Course description and objectives:

During the late imperial period of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, women's literary culture reached an unprecedented level of development before the 20th century. The publication of their writing challenged the long-standing cultural inhibition that women’s words should not circulate outside their inner chambers. This course examines a variety of textual forms and genres of writing – poetry, letters, diaries, travelogues, etc. – in which women engaged to realize their autobiographical desire, to tell their life stories. Recent theories of autobiography and approaches to the study of Chinese autobiographical writings are introduced as critical frameworks in which to analyze the cultural and gendered significance of women’s life narratives in this period. All readings are in English.