

SINO 2013

Women and Gender in Chinese History

Dr. Ji Li

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Office: Rm 119, May Hall

Office hour: Wednesdays 2-4 PM, or by appointment

Class Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 10:30-12:20 PM.

Class Venue: CPD.3.15

Tutorial session 1: Mondays, 1-2 PM on Feb 20, Feb 27, Mar 13, Mar 27, Apr 3, Apr 10

Tutorial session 2: Thursdays, 9-10 AM on Feb 23, Mar 2, Mar 23, Mar 30, Apr 6, Apr 13

Tutorial Venue: AV View Room, 1st Floor, New Wing, Main Library

Course Description

This course discusses key concepts of women and gender in Chinese history from ancient times to the present. The purpose of this course is to provide students with a base of knowledge regarding the changing historical experiences and contexts of women and gender in Chinese society. It aims to help students better understand Chinese culture and Chinese society through the orientation of women's writings and scholarly studies on women and gender. The learning process will equip students with basic techniques to conduct historical research. The course will be organized chronologically with thematic focus on different historical periods. Family, marriage, education, religion, revolution and political participation, as well as subjectivity and agency are major topics. We pay particular attention to analyze how the concepts of women and gender in Chinese society are historically and politically constructed.

Evaluation:

Class attendance and participation (15%): you are required to attend all lectures, read assigned readings before class, and actively participate in classroom discussion.

2 Response papers (50%): 25% each, 4-6 double-spaced pages, 12 point font. Topics should be chosen from weekly "Questions for thinking".

1 Reading report on primary source of historical documents and in-class presentation (15%): One written reading report on the weekly assigned primary sources. 2-3 double-spaced pages, 12 point font. Students will present the report in class and lead the discussion.

Group project (20%): you will voluntarily sign into 7 groups (about 4-5 students a group) to work on a research project on Republican women's journals. Each group will conduct research on one journal, design a research topic, and prepare for a 15-minute oral presentation at the end-of-semester seminar (15%). Each group will submit a one-page research report (5%) collectively, which includes research question, sources, and arguments.

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of this class, students will be able to:

- 1) Use the skills required for historical analysis to develop better writing and question-asking skills in order to critically examine competing points of view and construct a coherent argument in writing.
- 2) Use their informed historical awareness to identify and interpret ways that current issues on women and gender in Chinese society are shaped by the past.

References

Textbook: Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. (This book has been reserved in the Main Library for 2 hours. Please go to read relevant chapters in the book to contextualize specific topics of our lectures.)

Primary Source Collection: All required readings of historical documents for each week are selected from the below collections of historical documents (all translated in English).

1. Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *Chinese Civilization and Society: A Sourcebook*. The Free Press, 1981.
2. Mann, Susan and Yu-Yin Cheng edited. *Under Confucian eyes: writings on gender in Chinese history*. University of California Press, 2001.
3. Lan, R. Hua and Vanessa Fong eds. *Women in Republican China: A Sourcebook*. Armonk: Shaprpe, 1999.

Weekly readings are uploaded onto Moodle. Please download and read the readings before class each week.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Part I: Women in Traditional Chinese Society

Week 1 (Jan 18): Becoming Visible: Women in Chinese History

Readings: Ko, Dorothy. "Gender and the Politics of Chinese History" in *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, p. 1-26.

Young, Iris. "Five Faces of Oppression", in *Oppression, Privilege, & Resistance*, edited by Lisa Heldke and Peg O'Connor. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004)

Questions for thinking:

- 1) *Can we find "five faces of oppression" in Chinese history? Is this approach problematic and why?*
- 2) *What are the key themes of women and gender in traditional Chinese society, and why?*
- 3) *Can we use feminist/gender theories developed in the West to explain and solve women and gender issues in Chinese society?*

Week 2 (Jan 25): Chastity and Filial Piety: Ideal Women in Confucian Ideology

Readings: Teng, Emma. "The Construction of 'Traditional Chinese Woman' in the Western Academy: A Critical Review," in *Gender and History*, Vol. 18, No.3, Nov 2006, P.115-51.

