

Gender and Sexuality in Chinese Literature: The Woman Question in Modern China EAST350

Winter 2021

Instructor: Prof. Gal Gvili

Email: gal.gvili@mcgill.ca

Time: Wednesday & Friday 2:35-3:35 pm

Place: Zoom+ two in-person “check-in” sessions on January 29 and March 26, location: STBIO S3/3

Office hours: Wednesday & Friday 3:35-4:30, right after class.

Course Description

This course explores women in modern and contemporary Chinese fiction using two focal points: the representation of women in fiction, and the voices who write about women. Closely reading narratives by men and women who raised “the woman question” in China from the mid nineteenth century and until the Post-Mao era, we aim at understanding: how did “woman” come to dominate the literary imagination of modern Chinese authors? What did the trope of “woman” entail in different periods of Chinese history? How did Chinese women respond to their representation in literature?

Our readings will take us chronologically from the early formations of women’s rights as an issue of social importance in China, through the ripening of a substantial feminist discourse and body of literature both committed to putting the figure of “woman” at the center of modernization, revolution, and reform. We will read essays by Chinese feminists, short stories, novellas and novels and pay particular attention to questions of narration, voice, and figuration. Our secondary reading will hone our analytical skills and help us to situate the literary texts within historical and thematic contexts.

Structure of the Course

Because our course will be offered through remote delivery, we will dedicate class time to in-depth discussion of the course material instead of the traditional lecture format. Real-time discussions will provide you with an opportunity to ask for clarification, interact with your instructors and classmates in breakout groups, and discuss texts, films, images, etc.

We will meet on zoom twice a week, for one-hour discussions, to be followed by 20 minutes of office hours/free chat for those who have questions. We will also have two opportunities to meet in person: two of our sessions will be held in person and will give us a chance to get to know each other and for you to raise issues you may have in a “real, live” meeting. Those of you who are not in Montreal, or who would like to avoid a face-to-face are welcome to meet with me in a separate zoom meeting, if you’d like.

During the semester, we will check in regularly to see what is working and what is not working. I encourage and invite all of you to email me or chat with me during office hours and express your opinion about your experience in the class, the readings, and any concern you may have.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this class: students with no prior knowledge in Chinese history or experience working with literary text are welcome to join. For students who feel that they could

benefit from further historical background, the following book provides an excellent introduction to gender history in modern China:

Susan L. Mann. *Gender and Sexuality in Modern China*. Cambridge University Press. 2011.

Attendance

Attendance is not mandatory. You may complete the course asynchronously if you wish—all the sessions will be recorded and posted on myCourses. If you do attend real-time discussion, you must complete the assigned material beforehand in order for it to be a productive experience for everyone. I would like to ask you to turn your camera on if you can, as it will be a huge help for me in understanding YOUR experience in this class and to improve my teaching accordingly.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Presentations on class reading (in pairs, 1 time during the semester) 20%

Wikipedia related short assignments and training from week 3-13 (students will spend approximately 1 hour a week on these assignments, which will be done on the “Wikipedia dashboard” website. 30%

Wikipedia Project (Grading Rubric will be provided) 50%

Readings

All Available online, either on myCourses or as E books in the library (sometimes I provide a link here on the syllabus).

Presentations

Starting January 15, each session will begin with a short presentation of the required readings by two students. Your presentation (up to 10 minutes for each student) should summarize the main points the readings evoke, and raise one or two questions in order to launch class discussion for the larger part of the session. Please register to present on mycourses discussion board. Those of you who cannot attend the class sessions are asked to select a week to present and contact me via email to coordinate a meeting between you and myself so that you could deliver your presentation to me then.

Wikipedia Project

Our course had been selected to participate in the prestigious Wikipedia Student Program. This program trains students to become contributors to Wikipedia and culminates in each student contributing a new article **or** substantially elaborating on an existing Wikipedia “stub” related to the topic of the class. You will have the opportunity, in this class, to make a real contribution to the field, by improving the current offerings in Wikipedia on Chinese women studies, gender studies, and modern literature about these topics.

Replacing the traditional 7-10 page paper, the Wikipedia project is the major assignment for this course, and it consists of one article writing and smaller training-related assignments. From week 3, every week students will have a small training assignment to complete and we will devote time in class to reflect on these assignments and raise questions.

