm Eberhard. Trans. G. L. Campbell. London and New York: Routledge, 1986.

“Pan Ku and the Creation Myth” in *Myths and Legends of China* by E. T. C. Werner. Singapore: Graham Brash, Ltd. 1922. 76-78.

September 24 The Chinese zodiac

Mythical beasts and the comic order in Chinese culture

Readings:

“Animals, Zodiac” from *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*.

September 29 The Chinese dragon

The most important animal symbol in Chinese culture

Readings:

“Dragon” (1) from *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*.

“Dragon” from *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*.

October 1 Chinese symbols and ancient fertility rites

The toad in the moon, the bird in the sun and something you might not know about the mooncake.

Images to be shown in class

October 6 Salient zoological symbols

The tiger, the horse, and other symbolic animals

Readings:

“Real and Imaginary Animals” from *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*.

“Bat, Bird, Butterfly, Crane, Fish, Fox, Lion, Horse, Magpie, Mandarin Duck, Phoenix-Pig, Qilin (Please do not call it 'unicorn'). Tally-Taotie, Tiger, Tortoise” from *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*.

October 8 Botanic symbolism

The lotus, the peony, and other symbolic plants

Readings:

“Flowers and plants” from *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*.

October 13 Symbolism of human figures

The symbolism of human figures

Readings:

“Face, Gestures” from *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*.

October 15 Saints, immortals, heroes and beauties

The symbolism of human figures

Readings:

“Beauty, the Four callings, Children, Confucius, Emperor, the Eight Immortals (Eight), Fairies, Gestures-Ghost, Girl, Guandi, Hero, Immortals, Lao-zi, God of longevity, Official, God of riches” from *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*.

Short written assignment due

October 20 Understanding Buddhist symbolism

Buddha, Bodhisattva, and Buddhist emblems

Readings: The Heart Sutra

October 22 Buddhist symbolism in Chinese culture

Symbols of Buddhist origin in Chinese everyday life

Readings:

“Buddhist symbols” from *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*.
“Bald Head, Bodhi, Buddha, Fat-belly Buddha, Guanyin, Luohan, Monk, Nun, the Eight Precious Things, Scepter, Swastika” from *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*.

October 27 Midterm Exam

October 29 Essay preparation

How to write an essay on symbolism (for this course).

November 1-7 Fall Reading Week

No class meeting

November 10 The Importance of a Decorated Life

Symbolism in furniture, vessels, and other objects

Readings:

“Chinese characters” from *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*.
“Ball, Bells, Bisection, Black, Blood, Blue, Boat, Book, Bottle Gourd, Clouds, Imperial Insignia, Jade, The Endless Knot, Lantern, Marriage, Married Bliss, Meander, Mirror, Money, Sword, Ten Thousand, Vase, Waves” from *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*.

November 12 Fantastic beasts and where to find them on a Chinese building

Symbolism of architecture and architectural ornaments

Readings:

“Dragon” (2) from *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*.

November 17 Finding Your Way in the Symbolic World

The cosmic symbolism of space

Readings:

“Bridge, Gate, Geomancy (Fengshui), Landscape, Left and Right, Middle, Moon, Mountain, Pass, Pavilion, River, Sun, Terrace, Water” from *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols*.

November 19 Symbolism of the Chinese Garden

Symbolism of architecture and architectural ornaments

Reading: “The Scholar’s Garden”

November 24 Observing Olympic Symbolism

Video: *The Opening Ceremony of the 29th Olympic Games*.

November 26 Understanding the Narrative of the Opening Ceremony

Discussion of *the Opening Ceremony of the 29th Olympic Games*.

December 1 A High-speed Train Named Harmony

The politics of symbolism in contemporary China

Images to be presented in class

December 3 Symbolism in today's China

A comprehensive exercise in reading Chinese symbols

Images to be presented in class

OWL

Students must consult OWL for this course regularly. All course materials and announcements will be conveyed by this and no other means.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices, including laptops, tablet computers, smart phones, etc., can be used in the classroom for pedagogical/academic purposes only (such as note taking, reading, research, etc.), and for no other purposes (such as gaming, social networking, etc.).

Course work:

Please be reminded that your final grade reflects your performance in this course. As the term begins, your grade is zero and will increase with the accumulation of your course work. Please read the following descriptions carefully and decided how to earn your grade.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is calculated by hours attended divided by total lecture hours. An attendance sheet will be passed around during the lecture. It is the student's responsibility to sign the attendance sheet before the end of the lecture. The attendance sheet cannot be signed on a different day. Signing the attendance sheet in place of anyone but oneself is considered cheating and will be penalized.

Participation / Discussion (10%)

The participation/discussion grade reflects how active you are in class discussion. In your participation in class discussion, you should not only demonstrate your familiarity with the subject discussed, but also your critical consideration of it. You are encouraged to ask questions. Good questions make great contribution to class discussion.

Short written assignment (5%)

A symbol is "something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else (not by exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion, or by some accidental or conventional relation)" (OED).