Primary source:

*"The Classic of Filial Piety", in Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization and Society: A Sourcebook*, 64-68.

Questions for thinking:

- 1) What do chastity and filial piety mean in traditional Chinese society?
- 2) What is the image of ideal women in Chinese history? Who defined it and why?
- 3) According to *The Classic of Filial Piety*, why "filial piety" is essential for a ruler to establish order and rule a country?

Week 3 (Feb 8): Womanhood and Marriage

Readings: Ebrey, Patricia. "Separating the Sexes" and "Concubine", in *The Inner Quarters*, Chapter 1, and Chapter 12.

Primary source:

*"Women's Virtues and Vices", in Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization and Society: A Sourcebook*, 72-76.

*Feng, Menglong (1574 – 1646). "The Lady who was a Beggar" in Cyril Birch tr. *Stories From a Ming Collection*. 1958. Grove Press, 15-36.

*Shen Fu (1763 – 1810?). *Six Chapters of a Floating Life*. Chapter 1 "Delights of Marriage".

Questions for thinking:

- 1) What did marriage mean to Chinese women in traditional society?
- 2) Traditional views argue that Chinese women are inferior to men in family. Compare Feng Menglong's "The Lady who was a Beggar" with Shen Fu's "Delights of Marriage" and see if you agree with this point-of-view and why?

Week 4 (Feb 15): Motherhood and Family

Readings: Ebrey, Patricia. "Motherhood" and "Widowhood", in *The Inner Quarters*, Chapter 9 and 10.

Hsing, Ping-zhen, "Constructed Emotions: the Bond between Mothers and Sons in Late Imperial China." In *Late Imperial China*, Vol 15, No 1, (1994): 87-117.

Primary source:

*"Letter to My Sons' by Gu Ruopu (1592-ca.1681)", in Mann, *Under Confucian eyes*, 149-154.

*Gui Youguang, "A Short Biography of My Deceased Mother". In Kuei Chen-ch'uan hsien-sheng wen-chi. Taipei, Shih-chieh, 31-32.

Questions for thinking:

- 1) What are the characteristics of Chinese motherhood and why?
- 2) Do you agree that the authority of mother/grandmother in traditional Chinese family is contradictory to the conventional understanding of Chinese family structure as patriarchy?

Part II: Women in Late Imperial China

Week 5 (Feb 22): Women and Education

Readings: Mann, Susan. "Writing", *Precious Records*, Chapter 4, p. 76-120.

Widmer, Ellen. 1989. "The Epistolary World of Female Talent in Seventeenth Century China." *Late Imperial China* 10.2 (December): 1-43.

Primary source:

*"Letters by Women of the Ming-Qing Period", in Mann, *Under Confucian Eyes*, 169-178.

*"Selected Short Works by Wang Duanshu (1621-after 1701)", in in Mann, *Under Confucian Eyes*, 179-194.

Questions for thinking:

- 1) Do you agree that the large number of talented women (*cainü*) and literate elite women challenges the traditional understanding of Chinese women as passive, subordinate, and inferior, and why?
- 2) Women and education, and women and literacy are in fact an issue of “class” rather than “gender”. Do you agree with this argument, and why?

Week 6 (Mar 1): Women, Spirituality and Sexuality (possible Library Visit)

Readings: Ng, Vivian. 1987. “Ideology and Sexuality: Rape Laws in Qing China.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 46.1: 57-69

Primary source:

- * “Records of Past Karma by Ji Xian (1614-1683)” in Mann, *Under Confucian eyes*, 135-48.
- *Feng, Menglong (1574 – 1646). “The Pearl-Sewn Shirt”. Cyril Birch tr. *Stories From a Ming Collection*. 1958. Grove Press, 37-96. See Hsia, C.T. 1968. *The Classic*

Questions for thinking:

- 1) How do you understand sexuality, adultery and forgiveness in the story of “The Pearl-Sewn Shirt”? What did the story tell us about marriage and loyalty among common people in seventeenth-century China?
- 2) Religious women are often associated with the notion of chastity, why?
- 3) How was sexuality defined, legally and socially, in traditional Chinese society?

