

Viewing: **EALC 280 : Anthropology of Martial Arts**

Also listed as:
ANTH 280

Last approved: 03/09/23 3:54 am

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History

1. Feb 14, 2023 by Chilin Shih (cls)
2. Mar 9, 2023 by Chilin Shih (cls)

[ANTH - Anthropology](#)

Catalog Pages
referencing this course

General Information

Effective Term:

College: Liberal Arts & Sciences

Department/Unit Name (ORG Code): E. Asian Languages & Cultures (1362)

Course Subject: E. Asian Languages & Cultures (EALC)

Course Number: 280

Course Title:

Abbreviated Title: Anthropology of Martial Arts

Course

Description:

Cultural anthropology can be used to make sense of martial arts. We will consider versions of martial arts presented in books and movies, forms of sport and athletic performance, and a range of practices oriented by ideals of self-defense or spiritual cultivation. We will examine case studies from the US and around the world, paying particular attention to the association of martial arts with East Asian traditions.

Justification

Justification for change:

Please Note: a syllabus is required for General

Education review:

Course Information

Course Credit

Course credit:

Undergraduate: 3

Graduate:

Professional:

Registrar Use

Only:

Banner Credit: 3

Billable Hours: 3

Grading Type

Grading type: Letter Grade

Alternate Grading
Type (optional):

Available for DFR: No

Repeatability

May this course be repeated? No

Credit Restrictions

Credit
Restrictions:

Advisory Statements

Prerequisites:

Concurrent
Enrollment

Statement:

Restricted
Audience
Statement:

Cross-listing

Cross Listed

Courses:

ANTH 280 - Anthropology of Martial Arts

Class Schedule Information

Class Schedule

Information:

Fees

Is a fee requested No
for this course?

Course Description in the Catalog Entry

This is how the above information will be represented in the Catalog:

Cultural anthropology can be used to make sense of martial arts. We will consider versions of martial arts presented in books and movies, forms of sport and athletic performance, and a range of practices oriented by ideals of self-defense or spiritual cultivation. We will examine case studies from the US and around the world, paying particular attention to the association of martial arts with East Asian traditions. Course Information: Same as ANTH 280.

Additional Course Notes

Enter any other
course
information
details to be
included in the
catalog:

Course Detail

Frequency of
course:

Other

Describe other
frequency:
Once every two years

Duration of the
course Full

Anticipated
Enrollment: 40

Expected distribution of student registration:	Freshman: 20 %	Sophomore: 50 %	Junior: 20 %	Senior: 10 %
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General Education

General Education Non-Western Culture(s)
Category Social Science

General Information

Is the course required for a
major concentration? Yes

Specify which ones
(program or
department)

This course will fulfill the East Asian Languages and Cultures
(EALC) major requirement for 12 credits in disciplinary and
period courses.

Is the course part of a
sequence? No

What is the frequency with which the course will be offered?:
(For Example: every semester, once a year)

Once every other year

Briefly describe how the course fulfills the General Education objectives:

This course introduces students to the core methodology of cultural anthropology, and uses it to survey a range of contemporary and historical cultural phenomena associated with the category of "martial arts." It gives students an overview of the historical emergence of a distinctively East Asian tradition of thinking about body, power, and

virtue. And it situates that regional tradition in the context of global circulations of contemporary popular culture.

The first six weeks of the course are designed to communicate the basic idea of ethnographic method. A structured series exercises helps students develop a reflexive engagement with lived experience as an object of social scientific study. ("Reflexivity" is the theoretical/methodological principle that a scholar must be able to accurately reflect on how their own experience is shaped by their cultural location in order to accurately understand how other peoples' experience is shaped by other cultural locations). This portion of the class introduces the theoretical distinction between "structural violence" and "personal violence" to organize a conversation about the ways social structure can affect differently located individual's experiences differently. Gender becomes a central topic of the class beginning Feb 1, introduced as we watch action films and reflect on how female protagonists like Furiosa in *Mad Max: Fury Road* inflect masculinist tropes of righteous or redemptive violence through a gendered lens. This leads into a discussion of women's martial arts and self-defense in the lectures and readings on Feb 8, Feb 13, and Feb 15, beginning with Weinberg's book on the relationship between violence and consent, then examining literature on the women's self-defense movement, then finally taking this form of empowering praxis as a standpoint to engage and reflect on Megan Burke's discussion of rape culture. After this we turn from "self-defense" to recreational practices of "self-cultivation," and use Farquhar and Zhang's work (on Feb 20) to reflect on how power is gendered (and racialized) more generally. We return to issues of gender in the context of Olympic sports on April 4, and revisit the gendered dimensions of "self-cultivation" on April 18, before concluding with Judith Butler's recent book on nonviolent force, which extends her performative theory of gender to a more general consideration of social power.

