HIST 206/EALC 141 Love, Family Life, and Gender Roles:
The Changing Faces of Chinese Private Life

Spring 2009

Time & Place: Thursdays 1:30-4:30 PM MCES 105

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Underneath the grandeur of empires, war, revolutions, history eventually is about people’s life. This seminar explores how the boundaries of private life in China intersect with the public arena and how such an intersection has significantly re-shaped Chinese private life between the 16th century and the present. The first half of the seminar will explore how the private realm in late imperial China was defined and construed by Confucian discourses, architectural design, moral regulation, cultural consumption, and social network. Moving into the twentieth century, the remaining part of the seminar will examine how the advent of novel concepts such as modernity and revolution restructured the private realm, particularly in regard to the subtopics outlined above. The seminar is open to everyone but priority is given to History and EALC Majors when enrolment exceeds 15.

Organizing questions include: How did female chastity become the center of a public cult which then changed the life paths of countless families? How did the practice of female foot-binding intersect with marriage choices, household economy, and social status? How did print culture create a new space for gentry women to negotiate the boundaries between their inner quarters and the outside world? What was the ideal and reality of married life in late imperial China? How did people’s life change when the collective pursuit for Chinese modernity placed romantic love, freedom to marry and divorce at the center of public debates? How was “Shanghai modern” related to the emerging middle class life style as evidenced in advertisement posters? How has the ideal of gender equality been re-interpreted and realized under the Communist regime? How have the current market reforms reformulated the contours of private life in China?
Assignments and Grading Policy:

1. Attendance and Participation (10%):
   
   Any absence should be reported before class and be made up with an extra discussion paper. Your class performance will be evaluated by how you contribute to class discussion.

2. Discussion Leader (10%):
   
   Every student has to lead class discussion at least once during the semester. A sign up sheet will be distributed during the second class meeting. Discussion leaders should post a discussion sheet (1-2 pages) the day before class (no later than Wed 6PM) on Blackboard listing all major issues in this week’s readings with relevant page numbers specified. The purpose of the discussion sheet is to facilitate productive class discussion. This goal could be achieved by you explaining the reasons why these issues deserve our attention and how they relate to what we have already discussed in previous meetings, or any other creative formats. Discussion leader will also post a report (due Sunday 6PM the same week) on Blackboard summarizing class discussion and how the above issues are addressed in class.

3. Short Assignments (1-3 pages, 5 in total) (40%):
   
   Students should respond to questions listed in the syllabus marked by Short Assignment. This assignment is to prepare you for class discussion and will be due the day before class meeting (Wed. 6 PM) to be posted on blackboard. In addition to the two assignments marked as [not optional] in week 2 and 14, you can select to write on three out of the rest of the assignments, all of which will be simply graded as check [meaning that you have demonstrated sound understanding of the readings], check plus [meaning that you are able to digest the readings with original viewpoints], or check minus [meaning that you fail to understand the readings].

4. Final Project (40%):
   
   This includes a 10-15 page final paper (35%, due April 30) and an in-class presentation (5%) with a pre-circulated draft posted on BB by 5PM April 22. However, if you are a history major and want to take this seminar to fulfill the research requirement, the paper should be 20-25 page long and substantial engagement with primary sources would be expected. Please schedule a meeting with me before the spring break to discuss your paper proposal.

   Otherwise, you will pick one of the following topics:

   - A historical review essay. Based on the course materials, you should choose one topic about Chinese private life and elaborate a thesis regarding its development through time.
   - Imagine you are asked by a museum or a popular magazine to contribute an illustrated essay on Chinese private life. Use the sources introduced in the class to
construct a proposal for a museum exhibition or an article to be published for public circulation.
- Design your own topic. To be approved by the instructor in advance.

5. No late submission will be accepted. All the course requirements listed above must be fulfilled in order to pass the course. Failure in any segment will result in failure of the whole course. Exceptions will only be made for documented emergencies.

6. Academic Integrity: please read the university guidelines carefully [http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html](http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html). Any violation will result in a failing grade and subject to disciplinary actions.

**TEXTBOOKS**
(Textbooks are available for purchase at Penn Book Center 130 S. 34th Street, Philadelphia and on reserve at Van Pelt Library, Rosengarten Reserve room.)


**Recommended**


**Course Outline:**

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### Weekly Schedule

**PART I: Introduction**

**I. Jan 15: Introduction: What does “private life” mean in Chinese history?**

- Daxue (The Great Learning), *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, pp.330-332

**II. Jan 22: The Architecture of the Private Realm**

**READINGS:**

  Pick one other piece in the volume and report to the class.
- Zhang Yimou, *Raise the Red Lantern*
- [recommend] Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late*
SHORT ASSIGNMENT:
What is the author’s main thesis in “The Inner Quarters: Oppression or Freedom”? How does she construct her argument? How does she establish the said argument with primary sources?

III. Jan 29: The Enchantment of Love

READINGS:

- Patrick Hanan, *Falling in Love: Stories from Ming China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2006). Read the preface first and take notes of what you consider as indicative of traditional Chinese society and private life.