Week 7 (Mar 15): Women’s Rights in the Dawn of Modern China

Readings: Sudo, Mizuyo. “Concepts of Women’s Rights in Modern China”, in *Gender and History*, Vol 18, No.3, Nov 2006, p. 412-89.

Ko, Dorothy. *Cinderella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*. “Introduction” and Chapter 1, “Gigantic Histories of the Nation in the Globe: The Rhetoric of Tianzu, 1880s-1910s.” P. 1-67.

Primary source:

- *“Ridding China of Bad Customs”, in Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, p. 341-47.
- *Ye Shengtao, “Is This Also a Human Being?”, In Lan and Fong eds. *Women in Republican China: A Sourcebook*, 18-20.

Questions for thinking:

- 1) What was “women’s liberation”? Who initiated the movement? What the agenda behind?
- 2) Compare and discuss the discourses of “human rights”, “women’s rights” and “women’s liberation” in early twentieth-century China.
- 3) How do you understand foot-binding in relation to women’s rights?

Part III: Women in Modern China

Week 8 (Mar 22): Guest lecture by Dr. Zhang Yun on Republican journals

Week 9 (Mar 29): “New Woman”, Nationalism, and Modernization

Reading: Chin, Carol. “Translating the New Woman: Chinese Feminist View the West 1905-15”. *Gender and History*, Vol 18, No 3 (2006): 490-518.

Primary source:

- *“The Spirit of the May Fourth Movement: recollections of a woman who had been in middle school at that time” in Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization: A Source Book*, 360-363.

*Lu, Xun. "My Views on Chastity" and "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?" In *Women in Republican China: A Sourcebook*. Edited by Hua Lan and Vanessa Fong. Armonk: Shaprpe, 1999. 8-18, 149-157.

Questions for thinking:

- 1) What does "new women" mean in early twentieth-century China? Who were "new women"?
- 2) Some scholars argue that "new women" was born out of the ideology of nationalism and modernity, and others argue that "new women" was in fact NOT NEW because "new women" was just a renewed male imagination of Chinese women in modern times. Compare the two arguments and develop your own analysis.

Response paper 1 is due on Mar 29 (Wednesday) in class.

Week 10 (Apr 5): Women in Revolution

Readings: Wang, Zheng. "Introduction" and "Creating a Feminist Discourse", in *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories*, p. 1-24, 35-66.

Primary source:

*"Huang Dinghui (1907-): Career Revolutionary", Wang Zheng, *Women in Chinese Enlightenment*, p. 287-356.

* Ding Ling, "When I was in Xia Village," In Ding Ling, *Miss Sophie's Diary and Other Stories*. Translated by W. J. F. Jenner. (Panda Books, 1985)

Questions for thinking:

- 1) Compare and discuss women's loyalty to revolution in modern times and women's loyalty to husband and family in traditional society.
- 2) Why did Chinese women in general support communist revolution in early twentieth-century China?

Week 11 (Apr 12): "Half of the Sky": Womanhood and Motherhood in Maoist China (1950s-1970s)

Readings: Honig, Emily. "Maoist Mapping of Gender: Reassessing the Red Guards", in Brownell, *Chinese Femininities and Chinese Masculinities: A Reader*, 255-268.

Primary source:

*Wang, Zheng. "Call me 'Qingnian' but not 'Funü': A Maoist Youth in Retrospect", in *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era*, Rutgers University Press, 2001, P. 27-52.

*Jiang, Jin. "Times have changed: Men and Women are the Same." In *Some of Us: Chinese women growing up in the Mao era*. Edited by Xueping Zhong, Wang Zheng and Bai Di. (Rutgers University Press, 2001)

Questions for thinking:

- 1) What does "Half of the Sky" mean? Did it mean gender equality was achieved during Mao's era, and why?
- 2) What were Mao's views on gender and gender equality? How did Mao contextualize "women issues" in his agenda of Chinese revolution?

