

Women and Gender in China, Yesterday and Today

Spring 2010

Class: Thursday 1:55-4:55 in Matherly 6

Office Hours: Tuesday 10:30-11:30 and Thursday 11-12:40 in Flint 205

Course description

There is a common perception that Chinese culture traditionally was and still is a wholly patriarchal society where "men are venerated and women are denigrated." It turns out that such a simple, single paradigm is utterly inadequate to capture the complexity of gender dynamics in either traditional or modern China. Even the Confucian literati, who formed the philosophical basis of a male-dominated society, often adopted a female voice when addressing the ruler. In traditional times, women sometimes broke free of the domestic, inner sphere and became warriors, nuns, or poets—several even ascended to the pinnacle of political power and became rulers. Understanding masculinity, like femininity, brings to light a complex, layered and ever-changing narrative. We will explore all of these themes: normative gender roles, challenges to and defiance of these normative roles, the homosexual tradition, and changes in gender roles and expectations.

Objectives

1. Move beyond cultural generalizations and stereotypes: making distinctions over time in terms of ethnicity, gender and society.
2. Gain a greater appreciation of the depth and diversity of the East Asian cultures and the peoples.
3. Develop skills in critical and analytical thinking.
4. Gain a new perspective on history. History is about context. The facts, dates and names, stripped of context, are meaningless and dull.
5. Improve skills in writing papers.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

1. Two in-class essays (on 1/28 and 3/4) (20%)
2. Three papers (three-pager due 1/28 (10%), five-page paper due 2/25 [20%]; 10 page paper due 4/22 [30%])
3. Attendance/ Participation (20%)

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and cheating may be grounds for failing the course.

Classroom Decorum:

- *No visible or audible cell phones. I do not like cell phones.
- *Arrive on time and stay for the duration. Late arrivals and early departures distract classmates and teachers alike. .
- *If you must eat and drink—I realize this is inevitable given the time of the class—please do so quietly and unobtrusively.

Topics and Readings (subject to change)
January 7, Introduction

January 14, Gender and Sexuality: A Theoretical Framework

Judith Butler, "**Performative Acts and Gender Constitution**: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal*, (December 1988), 49(1):519-531

Susan Mann, "Presidential Address: Myths of Asian Womanhood," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 4. (Nov., 2000): 835-862.

Susan Brownell and Jeffery Wasserstrom, "Introduction: Theorizing Femininities and Masculinities," in Brownell and Wasserstrom eds., *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1-41

January 21, Paradigms of Patriarchy: "The Male is Venerated and the Female is Denigrated"

Rubie Watson, "The Named and the Nameless: Gender and Person in Chinese Society," in Bretell and Sergeant eds. *Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001), 166-178 (Bb)

Fu Xian poem, "Women," (Bb.)

Xia Xiaohong, "New Meanings in a Classic: Differing Interpretations of Ban Zhao and Her Admonitions for Women in the Late Qing Dynasty," Tao Jie, Zheng Bijun and Shirley Mow eds., *Holding Up Half the Sky* (New York: Feminist Press, 2004), 3-16

Ban Zhao's "Precepts for Women" in Ayscough, Florence, *Chinese Women: Yesterday and Today* (New York: Da Capo, 1975) (Bb)

Gordon, Paul Rakita, "The View of Women in Early Confucianism," in Li Chenyang Ed., *The Sage and the Second Sex*, (Chicago: Open Court), 133-155.

Wilt Edema and Beata Grant eds., *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 17-42

January 28 Breaking the Patriarchal Mold: Woman Warrior, Buddhist Nun, Courtesan and Poet

Tsai Chih-chung Ed. and Illustrated, *Fantasies of the Six Dynasties*, Jenny Lim trans., "Li Ji," (Singapore: Asiapac, 1996), 26-29 and 38-46.

Wilt Edema and Beata Grant eds., *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 153-163 and 189-195.

Howard Levy, *Ladies of the Tang*: "Courtesan Li" and "Oriole" (Bb)

Jowen Tong, *Fables for the Patriarchs*, chapter 12 (Bb)

February 4 Women and Power

Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, "Empress Lu" (Bb)

Yang Lien-sheng, "Female Rulers in Imperial China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 23 (1957) 47-61 (Bb)

Susan Rogers, "Female Forms of Power and the Myth of Male Dominance," *American Ethnologist* 2.4 (1975): 727-756.

