

HONG KONG CINEMA MOOC

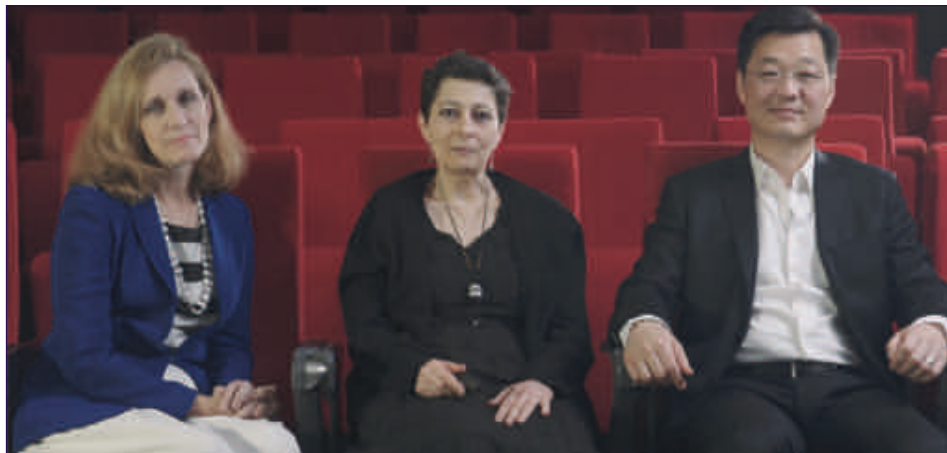
Gina Marchetti, Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park and Stacilee Ford, from the University of Hong Kong, explain the thinking behind their brand new MOOC, *Hong Kong Cinema Through a Global Lens*.

Most MOOCs originate in institutions with international reputations in specific fields, so a course devoted to Hong Kong cinema proposed by a department (Comparative Literature) known for its teaching and research in that area seems logical. In fact, as the major stakeholder and source of funding for the MOOC, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) benefits most from making this fact better-known by publicising research and teaching on a subject of interest to many learners across the globe.

When bringing together the core teaching staff for the MOOC, showcasing original scholarship on Hong Kong cinema as well as making that research accessible to a wide variety of learners were primary concerns. Gina Marchetti publishes on Hong Kong-Hollywood connections, the Chinese diaspora and American minority communities, gender, race, sexuality and the cinema. Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park writes on Confucianism and John Woo ('The Heroic Flux in John Woo's Trans-Pacific Passage: From Confucian Brotherhood to American Selfhood', 2007), Hong Kong film and French-speaking viewers ('The HK Venture: The Francophone Cine-logocentric Nexus', 2009), as well as Hong Kong-Korean film connections. With a background in cultural history,

transnational American studies, and women's studies, Stacilee Ford's *Troubling American Women: Narratives of Gender and Nation in Hong Kong* (2011) includes connections between Hong Kong and US cinema as well as analyses of Hong Kong women in the US. In the MOOC, we also showcase research and teaching on Hong Kong film carried out by other HKU colleagues, including Jason Ho (Comparative Literature), Esther Yau (Comparative Literature), Wendy Gan (English), and Giorgio Biancorosso (Music) through recommended readings, quotations, interviews and guest lectures. Of course, many other HKU colleagues conduct research on Hong Kong cinema, and we plan to feature their scholarship in future online courses (Mirana Szeto, Sylvia Martin, Denise Tang, Marco Wan, Fiona Law and Winnie Yee, among others).

Our location gives us unique access to local film professionals, archival materials and other resources. HKU hosts the Visiting Artists Scheme in the Faculty of Arts, and several celebrated filmmakers, who appear in the MOOC, also participated in that program, including actor/producer John Sham, director Mabel Cheung and director/screenwriter Alex Law. We have strong connections to the Hong Kong International Film Festival, and its executive director, Roger Garcia,



Core teaching staff for the MOOC: Stacilee Ford, Gina Marchetti and Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park.

appears in two units to discuss the importance of the festival to Hong Kong cinema's global reach. Film director/cinematographer Andrew Lau also chats about the global reception of *INFERNAL AFFAIRS* (Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, 2002) and its American remake, *THE DEPARTED* (Martin Scorsese, 2006).