Week 12 (Apr 19): Women and Gender Issues in Today's China (1980s-present)

Readings: Zhang, Jun and Peidong Sun. "'When Are you Going to Get Married?'" Parental Matchmaking and Middle-Class Women in Contemporary Urban China." In Deborah Davis and Sara

Friedman eds., *Wives, Hasbands, and Lovers: Marriage and Sexuality in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Urban China*. Stanford University Press, 2014, p. 118-143.

Zhong, Xueping. "Who is a Feminist? Understanding the Ambivalence towards Shanghai Baby, 'Body Writing' and Feminism in Post-Women's Liberation China" in *Gender and History*, Nov 2006, Vol 18, P. 635-60.

Primary source:

*"Economic liberation and new problems for women", "Peasants in the Cities," and "Posters calling for democracy." Ebrey, *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook*, p. 482-500.

Questions for thinking:

- 1) How do you understand the discourse of "Surplus/Single women (shengnü)" and "Tough girl or Tomboy (nü hanzi) in contemporary Chinese society?
- 2) What are the key gender issues in today's China?
- 3) Given what you have learned in this course, discuss the change of women's status in Chinese society.

Week 13 (Apr 26): Group project presentation

Questions for thinking:

- 1) Design a research question on your study of the republican magazine and answer it by analysis.
- 2) Summarize and analyze the change of themes of the women's journal from 1920s to the present.

The one-page research report from each group is due on April 26 in class.

Important Course Guidelines

- Assignments are to be completed and submitted at the time specified. No late submission will be accepted.
- Students are advised to familiarize themselves with the University's rules about citations and plagiarism (www.hku.hk/plagiarism). These rules will be enforced in this class.

Assignment Guidelines

Response Paper:

- Students will be required to select two topics from weekly Questions for Thinking and write two response papers during the whole semester.
- The topic of Response Paper 1 should be chosen from questions in Week 1-7, and the topic of Response Paper 2 from Week 8-13.
- 4-6 double-spaced pages, 12 point font.
- The response paper should: 1) Answer the question/questions by presenting your own argument; 2) use information from the lecture or evidence in other readings of scholarly studies to support your argument; 3) use at least two pieces of sources (from historical documents or from other scholarly studies) to support your argument; 4) include full footnotes.

Response paper 1 is due on Mar 29 (Wednesday) in class.

Response paper 2 is due on May 5 (Friday) by email before 11:59 PM.

Reading report on historical document:

- Each student will choose one of the weekly primary source to read and write a short reading report and present it in class.
- The reading report should: 1) Summarize the main content or main argument of the document; 2) introduce briefly the historical background of the document; 3) highlight and discuss one or two key issues in women's history or gender issues you get from the document (e.g. chastity, filial piety, patriarchy, gender equality etc.).
- 2-3 double-spaced pages, 12-point font.
- Reading report is due on the day you are scheduled to do the report presentation in class.

Group Project:

You will voluntarily sign into 7 groups (about 5-6 students a group) to conduct research on one Republican women's journal (or other assigned topics to students who cannot read Chinese). You should choose one journal that HKU provides full access to the complete collection (in hardcopy, microfilm or on-line database).

Each group will conduct research on this journal by focusing on a specific topic and prepare for a 15-minute oral presentation. All group members are expected to involve in the research and oral presentation. You may use PowerPoint to present your research and analysis.

Timeline for group project:

- **February:** Tutorials in the Main Library. Students will be introduced to the journal collection and on-line resources by library staff.
- **March 22:** Guest lecture by Dr. Zhang Yun on Republican Journals. Groups please prepare questions on how to conduct historical research on journals. Dr. Zhang will try to help each group develop the group project.
- **March 1-April 26:** Each group conduct research on your own in the library and prepare for the one-page research report, which should include research topic, research questions, introduction of sources, and arguments.
- **April 26:** Group project presentation in class. The one-page research report from each group is due in class.