

### ***East – West Poetry and Poetics***

Professor Jonathan Stalling

ENGL 4403 001 “SPEC TOP/COMP LIT”

Gittinger Hall TBA

Time Jan 20 - May 8, 2009

#### **Course Description:**

As Americans enter what many scholars are already dubbing the “Pacific Century,” it is increasingly important to explore the potential transpacific configurations of twentieth-century literature and poetry. Unlike comparative literature or comparative philosophy and religion, which trace the similarities and differences between distinct discourses, both Chinese and American poetry have from the very birth of twentieth century been drawing heavily upon one another’s poetry and philosophy for inspiration. So as American students enter this new era, it is not only important to know more about different ways of seeing the world, but also see how these ways of seeing are unfixed, dynamic, and always in a state of interpenetration (what we might call interfluence). Yet this is not an easy story to tell as it requires its listeners to have a basic knowledge of not only China’s “Three Teachings” (*sanjiao*), but also Classical Chinese poetics, cosmology, and an understanding of how these discourses have changed as they enter America through intermediaries like Japanese Zen for instance. Yet this is perhaps one of the most exciting stories in American literature and one that I believe you will enjoy exploring.

#### **Class Objectives:**

1. To offer a background in East Asian Philosophy and Religion;
2. To offer a background in East Asian poetry and poetics
3. To offer a survey of American poetry and poetics influenced by these discourses.

#### **Course Structure:**

**First section** will focus on the relationship between Chinese poetry/poetics and philosophy. In this section we will explore the interplay between Daoism, Confucianism and Classical Chinese poetry, we can see how concepts of *yinyang wuxing* or Yin and Yang and Five Element Theory will contribute to parallelism and tonal prosody, on the one hand, while the ecstatic and religious (shamanistic) elements of Daoism appear as vital components in the celestial imaginary of other important collections like the *Chu Ci* and *Wei*.

**Second section** Will focus more on Buddhism, and Buddhist influence on and styles of reading Chinese poetry. This section will provide an introduction to the key ideas of Buddhism which migrate into American poetics.

**Third section** will trace the impact of East Asian thought on three distinct periods of American Poetry: 1, The Early Modernism of Ezra Pound (Confucian) and Ernest Fenollosa (Buddhist), 2, The Buddhist inspired poetry of the “Beats” and contemporary Buddhist and 3, Daoist inspired avant-garde poetry and poetics in the US. This section, which will be the longest of the three, will show how many of these ideas have become the very foundation of American poetical ideas, while others have remained on the margins of the American poetic imagination.

## Special Events and Class Visits

One of the most exciting aspects of this course is that it will include visits by well-known poets and critics of East-West poetics. As you will see in the schedule below, we will be visited by the most well-known Chinese American poet, Arthur Sze, who works also as a translator and cultural mediator of East-West poetics, Yun Wang another well-known Chinese American poet and theoretical astrophysicist, and Andrew Schelling, poet and editor of one of our text books: *The Wisdom Anthology of North American Buddhist Poetry*.

## Books

- A Reader available at SOONER COPY on Jenkins and Boyd
- Andrew Schelling, *The Wisdom Anthology of North American Buddhist Poetry*.
- Cai Zong-qi, *How to Read Chinese Poetry*
- Corinne H. Dale. *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature: A Reader*.

## Schedule:

Week One: Introduction to East-West Poetry

1-20 Class introduction (syllabus, classmates, etc)

1-22 Different models of East West Poetics:

Week Two: Classical Chinese Poetry

1-27 Classical Chinese Cosmology and the early Chinese Canon

1-29 Confucianism, Daoism two visions of the “Dao” Featuring Poetry from *Shijing*, The Book of Songs, and *Chu Ci* and the Li Sao, “The Songs of the South”

Week Three the rise of Classical Chinese poetic formalism

2-3 Liu Xie to Shen Yue: The rise of classical Chinese Poetic forms: case study

The *shanshui shi* “Mountains and Water Poetry” of Xie Lingyun, (謝靈運, 385-422).

2-5 Jinti Shi Recent Style “Regulated Verse” Li Bai, Du Fu, Han Yu, Li Shangyin, Ci: Lyric Su Shi and Ma Zhi Yuan

Week Four: From Mimicry to Modernism: Qing-to Contemporary Chinese Poetry

2-10 Late Dynastic Mimicry as poetic method and high art.

2-12 Chinese Modernism: Pre Mao: Ai Qing and Wen yi Duo and Post Mao: Shi Zhi, Bei Dao, Xi Chuan

Week Five: America looks to the East: Transpacific Modernism

2-17 Pound. “Shi” and Haiku in Imagism, and the “ideogrammic Method”

2-19 Ezra Pound’s Confucianism and Ernest Fenollosa’s “Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry”

Week Six: Fenollosa Re(dis)covered

2-24 Fenollosa and Classical Chinese poetics

2-26 Fenollosa and Buddhism

Week Seven: Chinese American Poetry Week One: Arthur Sze (and Newman Prize events)

3-3 Sze's Poetry and translations discussion

3-5 Sze Class Visit. Mandatory Nighttime Poetry Reading

Week Eight: Chinese American Poetry Week One

3-10. Li Young Li, Yun Wang

3-12. Yun Wang Class Visit, and mandatory Poetry Reading at night.

Week Nine: Spring Break

3-17

3-19

Week Ten: Buddhism

3-24 Buddhism 101

3-26 Buddhism from 19<sup>th</sup> Century Japan to Mid-Century America

Week Eleven: Buddhism and the Beats

3-31 The Buddhist poetry of Gary Snyder

4-2 The Buddhist poetry of Allen Ginsberg

Week Twelve:

4-7 The Buddhist poetry of Phillip Whalen

4-9 Buddhist poetry of Joanne Kyger

Week Thirteen:

4-14 The Buddhist poetry of Norman Fischer

4-16 The Buddhist poetry of Jackson Mac Low

Week Fourteen:

4-21 Wisdom Anthology and visit by Andrew Schelling

4-23 Discussion of Schelling's work

Week Fifteen: Andrew Schelling and Review

4-28 Andrew Schelling Class Visit and Mandatory Poetry Reading Thursday Night.

4-30 Review

Week Sixteen:

5-5 Class workshop period

5-7 Class Workshop period (essays due on day of Final)