FROM CHAMPAIGN TO CHENGDU: THE OTHER SIDE OF CHINESE CUISINE
WHY SICHUAN?

• Although most Americanized Chinese food is dominated by culinary influences from Canton and Shanghai, among others, the introduction of Sichuan cuisine has not only found its way into more North American restaurants than ever before, but it is the subject of many media texts including documentaries, memoirs, cookbooks, and even television series.
• To connect students to this fascinating region and culinary culture in China which is becoming more popular in Western Culture due to prominent celebrity chefs such as Eddie Huang, Anthony Bourdain, and Fuchsia Dunlop, who’s delightful Sichuan cookbooks have become best-sellers.
SICHUAN PROVINCE

- One of China’s most populated provinces
- Population of around 90 million
- “Four rivers” – situated in southwestern China and runs from east to west, spanning a distance of more than 600 miles
SICHUAN’S “RED BASIN”

• Extremely fertile and agriculturally important lowland region

• Produces up to three harvests a year and is densely populated

• One of China’s main rice-producing areas
SICHUAN CUISINE

• Sichuan cuisine is hot stuff; chiles are almost regarded as part of the staple diet

• Most important ingredients: Sichuan pepper, chiles, star anise, ginger, coriander, fennel, and garlic

• Most famous dish: mapo doufu – a tofu and ground pork dish named after a pock-marked female chef from Chengdu, who created it
SICHUAN PEPPER

• One of the best-known ingredients in Chinese cooking

• Produced from the fruit of the pepper tree

• When eaten, creates a tingly numbness in the mouth known as ‘mala,’ meaning numbingly hot

• Widely used in Sichuan cuisine
CHENGDU

- Capital of Sichuan province; surrounded by fertile land - boasts a thriving handicraft industry; a hub of commerce

- Home to much of the world’s giant panda population; panda-breeding facility

- Designated a UNESCO World heritage site in 2006
CITY OF GASTRONOMY: UNESCO

• City criteria:

• *well-developed cuisine, characteristic of the region
• *vibrant community of chefs and traditional restaurants
• *traditional culinary practices that have survived industrial/technological advancements
• *be committed to nutritional education and the inclusion of biodiversity conservation programs in cooking schools
CHENGDU: TEA HOUSE CULTURE

• China’s tea house traditions date back over a thousand years to the Tang dynasty (618-907), experiencing their heyday during the Song period (960-1279)

• During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Mao closed down nearly all the tea houses in his attempt to destroy old Chinese traditions

• In the 1990s, tea houses finally began to open up throughout China
• Microcosm of society, as well as a place to relax and exchange news

• Spirituality plays a key role in the ceremony of serving – as well as drinking – tea; tea ceremony symbolizes unity and harmony, two factors which lie at the heart of Buddhism

• Sichuan’s tea houses often serve steamed dumplings as an accompaniment to tea
PLANS FOR THE SEMESTER

• Summary assignment

• Journals

• Short MLA documented essay

• Jiudouwan party!
SEMESTER SCREENINGS

- Parts Unknown: Sichuan with Eric Ripert
- Huang’s World: Chengdu
- A Bite of China
- Jiudouwan youtube clip
Upon completion of this module, students will gain a broader understanding of Sichuan culture, cuisine, and the research writing process.

...and, HAVE FUN!!!