In designing the MOOC, we thought carefully about translating the key elements of our HKU on-campus, interdisciplinary and comparative core course on the same topic to a worldwide audience of learners with different cultural and educational backgrounds. The instructional design team encouraged us to start with key outcomes, which we refined to focus on thinking critically and historically about globalisation and local lives through Hong Kong cinema, with an emphasis on questions of identity (gender, race, class, ethnicity and language).

Needless to say, many of our original ideas for the MOOC evolved during the process of preparation, production and dissemination. After attending MOOC seminars organised by HKU, edX, and Coursera as well as reading the current scholarly literature on MOOCs and participating in MOOCs ourselves, we agreed to cut back on our original plan. The lecture videos now average one hour per unit, roughly half of the online quizzes do not count toward certification of completion of the course, short peer-assessed papers replace projects, and all reading material is optional. Therefore, the MOOC does not provide a learning experience equivalent to an entry-level college course. However, it does offer an academically informed introduction to the topic, ample opportunities for online discussion and feedback on the mastery of basic concepts.

In deciding on the specific topics for each unit, we chose to highlight material that had a close connection to our own research and publication record. Stars Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee, directors John Woo and Wong Kar-Wai, as well as specific films such as *INFERNAL AFFAIRS* and Mabel Cheung's *AN AUTUMN'S TALE* (1987) stood out, since they reflect our interests as scholars as well as providing superb illustrations of the local-global dialectic at play in the Hong Kong film industry. In designing the course, we devoted considerable attention to

coherence, flow and address. We wanted written text to be lively, accessible and engaging as well as intellectually stimulating and academically sound. To accomplish this, Stacilee Ford took charge of all 'knowledge capture' (quizzes, instructions for written assessments, peer review rubrics, welcome messages and connecting text) in order to insure a consistent voice throughout the course.

One of the major hurdles we encountered, of course, involved the use of copyrighted material in the MOOC. MOOCs exist somewhere in a grey area between college courses open only to registered students and internet broadcasts. Service providers, such as edX, leave questions of fair use up to individual institutions. In film studies, the free use of frame grabs for critical and instructional purposes is the norm. For other still images, we chose materials clearly marked as 'fair use' on the internet in the public domain. However, clips, as longer 'quotations' from feature films, push against the limit of fair use for educational purposes, so, to err on the side of caution, we secured and paid for use of all of our motion picture clips from the copyright holders.

The availability of the films for viewing also posed a problem. Learners must take it upon themselves to find and view the films discussed in the course. We recommend specific features, and two units deal with close analyses of specific films (*AN AUTUMN'S TALE* and *INFERNAL AFFAIRS*). However, because of possible barriers to accessing films, we redesigned the MOOC to enable learners to find alternatives from a pool of options for viewing.

The various stakeholders in the MOOC – online learners, edX, HKU, and the individual members of the teaching, research, instructional design and production team – all have different definitions of success for the course. For



the most part, enrollment statistics show our typical learner to be around 30 years old with at least a college degree. Clearly, we are addressing a very different student body than we do in our on-campus, undergraduate classrooms. Although non-profit, edX depends on content provided free of charge by high-ranking universities in order to generate some income from verified student certificates, which only a small fraction of learners opt to obtain. HKU, clearly, wants to solidify its position as a leading research university that can provide a gateway to the potentially lucrative mainland Chinese educational market. As evidence of this, *Hong Kong Cinema Through a Global Lens* provides Chinese translations using the simplified character system favored by the People's Republic of China. The individuals involved want to showcase their research on Hong Kong cinema, develop their online teaching skills and explore the uses that can be made of MOOCs in addressing the needs of learners worldwide.

Film courses occupy a small fraction of the MOOCs currently available. However, film studies MOOCs, such as *Hong Kong Cinema Through a Global Lens*, do promise to provide new approaches to understanding the role specific universities can play in providing greater access to local film industries and global film cultures to learners worldwide.

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