"Imagining Matriarchy: "Kingdoms of Women" in Tang China," Jennifer W. Jay, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116. 2. (Apr. - Jun., 1996), pp. 220-229.

February 11, Wu Zhao, China's Only Woman Emperor

Rothschild, *Wu Zhao, China's Only Woman Emperor*

Chen Jo-shui, "Empress Wu and Proto-Feminist Sentiments in T'ang China" (Bb)

Jowen Tong, *Fables for the Patriarchs*, 57-72.

By Xu Changling, *Ruyizhuan, The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction*

February 18 Homosexuality in Traditional Chinese Society

Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)

Sima Xiangru, "Li Sao"

Jowen Tong, *Fables of the Patriarchs*, "In Feminine Voice," 151-168.

Matthew Sommer, "Dangerous Males, Vulnerable Males and Polluted Males: The Regulation of Masculinity in Qing Dynasty China," in Brownell and Wasserstrom eds., *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 67-88

February 25, Female Sexuality in Traditional China

Readings: Goldin, Paul Rakita, *The Culture of Sex in Ancient China*, (Hawaii University Press, 2002), 48-75, (Bb).

Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve*, 173-179.

Robert van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Traditional China*, "Tang" (Bb)

Excerpt from Gao Shiyu, *The Chalice and the Blade* (Beijing, 1995)

March 4, Footbinding: The Aesthetics and Sexualization of Pain

Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Bb)

Wang, Ping, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China*

Patricia Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 21-44 and 61-88 (Bb)

March 18, Women and the Family in Late Imperial China

Cao Xueqin, *The Story of the Stone*.

Selections from Levy, *Ideal and Actual in The Story of the Stone*, 27-66 (Bb)

Susan Mann, "Learned Women in the Eighteenth Century," in Christina Gilmartin, Gail Hershat, Lisa Rofel and Tyrene White eds., *Engendering China: Women, Culture and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 27-47.

March 25 Women in the Early 20th Century

Lu Meiyi, "The Awakening of Chinese Women and the Women's Movement in the Early 20th Century," in *Holding Up Half the Sky*, (New York: Feminist Press, 2004), 55-70

Gail Hershat, "Modernizing Sex, Sexing Modernity" in Brownell and Wasserstrom eds., *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 199-225

Lydia H. Liu, "Invention and Intervention: The Making of a Female Tradition in Modern Chinese Literature," in Brownell and Wasserstrom eds., *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 149-174

Ding Ling, *Miss Sophie's Diary* (Bb)

Wilt Edema and Beata Grant eds., "The Beheaded Feminist, Qiu Jin," in *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 767-808

Tani Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 127-189.

April 1, The Good Comrade: Women in Communist China

"The Changing Course of Courtship," in Pat Ebrey ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 470-475.

Chen Mingxia, "The Marriage Law and the Rights of Chinese Women in Marriage and the Family," in Tao Jie, Zheng Bijun and Shirley Mow eds. *Holding Up Half the Sky* (New York: Feminist Press, 2004), 159-171.

Emily Honig, "Maoist Mappings of Gender: Reassessing the Red Guards," in Brownell and Wasserstrom eds., *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 255-268.

Harriet Evans, "Past Perfect or Imperfect: Changing Images of the Ideal Wife," in Brownell and Wasserstrom eds., *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 335-360.

April 8, Gender and Sexuality in Post-Socialist China

"The One Child Family," "Economic Liberalization and New Problems for Women," Peasants in the Cities," in Pat Ebrey ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 476-487

Mian Mian, *Candy*, (Back Bay Books, 2003)

Farquhar, Judith, "Ars Erotica" in *Appetites: Sex and Food in Post-Socialist China*, 243-284 (Bb)

Colin Mackerras, "Critical Social Issues," in Czeslaw Tubilewicz, *Critical Issues in Contemporary China* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 194-203.

Louisa Schien, "Gender and Internal Orientalism," in Brownell and Wasserstrom eds., *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 385-411.

April 15 TBA

Books to Purchase

Hinsch, Bret, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* (University of California Press, 1992).

Cao Xueqin, *The Story of the Stone*, Vol. I. (Penguin Books, 1974).

Anchee Min, *Red Azalea* (New York: Anchor, 2006)

Mian Mian, *Candy* (Back Bay Books, 2003)

Rothschild, N. Harry, *Wu Zhao: Woman Emperor of China* (New York: Longman, 2008).