Women and Gender in China

Fall 2018

MWF 11.45-12.35

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Women and Gender in China explores the social construction of gender and sexuality in late imperial and modern China (1700-present). In order to provide students with an historical context in which they can describe and analyze the historical development of gender-related notions in China, the course traces how Chinese women from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds experienced the transition from imperial to modern, and socialist to neoliberal phases of Chinese history while their bodies and labor were subject to competing but similarly patriarchal claims of the state, family and male sexuality. The course will also include a discussion of Chinese queer theories and identities for the same historical period.

The course will begin with a discussion of how female sexuality was institutionally defined in imperial China through rape laws and a chastity cult, as well as the impact of the practice of prostitution and contradictory debates on feminine virtue. It will furthermore include an inquiry into how female labor gained different meanings in Confucian and revolutionary China, analyses of the works in which a new woman was composed in response to the needs of nation-building, and an explanation of how these multifarious female experiences gave birth to a distinct feminist radicalism at the conjunction of local and global forces. The course will end with an elaboration on the history of queer identities and contemporary LGBTQ activism.

Over the course of the semester, we will read multiple original texts, in addition to academic articles and book sections that will lead us into a systematic elaboration of gender and sexuality via the historical perspective. By the end of the semester, students will be able to utilize the methodologies offered in these secondary sources to formulate their own inquiries into the constitution of gender relations and categories in changing sociopolitical contexts. In addition to learning about the multiplicity of gender experiences in China, students will also be able to deconstruct original texts in order to analyze inherent assumptions and propositions on women, gender, and sexuality.

Course requirements

15% Attendance and participation

15% Essay I (4 pages)

20% Essay II (5 pages)
10% Leading a discussion section

40% Final paper

**Participation and Attendance:** This course requires active participation of all students. You are expected to attend classes regularly with required readings completed before each meeting.

**Essays:** (double space, 12-point fonts) For two essay assignments, students will answer a question given by the instructor. These are not a research paper and no external source is allowed.

**Leading Discussion:** You are responsible to facilitate one of the class discussions (mostly on Fridays). Schedule and assignment will be made by the instructor.

**Final Paper:** At the end of the semester, students will submit a final paper, using the sources on the syllabus. You need the consent of the instructor for additional sources. Final paper will be 10-12 pages, double-spaced, with 12-point fonts. No late paper will be accepted unless a medical emergency causes a delay.

**Suggested paper topics:** Western and Chinese concepts of gender and sexuality, chastity and gender norms in late imperial China, Chinese approaches to rape and prostitution, foot binding and sexuality, women’s education, women and modernity, gender politics in the service of nationalism, Maoism, socialism and feminism, gendered division of labor, gender and migration, gender and ethnicity, queer identities and activism.

**Accommodations**

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. 0001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

**Course Plan and Weekly Readings**

**Week 1**

**Aug 22:** Introduction

**Aug 24:** What is gender?

Week 2

Aug 27: Discussing gender and sexuality in a Chinese context


Aug 29: Chinese Women in Western Eyes


Patricia Ebrey, “Gender and Sinology: Shifting Western Interpretations of Footbinding, 1300-1890.” Late Imperial China, no. 2 (1999): 1-34.

Aug 31: Discussion


Week 3

Sep 5: Chastity


Sep 7: Rape


Week 4

Sep 10: Prostitution


Sep 12: Concubines and Courtesans

Catherine Vance Yeh, “Playing with the Public: Late Qing Courtesans and Their Opera Singer Lovers,” in Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China, ed. Goodman and Larson, pp. 145-168.
Sep 14: Discussion


--- First paper prompt ---

**Week 5**

Sep 17: Footbinding


Sep 19: Ideal Wife


Sep 21: Discussion


**Week 6**

Sep 24: Women’s Labor in Imperial China


Sep 26: Work and Virtue

Kenneth Pomeranz, “Women’s Work and the Economics of Respectability,” in *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China*, pp. 239-263.

Sep 28: Discussion


--- First essays due ---

**Week 7**

Oct 1: Women’s Labor in Revolutionary China

**Oct 3: Women of the Revolution**


**Oct 5: Discussion**

Gail Hershatter, “Virtue at Work: Rural Shaanxi Women Remember the 1950s,” in *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China*, pp. 309-328.

**Week 8**

**Oct 8: Ethnic Women**


**Oct 10: Gender and Ethnicity**


**Week 9**

**Oct 15: Educated Women in Imperial China**


**Oct 17: Nation and Mothers**


**Oct 19: Discussion**


--- Second essay prompt ---

**Week 10**

**Oct 22: The New Women in Historical Perspective**

Ying Hu, “Naming the First ‘New Woman,’” in Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China, ed. Karl and Zarrow, pp. 180-211.

**Oct 24: Women, Family, and the State**


**Oct 26: Discussion**


**Week 11**

**Oct 29: Gender, Work, and Migration**


**Oct 31: Gendered Labor in Reform China**


**Nov 2: Discussion**

--- Second essay due ---

**Week 12**

**Nov 5: History of Homosexuality in China**


**Nov 7: Queer Identities in Modern China**

Nov 9: Discussion

**Week 13**

Nov 14: The Birth of Chinese Feminism


Nov 16: Discussion


**Week 14-15**

Nov 19

Office hour for final papers

Nov 26: Feminist Politics in Revolutionary China


Nov 28: Maoism and Feminism


Nov 30: Discussion

**Week 16**

Dec 3: Feminist Radicalism in Contemporary China


Dec 5: Concluding Remarks