

PAAS 354 (31115)
Master Works of Chinese Literature

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Overview:

When we speak of the Masterworks of Chinese Fiction, we are referring primarily to four specific works of literature that were produced during the mid to latter part of the Ming dynasty (明朝 1368 – 1644). They are: *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三国之演义), *Journey to the West* (西游记), *Water Margin* (水湖传), and *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (金瓶梅词话). In this course we will focus on *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, or *Jinpingmei*. It was written anonymously, and from the time it was first circulated in manuscript form it stirred controversy. Historically, mainstream scholarly opinion has condemned the novel as a work of unmitigated pornography with no redeeming social value. On the other hand, counter-cultural critics since the Qing dynasty (清朝 1644-1911) have argued that it is a work of unparalleled genius. 金瓶梅 is a narrative of power, greed, lust, corruption, sex, vengeance, and murder; themes that are *au courant* in today's movies, television, and on the Net.

Over the course of the next seven weeks we will read forty chapters of the primary text, and to place the work in its historical context we will also read *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*, by Timothy Brook. Students can read the primary text in Chinese or English—the correct Chinese version is on reserve in the library. As well, there are other books pertinent to reading *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, which are also available on reserve.

The questions that will arise while we are reading *Jinpingmei* involve complex social issues: What is morality? What are ethics? What is eroticism? What is pornography? What is the outcome of unbridled materialism? Was Pan Jinlian a victimized young woman who was just trying to get ahead in a cruel world? Has the modern Chinese “material girl” finally escaped the tyranny of Confucian ideology? These are just some of the questions we'll be delving into.

Required Reading:

1. *The Plum in the Golden Vase* or *Chin P'ing Mei (Jinpingmei)*, trans. David Todd Roy, Volume One: The Gathering, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
2. *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, Volume Two: The Rivals
3. *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*, Timothy Brook, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Chinese Text

金瓶梅

笑笑生原著，刘本栋校注，缪天华校阅。

重印二版四刷。台北市；三民，2003

面；公分。（中国古典名著）

ISBN 957-14-0794-1 (平装)

On Reserve:

1. Anonymous *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, trans. David Todd Roy [PL2698 H73C4713](#)
2. Brook, Timothy, *The Confusions of Pleasure...* [DS753 B76](#)
2. Ding Naifei, *Obscene Things: Sexual Politics in Jin Ping Mei* [PL2698 H73C5337](#)
3. Hsia, C.T., *The Classic Chinese Novel* [PL2415 H75](#)
4. Plaks, Andrew, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*. [PL2436 P53](#)
5. Rolston, David L., *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*. [PL2415 R65](#)
6. Rolston, David L., *How to Read the Chinese Novel*. [PL2415 H66](#)
7. 小小生 , 金瓶梅词话 [PL2698 H73C551](#)

Course Requirements and Assessment:

1. Attendance & Participation 20 points
2. Weekly Comments 40 points
3. Quiz on Brook 10 points (will be give sometime during the last three weeks)
3. Final Project 30 points

Attendance & Participation:

Students are required to attend every class, as well as to participate. If it's just me up there talking for seven weeks it's not going to be fun for anyone, myself included. During class you are quite free to speak your mind on anything at all if it is somehow connected to the text. (That being said, I offer the following cautions: I will not tolerate "inappropriate language", nor will I tolerate any expression bias or discrimination against specific ethnic, religious, or gender identities). If you attend every class but do not participate in the discussions you will receive 10 points.

Weekly Comments:

Every Thursday (from May 19 to June 16) students are required to hand in a 1 to 2 page "critique," reflecting on the week's readings. I encourage you to let your thoughts range as far and wide as they can take you, but they must be expressed in **2 pages max**. Believe me when I tell you that I flat out stop reading at the end of page 2.

Each critique will be worth 8 pts.—5 critiques @ 8 pts. each = 40 pts. This component of the course is worth 40% of your final mark, so comments must be thoughtful and concise; there's no space for fluff. What I look for in these comments is originality of thought. Write the best you can but think. Do not tell me about the text (I've already read it), tell me what you think about the text. Comments must be written in English, and formatted in 12 pt. type, double spaced. It is possible to earn 10 pts on a single page critique (it's been done), but you have to be serious/creatively thinking about what's going on in the narrative. Assignments **must be submitted in person** at the beginning of class, and will not be accepted after the due date. There is no way to make up an assignment.

Quiz

Some time after the halfway point in the course I will give a 10 pt. quiz on Timothy Brook's book, *The Confusions of Pleasure*. There will be 10 simple questions; if you've read the book it will be a slam-dunk.

Final:

The final assignment (worth 30 pts) is a five page essay on some aspect of novel or a concise research paper on some question that was raised during class discussions vis-à-vis the text. This assignment must be handed in on the last day of class, June 24th. Alternately, students are free to substitute a project for the essay. Examples will be shown on the first day of class.

Numerical Grade Scale and Equivalencies:

95 – 100 = A+	80 – 84 = B+	65 – 69 = C+	< 50 = F
90 – 94 = A	75 – 79 = B	60 – 64 = C	
85 – 89 = A-	70 – 74 = B-	50 – 59 = D	

Take Note: If you are planning to get an A in this course you will have to earn it. A+ is an exceptional mark and will not be given unless a student produces exceptional work in every aspect of the class. If you miss an assignment or class do not bother me with excuses.

Reading Schedule:

Week One

May 10 Introduction to the course

May 11 *Jinpingmei* (hereafter JPM) Chapters 1-2

May 12 JPM Chapters 3-4

Week Two

May 17 JPM Chapters 5-6

May 18 JPM Chapters 7-8

May 19 JPM Chapters 9-10 First written critique due at the start of class

Week Three

May 24 JPM Chapters 11-12

May 25 JPM Chapters 13-14

May 26 JPM Chapters 15-16 Second written critique due

Week Four

May 31 JPM Chapters 17-18

June 1 JPM Chapters 19-20

June 2 JPM Chapters 21-22 Third written critique due—reflections on Volume 1

Week Five

June 7 JPM Chapters 23-24

June 8 JPM Chapters 25-26

June 9 JPM Chapters 27-28 Fourth written critique due

Week Six

June 14 JPM Chapters 29-31 Note, we are now reading three chapters per day

June 15 JPM Chapters 32-34

June 16 JPM Chapters 35-37 Fifth critique due

Week Seven

June 21 JPM Chapters 38-40

June 22 Movie: The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus (潘金蓮之前世今生)

June 23 Last day of class, open discussion. Final written assignment due.