After the first few weeks of studies in this course, you have become familiar with such the concepts of "symbol" and "culture." You have also discussed some Chinese symbols

and how they reflect Chinese culture—ideas, values, belief, etc. shared by those who identify themselves as “the Chinese.” Now you can clearly explain what a symbol is and how it works. In this very short assignment, please demonstrate your understanding of “symbol” with an example of Chinese symbol of your choice. Explain your understanding of the symbol **in its context**.

Short as it is, this assignment is expected to be in essay format. You are supposed to present a statement and prove it with an example of details. (This example is a symbol because it...)

Suggested procedures:

1. Research for an example that you think is a symbol.
2. Examine the example closely to find out features that make it a symbol.
3. Think why these features show that the example is a symbol; take notes.
4. Write your first draft.
5. Read your draft as if it were written by someone else to see a) if the writing is clear; b) if the writing is efficient and well organized; c) if the argument is based on sufficient, relevant evidences and sound logic.
6. Revise and proofread the draft; make sure there is no grammatical or spelling mistakes.
7. Submit.

In-class Test (30%)

The midterm in-class test includes two parts. Part I (20%) tests your knowledge of traditional Chinese symbols and icons gained in the course. Part II (10%) tests your skills and abilities to discuss symbols in cultural contexts. To do well in this test you need to

- 1) study the assigned readings carefully;
- 2) be attentive and **take notes** in the lectures;
- 3) review your notes before the test.

If the test is missed for a legitimate reason, appropriate documentation must be submitted to arrange a makeup (See relative section in the appendix). It is the student’s responsibility to attend the test at the proper time. Such excuses as mistaking or forgetting the date of the test will not be accepted.

Long written assignment (45%)

In this course, we have become familiar with the concepts of “symbol” and “culture;” we have exercised skills of analyzing symbols and icons in their contexts; and we have seen how symbols and icons reflect Chinese culture—ideas, values, belief, etc. shared by those who identify themselves as “the Chinese.”

In this assignment, you are asked to demonstrate how you can better understand a Chinese cultural phenomenon by examining Chinese symbolism. You are asked to provide an interpretation of ONE of the following: either the 2000 film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (dir. Ang Lee) or the opening ceremony of the 29th Olympic Games in Beijing (dir. Zhang Yimou), based on symbols and icons you observe in the material of your choice.

Please understand:

1. This assignment is a university essay. You are expected to develop an argument with a clearly stated thesis in the introductory paragraph, supported by detailed analyses of evidences in the body text. You are also expected to write in a clear and well organized fashion.

A reminder: you are not asked to provide a list or description of symbols and icons that you have observed in the film or the performance. You are asked to make a statement about how you understand the film or the performance as a cultural phenomenon, with symbols and icons (rather than other elements) as your evidence.

2. This essay is NOT a research project. Your task is to closely examine the material of your choice and try to interpret what you have observed. Your evidence should be symbols and icons you find from the film or the performance ONLY.

3. The expected length of this assignment is approximately 6 pages (double space; 12" New Times Roman).

To get a D and above, your written assignment must meet the following basic requirements:

- 1) The essay must consist of an introduction, a body text and a conclusion.
- 2) A thesis statement (one sentence) must be presented in the introduction.

To get a C and above, your written assignment must meet the following requirements:

- 1) The essay must address the main issues discussed in this course.
- 2) The thesis statement must be clear and specific.
- 3) The arguments should be based on analyses of the literary texts you choose to discuss.

To get a B and above, your written assignment must meet the following requirements:

- 1) The thesis must be organized in an argument-driven manner.
- 2) The essay must analyze **details** of the literary texts you choose to discuss.
- 3) The essay must show a good understanding of the main issues discussed in this course.

To get an A and above, your written assignment must meet the following requirements:

- 1) The essay must show a perceptive reading of the literary texts you choose to discuss.
- 2) The writing must be clear and efficient.

Please see the rubrics for assessing the written assignment on the course website.

To do well in the written assignment, you need to

- 1) understand the requirements of the assignment;
- 2) study the assigned readings critically;
- 3) be familiar with the main issues discussed in this course.

The instructor is more than happy to provide help with the assignment. Yet please understand: 1) The instructor will only give advice and make suggestions; it is the student's responsibility to finish the assignment independently; 2) the instructor's advice and suggestions do not guarantee a higher grade.

The written assignment is to be submitted on the course website. **It is the student's responsibility to confirm that the assignment is successfully submitted.**

Extension is only granted for academic reasons, and must be requested at least one week before the due date. For medical or non-medical academic accommodation, see relative section in the appendix.

Plagiarism is not tolerated in any situation.



Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations 2021 - 2022

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Pandemic Contingency

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, typically using a combination of synchronous instruction (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) and asynchronous material (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor. In the unlikely event that changes to the grading scheme are necessary, these changes will be clearly communicated as soon as possible.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at:

<https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.

- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

(a) Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, and if the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported absences, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may not collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

(b) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf. Consult [Huron Academic Advising](mailto:huronsss@uwo.ca) at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services at huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>

Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>

Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>

Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicssupport.uwo.ca/>

Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>

Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

Mental Health & Wellness Support at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca

Community Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca

Chaplaincy: gthorne@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.