SHORT ASSIGNMENT: [**not optional**]
To what extent do you think these novels reflect the social reality? How did romantic love factor in the late Ming society? To better illustrate the underlining cultural logic in these stories, make two comparisons between late Ming China and contemporary US (or any other place/time) and use these stories as evidence to support your point.

IV. Feb 5: Biographic Portrait of a Chinese Family

Guest lecture by Susan Mann on Feb 4.

READINGS:


SHORT ASSIGNMENT
Is the Zhang family typical or atypical of its time? Please be specific with the criteria you use.

V. Feb 12: The Practice of Foot-binding

READINGS:

[recommend] Dorothy Ko, *Every Step a Lotus*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 4

**SHORT ASSIGNMENT**

- How did this practice of foot-binding influence the public and private realm in China? Make a comparison list and rank the contributing factors to the development of this practice.

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**VI. Feb 19: The Cult of Female Chastity in Late Imperial China**

**READINGS:**

- Du Fangqing and Susan Mann, “Competing Claims on Womanly Virtue in Late Imperial China,” in *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korean, and Japan*, pp.219-247.

**SHORT ASSIGNMENT:**

- What are the factors that contributed to the cult of female chastity? How did this practice influence the lives of Chinese women as well as men (as wife, as daughter, as husband, as parents, as children...etc)? Does a functionalist view (that the cult served to protect the patriarchal system) fully explain the phenomenon?

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**VII. Feb 26:**

**Courtesans, Homosexuality, and Polyandry: Alternative “Marriages”**
READINGS:

Courtesans
- Literary image: Review the parts related to courtesans in *Falling in Love*.
- Li Waiyee, "The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Cultural Ideal," in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*

Polyandry
- Matthew Sommer, “Making Sex Work: Polyandry as a Survival Strategy in Qing Dynasty China,” in *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China*.

Homosexuality
- Li Yu, “A Male Mencius’s Mother Raises Her Son Properly by Moving House Three Times”

SHORT ASSIGNMENT:
- What are the social/economic factors that gave rise to the practices of alternative marriages? How were they perceived and understood in their time? Did they complement or endanger the ideal social order?

VIII Mar 5: May Fourth Discourses on Marriage Reform

READINGS:
- Pang-mei Chang, *Bound Feet and Western Dress*, Chapters 1-10 and skim the rest

CLASS ACTIVITY: Role Play

SHORT ASSIGNMENT:
How did the discourses on modernity propose to reform the Chinese private life? How was this ideal realized in real life? Are the theory and reality consistent with each other? If not, how to explain the discrepancy?
IX. Mar 12 Spring Break


****paper proposal due in class****

READINGS:

Love and Gender Roles
   - *I Myself Am a Woman*: Selected Writings of Ding Ling, “Miss Sofie’s diary,” “A Woman and a Man,” “Shanghai Spring 1930.”

New Ideal of Family Life
   - Shanghai calendar posters in *Tu hui mo deng*.

The Emergence of Single Working Women
   - Bryna Goodman, “The Vocational Woman and the Elusiveness of ‘Personhood’ in Early Republican China,” in *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China*
   - [Recommend] Shanghai Modern, Ch 1

SHORT ASSIGNMENT:
   - If these new life styles were a product of the new industrialized urban society, why would they provoked mixed reactions from people at the time?

XI. Mar 26: no class

***thesis statement and annotated bibliography due on BB by 5PM March 26***

XII. April 2: Private Life under the Communist Regime

READINGS:
   - “Women and the Law: Divorce in the Republican Period,” in *Civil Law in Qing and Republican China*, ed. by Kathryn Bernhardt and Philip C. C. Huang,
How does men/women/family/village/state represented in this film? Is the cinematic portrayal of rural women consistent with what we have read so far?

SHORT ASSIGNMENT:
How did Diamant and Wolf reach opposite conclusions on the status of women in cities and countryside? Which side is right? Or both right just different views/sources/questions?

XIII Apr 9: Private Life during the Cultural Revolution

READINGS:

New Gender Model: Iron Girls

Revolution in the Deepest Corner of the Soul
- Yang Jiang, Six Chapters from My Life Downunder (Renditions Books)
- Chen Kaige, Farewell, My Concubine.
- Xie Jin, Hibiscus Town.
- [recommend] Zhang Xinxin, “How come you aren’t divorced yet?” in Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People’s Republic

SHORT ASSIGNMENT:
How did the Cultural Revolution revolutionize private life (or did it?)

XIV Apr 16: Love, Marriage and Private Life in Contemporary China
READINGS:

Films for group presentation:
- Huang Jianxin, The Marriage Certificate
- Xu Anhua, My Aunt’s Post Modern Life
- Tsai Ming-liang, Vive l’Amour (Taipei) [Call No. DVD PN1995.9.S45 A37 1998].
- Tsai Ming-liang, The River
- Stanley Kwan, Lan Yu
- [recommend] Deborah Davis, “My Mother’s House”

CLASS ACTIVITY: Group Presentation
Present a brief movie review that places the cinematic portrayal of contemporary private life in China in a longer historical perspective as discussed in this term. How would you characterize the changes that had occurred in Chinese daily life? Choose a few movie clips to illustrate your point.

XV Apr 23:   Final Paper Workshop (draft due April 22 5PM)

XVI April 30: Final Paper Due  4PM [College Hall 316B]