

Fall 2021
TR 2:40-3:55
Classroom: Diana LL104

Prof. Dorothy Ko
Office: Milstein 803, BC
Office Hours: Tues. 4-6 p.m.

TA: Fran Zhao (jz2974@columbia.edu)

HIST 2865: Gender and Power in China (3 pts.)

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 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 lectures I cover the necessary historical and theoretical background; in discussions 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 knowledge of women and gender in Chinese history and contemporary society. The latter includes understanding 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 read one of the recommended standard textbooks at your own pace:

1. John K. Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History: Second Enlarged Edition* (Belknap, 2006)
2. 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 (2 pp. each) 40% (due **Sept. 30; Oct. 14; Nov. 2; Nov. 23 @ 10 p.m.**)
Final paper (8-10 pp.) 30% (due **Dec. 16 @ 4 p.m.**)

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

Course materials are divided into five sections, following a rough chronological order. You will write one short take-home “summary paper” at the end of each section except the last, making a total of four scattered through 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 essay (about 8-10 pp.) due on the day of the scheduled final exam (**Thur. Dec. 16 @ 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.112th St.). They are also available on reserve at the Barnard Library:

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

All other assigned readings can be downloaded from Canvas.

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 themes. You can submit the report any time during the semester up to the day of the final exam. Some possibilities are (others will be announced throughout the semester):

Metropolitan Museum: “Companions in Solitude: Reclusion and Communion in Chinese Art” (July 31, 2021-Aug. 14, 2022)

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2021/companions-in-solitude>

China Institute: “Confetti: A Film by Ann Hu” (Screening and discussion with director, Oct. 5, 2021 @ 5 p.m.)

<https://www.chinainstitute.org/event/confetti-film-screening-discussion-writer-director-ann-hu/>

Course Outline:

I. Introduction: Key Concepts and Themes

WEEK 1

Sept. 9 Introduction

WEEK 2

Sept. 14 [#1] Western and Chinese Concepts of Gender and Sex
Reading: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Chinese History*, xv-xx, 1-79.

Sept. 16 [#2] Modern and Pre-Modern Bodies
Reading: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 83-134.

WEEK 3

Sept. 21 [#3] The Patriarchal Family
Reading: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 137-168.

Sept. 23 [#4] The Women's Perspective of the Patriarchal Family
Reading: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 169-200.

WEEK 4

Sept. 28 [#5] Summary I: Body, Self, and Family: Chinese and Western Comparisons
Reading: Amy Chua, "Why Chinese Moms Are Superior"

II. Classical Foundations (2nd Century BCE-5th Century CE)

Sept. 30 [#6] Gender Norms in the Confucian Tradition: The Male-Female Binary
Reading: Ban Zhao, *Admonitions for Daughters*
**** Summary paper I due @ 10 p.m.****

WEEK 5

Oct. 5 [#7] Gender in the Buddhist and Daoist Traditions: Beyond the Male-Female Binary
Readings: 1. "The Lotus Sutra," 186-189.
2. Vivienne Lo, 'Healing and Medicine' in *China: Empire and Civilization*, ed. Ed. Shaughnessy (Oxford UP, 2005), 148-162.

Oct. 7 [#8] Summary II: Body, Gender, Sex: Pre-Modern and Modern Comparisons

III. Transition to Modernity (1890s-1949)

WEEK 6

Oct. 12 [9] 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.

Oct. 14 Breathing Space
**** Summary paper II due @ 10 p.m.****

WEEK 7

Oct. 19 [#10] The Women's Question: Concept of Women's Rights
Reading: He-Yin Zhen, "On Women's Liberation," in *Birth of Chinese Feminism*, 53-71.

Oct. 21 [#11] 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.

WEEK 8

Oct. 26 [#12] Family Revolution and National Revolution
Readings: 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?" 1-6.
Review: Mann, *Gender and Sexuality*, 27-49.

Oct. 28 [#13] Summary III: The May Fourth New Culture Movement

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

WEEK 9

Nov. 2 ELECTION DAY: NO CLASS
**** Summary paper III due @ 10 p.m.****

Nov. 4 [#14] Maoist Gender Policy
Readings: 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.

WEEK 10

Nov. 9 [#15] Rural Transformations: Collectivization

Reading: Yan Yunxiang, *Private Life Under Socialism*, 1-63.

Nov. 11 [#16] Urban Transformations: The Iron Girls in Myth and Reality

Reading: Yan, *Private Life*, 64-111.

WEEK 11

Nov. 16 [#17] The Cultural Revolution (and Summary IV)

Readings:
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-2021)

Nov. 18 [#18] Market Reforms: Internal Migration; Consumption

Readings:
1. Yan, *Private Life*, 162-227.
2. Peter Hessler, "Boomtown Girl," *The New Yorker*, May 28, 2001, 108-117.

WEEK 12

Nov. 23 THANKSGIVING WEEK: NO CLASS

**** Summary paper IV due @ 10 p.m.****

Nov. 25 THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 13

Nov. 30 [#19] The One-Child Policy

Reading: Leta Hong Fincher, *Leftover Women*, Introduction (1-13); ch. 3 (75-108).

Dec. 2 [#20] 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.

WEEK 14

Dec. 7 [#21] Sex as Identity; Sex as Work

Reading: WANG Zheng and Ying ZHANG, "Global Concepts, Local Practices: Chinese Feminism since the Fourth UN Conference on Women," *Feminist Studies* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 40-70.

Optional Reference: The Global Feminisms Project, University of Michigan:

<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/globalfeminisms/>

Dec. 9 [#22] From State Feminism to #MeToo in China

Reading: "Above Ground: China's Young Feminist Activists and Forty Moments of Transformation," curated by Lü Pin, 2016; converted to an online

exhibition by Liangyu Fu and Meredith Kahn, librarians at the University of Michigan

<https://apps.lib.umich.edu/online-exhibits/exhibits/show/aboveground>

Optional:

Lü Pin, “Feminism and Social Change in China” (48 min.)

<https://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/%E5%90%95%E9%A2%91>

Optional for Chinese Readers:

<https://chinesefeminism.org/>

****Dec. 16 (Thur.) Final paper due at 4 p.m.****