

Spring 2016  
 TR 2:40-3:55  
 LL103 Diana Center

Prof. Dorothy Ko  
 Office: 219 Lafrak, BC

## **HIST 2865: Gender and Power in China**

### Course Description:

This course explores the power dynamics of gender relations in Chinese history and contemporary society. It is a lecture course with a built-in discussion component in class. Whenever possible, I select readings from Chinese sources. I deliberately juxtapose topics from pre-modern history with their modern counterparts to highlight the co-existence of temporalities that affect the choices women make. In the lecture I cover the necessary historical and theoretical background; in discussion sessions we work together to analyze the primary sources or research articles and apply them to our present world.

### Learning Objectives:

This course will familiarize students with theoretical discussions of power and agency in recent feminist discourses as well as specific information on the situation of women in China in various historical settings. The latter includes knowledge of the gender ideology of the two main classical traditions—Confucianism and Daoism—and a major religion, Buddhism, the operations of such socio-political institutions as family and law, life course and career choices of women, as well as the impact of modernization and revolution.

Students who complete this course will learn how to:

1. Read texts critically and apply them to contemporary situations
2. Understand the cultural logic of a time and place not our own
3. Engage in informed discussions and debates with people from different backgrounds and with different opinions
4. Write with clarity and persuasive power

### Requirements and Evaluation:

There are no prerequisites for the course. Knowledge of Chinese history and society is helpful but not mandatory. If without the necessary background, you may want to purchase one of the following standard textbooks on Chinese history and do optional reading on your own from week to week:

1. John K. Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History: Second Enlarged Edition* (Belknap, 2006)
2. Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, Second Edition (W.W. Norton, 1999)
3. Conrad Schirokauer and Miranda Brown, *A Brief History of Chinese Civilization* (eBook)

You are expected to come to class prepared, having done the readings assigned for the day and completed the short assignments designed to guide your reading, if any.

Your final grade will be based on:

Class participation	30%
Summary papers (about 2 pp. each)	40% (due Feb. 9, Feb. 23, Mar. 10, Apr. 12)
Final paper (about 10 pp.)	30% (due May 12)

“Class participation” may include: Occasional coursework postings, small exercises, short presentations, leading discussions, and regular attendance. The exercises and assignments will be announced in class and on Courseworks.

The materials of this class are divided into five sections, following a rough chronological order. You will write one short take-home “summary paper” (each about 2 pages long and counts toward 10% of your total grade) at the end of each section except for the last, making a total of four summary papers scattered throughout the semester. They are meant to help you digest the readings and synthesize them with the lectures and class discussions.

The final is a take-home paper (about 10 pp.) due on the day of the scheduled final exam (Thur. May 12, 4 p.m.) It builds on the four summary papers and gives you a chance to review class materials, deepen your analyses in the summary papers, and strengthen your interpretations of the issues discussed. It is NOT a research paper and requires no additional outside reading.

You MUST complete all written assignments to receive a grade for the course.

#### Readings:

The following books, assigned in their entirety, are available for purchase at Book Culture (536 W.112<sup>th</sup> St.):

1. Susan Mann, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge UP, 2011)
2. Yan Yunxiang, *Private Life Under Socialism* (Stanford UP, 2003) [also as eBook]

Other assigned articles can be downloaded from CLIO or Courseworks.

#### Extra Credit Opportunities:

For extra credit, you may visit a museum exhibition or attend a talk on or off campus, and write a one-page report discussing how it relates to some of our course themes. You can submit the report any time during the semester up to the day of the final exam, May 12.

Some possibilities are:

1. “Chinese Textiles: Ten Centuries of Masterpieces from the Met Collection,” Metropolitan Museum of Art (opens Aug. 15, 2015 to June 19, 2016)

<http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2015/chinese-textiles>

2. “Practicing Utopia: Feminism and Activism in Institutional Contexts,” IRWGS Conference, Fri. Feb. 26, 2016, 523 Butler

<http://irwgs.columbia.edu/events/2016-02/practicing-utopias-feminism-and-activism-institutional-contexts>

#### Course Outline:

## I. Introduction: Key Concepts and Themes

### WEEK 1

Jan. 19 Introduction

Jan. 21 [#1] Western and Chinese Concepts of Gender and Sex  
Reading: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History*, xv-xx, 1-79

### WEEK 2

Jan. 26 [#2] Modern and Pre-Modern Bodies

Reading: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 83-134

Jan. 28 [#3] The Patriarchal Family

Reading: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 137-168

### WEEK 3

Feb. 2 [#4] The Women's Perspective of the Patriarchal Family

Reading: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 169-200

Feb. 4 [#5] Summary I: Body, Self, and Family: Chinese and Western Comparisons

Reading: Amy Chua, "Why Chinese Moms Are Superior"