In week seven we begin a broad genealogical survey of the historical sources of the popular contemporary forms of East Asian martial arts. We start with the South Asian Vedic tradition, exemplified in Indian Wrestling, which travelled along with the mythical Monkey God (Hanuman/Sun Wukong) that accompanied the monks who brought Buddhism to China and founded the Shaolin Temple there. This allows us to continue our discussion of "structural violence," but now in a historical context, exploring how the social structure of premodern China and Japan forged a strong association between religious institutions and martial arts practices. We then spend several weeks studying the process of modernization which produced the forms of martial arts that most students will have come into the class familiar with. As mentioned above, gender and race again become central topics of discussion as we study the infrastructure of cultural circulation enabling the global diaspora of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean traditions, including a unit on Chinese women's participation in Olympic sport, and a unit considering the cultural and practical intersection of the Black Power movement with technologies and imaginaries of insurgent power rising from the Global South. The final unit of the class juxtaposes a consideration of martial arts in connection to China's "soft power," with the rising global popularity of "reality fighting" and Mixed Martial Arts. Comparing the "realism" of MMA with overtly nationalist/culturalist qualities of

regional imperialism leads into a concluding discussion, which asks students to reflect on what we might learn from martial arts about the mechanics of power more generally.

This is a 200-level course because it is primarily intended for students who have already completed some university coursework, but who may not yet know much about the social sciences. It is intended to respond to student interest and familiarity with popular culture in a way that shows them how much they can learn from a more sustained and disciplined engagement with such topics. The course does not require any preexisting knowledge of the history and culture of East Asia, or cultural anthropology. It introduces students to active and critical reading skills, ethnographic and historical research methods, and improves their oral communication and written composition.

The course enhances student's critical and analytic through an integrated progression of writing assignments. These begin with short responses to prompts about topics from class readings and lectures. These responses are submitted before each class to an online platform, making them available for peer conversation and immediate instructor feedback. After this conversation and feedback has been absorbed, a second layer of assignments reflects on these response essays. Five times during the semester, students select several of these response essays (their own and their classmates) and write a more extended critical comparison contrasting the multiple perspectives they reveal. Instructor feedback is again provided. This is supplemented by two additional essays reviewing texts or connecting participant observation to the themes of the class. Instructor feedback is again provided. The final assignment of the semester asks each student to form a portfolio of work by selecting at least five of the different assignments they have completed over the semester, and then write a final paper describing something they learned in the class and using these assignments as evidence of their learning process. In total, each student writes between 12,000 and 15,000 words over the semester, receiving instructor and peer feedback on their writing multiple times each week. Regular and repeated feedback from the instructor, combined with peer-review fosters students' abilities to analyze, synthesize, and communicate their thoughts and the results of their research in writing. The instructor comments on all student composition, and students are expected to incorporate those comments in subsequent assignments which build on earlier writing.

Describe the instructional format and provide special justification, if necessary:

The course is organized around a series of structured reading and discussion exercises that are supported by short lectures from the instructor. In addition, all students work on self-selected, semester-long portfolio projects that deepen their knowledge about martial arts, East Asian history, and cultural anthropology. The course is taught in-person and will be supported by a robust course site mounted on Canvas.

Describe the means by which the Communication Skills goal will be achieved:

This course develops student oral and written communications skills through a variety of exercises and assignments. For oral communication, students are asked to prepare and improve their communication skills through in-class discussions. For written communication, the course enhances student's critical and analytic through an integrated progression of writing assignments. These begin with short responses to prompts about topics from class readings and lectures. These responses are submitted before each class to an online platform, making them available for peer conversation and immediate instructor feedback. After this conversation and feedback has been absorbed, a second layer of assignments reflects on these response essays. Five times during the semester, students select several of these response essays (their own and their classmates) and write a more extended critical comparison contrasting the multiple perspectives they reveal. Instructor feedback is again provided. This is supplemented by two additional essays reviewing texts or connecting participant observation to the themes of the class. Instructor feedback is again provided. The final assignment of the semester asks each student to form a portfolio of work by selecting at least five of the different assignments they have completed over the semester, and then write a final paper describing something they learned in the class and using these assignments as evidence of their learning process. In total, each student writes between 12,000 and 15,000 words over the semester, receiving instructor and peer feedback on their writing multiple times each week. Regular and repeated feedback from the instructor, combined with peer-review fosters students' abilities to analyze, synthesize, and communicate their thoughts and the results of their research in writing. The instructor comments on all student composition, and students are expected to incorporate those comments in subsequent assignments which build on earlier writing.

Describe how evaluation and adherence to General Education guidelines will be monitored:

Please indicate the timeline for such evaluations

The course will be taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty in the EALC department. The department will ensure that the quality of instruction remains consistent through periodic teacher observations by other tenured faculty in the department and by the student responses on the ICES form.

Indicate those who will teach the course and describe procedures for training & supervising teaching assistants:

Jeffrey Martin is the primary instructor. No teaching assistants will be required for this course.