## II. The Early Empire: Classical Foundations (2<sup>nd</sup> Century BCE-5<sup>th</sup> Century CE)

### WEEK 4

Feb. 9 [#6] Gender Norms in the Confucian Tradition: The Male-Female Binary

Reading: Ban Zhao, *Admonitions for Daughters*

\*\* Summary paper I due \*\*

Feb. 11 [#7] Gender in the Buddhist Tradition: Beyond the Male-Female Binary

Reading: 1. "The Lotus Sutra," 186-189  
 2. "The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti," 58-63

### WEEK 5

Feb. 16 [#8] Training the Daoist Body: Self-Cultivation Exercises

Reading: Vivienne Lo, 'Healing and Medicine' in *China: Empire and Civilization*, ed. Ed. Shaughnessy (Oxford UP, 2005), 148-162

Feb. 18 [#9] Summary II: Body, Gender, Sex: Pre-Modern and Modern Comparisons

## III. Transition to Modernity (1890s-1949)

## WEEK 6

Feb. 23 [#10] China Under Western Eyes: From Footbinding to Anti-Footbinding

Reading: Qiu Jin, "Excerpts from *Stones of the Jingwei Bird*," in *Writing Women in Modern China*, comp. Amy Dooling and Kristina Torgeson, 39-78

Review: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 103-120

\*\* Summary paper II due \*\*

Feb. 25 [#11] The Women's Question: Concept of Women's Rights

Reading: He-Yin Zhen, "On Women's Liberation," in *Birth of Chinese Feminism*

## WEEK 7

Mar. 1 [#12] Masculinity Besieged

Reading: Susan Glosser, "'The Truths I have Learned': Nationalism, Family Reform, and Male Identity in China's New Culture Movement, 1915-1923," *Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities*, 120-144

Review: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 83-102

Mar. 3 [#13] Family Revolution and National Revolution

Reading: 1. Mao Zedong, "Commentary on Miss Zhao's Suicide, " and "The Question of Miss Zhao's Personality," in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Stuart Schram, 421-422

2. Lu Xun, "After Nora Walks Out, What Then?" [Often rendered "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?"], 1-6

Review: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 27-49

## WEEK 8

Mar. 8 [#14] Summary III: The May Fourth New Culture Movement

Mar. 10 Breathing Space

\*\* Summary paper III due \*\*

(May 12-20 SPRING BREAK!)

#### IV. The Socialist/Maoist Revolution (1949-1980s)

## WEEK 9

Mar. 22 [#15] Maoist Gender Policy

Reading: 1. "The 1950 Marriage Law," in Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China*, 235-39

2. Kay Ann Johnson, "The Politics of Family Reform," and "Land Reform and Women's Rights," *ibid.*, 93-101; 102-114

Mar. 24 [#16] Rural Transformations: Collectivization

Reading: Yan Yunxiang, *Private Life Under Socialism*, 1-41

## WEEK 10

Mar. 29 [#17] Urban Transformations: The Iron Girls in Myth and Reality  
Reading: Yan, *Private Life*, 42-85

Mar. 31 Film: "Small Happiness"  
Reading: Yan, *Private Life*, 86-111

## WEEK 11

Apr. 5 [#18] The Cultural Revolution (and Summary IV)  
Reading: 1. Emily Honig, "Maoist Mappings of Gender: Reassessing the Red Guards," *Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities*, 255-268  
 2. Yan, *Private Life*, 112-161

### V. The Reform Years (1980s-2014)

Apr. 7 [#19] Market Reforms: Internal Migration; Consumption  
Reading: Yan, *Private Life*, 162-189  
 Peter Hessler, "Boomtown Girl," *The New Yorker*, May 28, 2001, 108-117

## WEEK 12

Apr. 12 [#20] The One-Child Policy  
 \*\* Summary paper IV due \*\*

Apr. 14 [#21] Sex as Identity; Sex as Work  
Reading: Yan, *Private Life*, 190-227

## WEEK 13

Apr. 19 [#22] Ethnic Minorities: Development and New Inequalities  
Reading: Louisa Schein, "Gender and Internal Orientalism," *Chinese Femininities Chinese Masculinities*, 385-411  
Review: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 169-185

Apr. 21 [#23] Between the State and the Market: A Women's Public Sphere?  
Reading: Mayfair Yang, "From Gender Erasure to Gender Difference: State Feminism, Consumer Sexuality, and Women's Public Sphere in China," in *Spaces of Their Own: Women's Public Spheres in Transnational China*, ed. Mayfair Yang  
Review: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 137-153

## WEEK 14

Apr. 26 Discussion: The Future of State Feminism? Women's Public Sphere?  
Reading: 1. Wang Zheng, "Maoism, Feminism, and the UN Conference on Women," *Journal of Women's History* 8.4 (1997): 126-152

2. Li Xiaojiang, "With What Discourse Do We Reflect on Chinese Women? Thoughts on Transnational Feminism in China," in *Spaces of Their Own*, 261-277

Apr. 28      Summary V: From Collectivization to Individualism?

**\*\*May 12 (Thur.) Final paper due at 4 p.m.\*\***