Social and Behavioral Sciences - Social Sciences

If the course contains elements of both the Social Sciences and the Behavioral Sciences categories, show how the emphasis of the course makes it most appropriate for the Behavioral

Sciences category for which it is being proposed.

This course places primary emphasis on elements appropriate for the Social Science category, as detailed in answers to the three following questions.

What social groups, institutions, organizations, or processes are studied in this course? What is the chronological, geographical, or cultural area within the scope of the course?

This course studies people, groups, and institutions who are engaged in practices organized under the category of "martial arts." This is a category of global popular culture that emerged from the modern history of East Asia, and the course considers both the contemporary global milieu in which martial arts presently circulates, and the regional history which produced them. Chronologically, the course covers the period from the formation of Buddhism in Northern India (5th Century BCE) to the present day, while concentrating student attention on the transition to modernity in Japan and China (between the middle of the 19th and early 20th centuries), as well as the contemporary period. Geographically/culturally, the course is anchored in East Asia, while considering the global circulation of regional forms.

Show how the course emphasizes persons in relation to other persons and to their environment.

Martial arts is a cultural technology for engaging with forms of power that exist in the relationship between persons (and, to a lesser degree, in the ways people are located in the environment) . The course frames this issue through a theoretical language of structural/personal violence, and invites students to think about how broader structural aspects of social history shape the ways individual people experience the power dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

Show how the course considers both methodological and substantive issues, and formulates and inquires into basic questions about the nature of social life.

This course gives students an opportunity to think like a cultural anthropologist, training them to use the "ethnographic imagination" to reflect on their own experience with martial arts as a cultural form (and, potentially, an embodied practice), and to inquire into how their own experience might relate to the broad range of different ways that other people have experienced and engaged with similar cultural forms. The course also trains students to use the "sociological imagination" to situate the micropolitics of individual experience in the macropolitics of historical and structural power. Substantively, the course will give students a broad and deep introduction to the historical origins and range of contemporary practices associated with the category of martial arts, positioning them to sustain the inquiry by taking more classes in anthropology or Asian studies, or through their own self study.

Non-Western Cultures

Show how the course treats topics and issues that promote a deeper understanding of the culture(s) discussed.

The department of EALC offers courses about the languages and cultures of China, Japan, and Korea. Through its focus on the regional history of martial arts and its specific consideration of the national traditions in China, Japan, and Korea, this EALC course introduces students to this history and culture. Through a range of scholarship on different facets of the historical and cultural significance of the martial arts, students gain a deeper understanding of gender, status, class, and race relations within a wide range of cultural and historical contexts.

Show how the course provides at least one of the following: (i) a broad description and analysis of the interaction of intellectual, artistic, political, economic, social, and other aspects of a society's cultural life; (ii) an intensive investigation of the cultural life of a society or group in a particular time and place; (iii) a focused investigation of particular aspects of the culture of a society or group (e.g., its art and architecture); or (iv) a comparative investigation of cultural systems and the development of constructs for cross-cultural sensitivity and analysis.

Beginning in the 1980s, anthropologists responded to critiques of the reification of culture and society (i.e. presumption that "a culture" or "a society" is a well-formed unit which can be studied through a focus on its internal dynamics) by introducing a range of novel "multi-sited" or "circulatory" methods. This course, while pitched at an introductory level, is consistent with contemporary methodologies in cultural anthropology which look less to a single reified culture or group than to processes of historical circulation when investigating the dynamics of cultural and social life. This course provides students with a broad description and analysis of the intellectual, artistic, political, and social dimensions of the institutions and practices which historically produced and currently support the circulation of recognizably East Asian traditions of martial arts.

If the course contains elements of the Western, U.S. Minority, and/or Non-Western categories, show how the emphasis of the course makes it more appropriate for the Non-Western Cultures category for which it is being proposed.

This course puts primary emphasis on understanding and awareness of significant aspects of cultural traditions that have their origins outside the Western cultural tradition, further detailed in the answer below.

Show how the course provides understanding and appreciation awareness of significant aspects of cultural traditions that have their origins outside the Western cultural tradition.

This course is grounded in a genealogical consideration of the cultural sources associated with East Asian civilization (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and

Confucianism). It provides understanding of how the formation of East Asian modernity generated forms of transposable bodily practice associated with this constellation of cultural values. And it provides an awareness of how these values, which originated outside the Western cultural tradition, have become core elements of contemporary global popular culture.

Additional Course Information

Does this course replace an existing course? No

Does this course impact other courses? No

Does the addition of this course impact the departmental curriculum? No

Has this course been offered as a special topics or other type of experimental course? Yes

Please indicate the Banner subject, course number, section ID, term and enrollment for each offering:
Spring 2016, EALC398, 11 students.

Will this course be offered on-line?
Face-to-Face

Faculty members who will teach this course:
Jeffrey T. Martin

Course ID: 1012730

Comments to
Reviewers:

Course Edits
Proposed by:

Key: 13171