Our course will have a [Wikipedia dashboard course page](#) where you will log in with a username and password and perform small assignments, training modules, and complete your article which is the final assignment of the course. We will also have a Wikipedia specialist assigned to our course, whom we will be able to consult with every question. Once you finish this course, you will learn [critical media literacy skills](#), be trained in the content, form, and technicalities of improving on Wikipedia's existing resources, and could continue to add and contribute more knowledge if you wish to!

Class Policies

Academic Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Submission of written work: In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Accommodation

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not yet registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities, you should do so right away. The Office for Student Disabilities is there to mediate for you and help your professors understand what is the best way for working with you while respecting your limitation. Please approach them as soon as possible through: <https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/> or 514-398-6009 or disabilities.students@mcgill.ca

Sexual Assault Survivor Support and Allyship

Should you or someone you know need support as a survivor of sexual assault, harassment and/or discrimination on campus, please contact McGill's Sexual Violence Response Advisor, Émilie Marcotte, at 514-398-4486 or by email at: osvrse@mcgill.ca, situated in the new Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education (located at 550 Sherbrooke, suite 585) for assistance. They also offer drop-in hours during the school year (the schedule is online). For more information on their office, sexual violence support and reporting options visit: www.mcgill.ca/saap. The Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Student's Society (SACOMSS) offers peer counseling and support to students who have experienced sexual violence and their allies, as well as outreach and education. You can find out more about them at <http://www.sacomss.org/wp/>. Their hotline number is: (514) 398-8500 and they offer drop-in hours as well (the schedule for which is online).

A note on Chinese names

Chinese names are preceded by the last name to be followed by a first name. For example, the protagonist of Wang Anyi's excellent novel Song of Everlasting Sorrow's name is Wang Qiyao. This means that her surname is Wang and first name is Qiyao. As is customary in China, people are usually referred to by their full name especially in writing. Please make a note of this and avoid

confusing first and last names. For example, the author Yu Hua who we will read carries that last name Yu and first name Hua. You should refer to him in your writing as Yu Hua and not as “Hua” and preferably not as “Yu” either.

Schedule:

January 8: Introduction: Class topic, reading, grading and the Wikipedia project.

January 13: Is Gender a Useful Category?

- Joan Scott. “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” *The American Historical Review* 1986, 91(5): 1053–1075.

January 15: “Footbinding IS History”

- Li Ruzhen. *Flowers in the Mirror* (Lin Tai-Yi, trans.) 1965, “Introduction” “13, 14, 15” 5–9; 107–132.
- [Dorothy Ko. 2005. *Cinderella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* \(Berkeley, California: University of California Press\), pp. 9-37](#)

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: 1. Read: “Editing Wikipedia” and “Evaluating Wikipedia” 2. Complete the trainings: “Wikipedia Policies” and “Sandboxes, talk pages and watchlists”

January 20: Changing Roles of Emotions (*qing* 情)

- Wu Jianren. 1995. *The Sea of Regret* (Patrick Hanan, trans) University of Hawaii Press, pp. 101–205.

January 22: National Feminisms

- September 21: Herbert Spencer. 1851. [“The Rights of Women,”](#) in *Social Statics Or The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified, and the First of them Developed* pp. 173-191. Full text available online via Hathi Trust and the Internet Archive.
- Dorothy Ko. 2005. *Cinderella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* 2005, Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 38–68. (see link to E book in January 15).

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: Evaluate Wikipedia: Training + Exercise. We will do the discussion section together in class.

January 27: National Feminisms II

- Qiu Jin. [1905]. 1998. “Excerpts from Stones of the Jingwei Bird” In Amy D. Dooling and Kristina M. Torgeson, *Writing Women in Modern China* (Columbia University Press): 39–78.
- Liang Qichao. (1897) 2013. “On Women’s Education”, In Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, 2013, Columbia University Press, pp. 189–203.

January 29: Check In Session #1: One on One meetings at STBIO S3/3. Please pre-register on mycourses discussion board.

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: “add to an article” training + exercise.

February 3: Anarcho-feminism

- Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, 2013, Columbia University Press, “Introduction,” “The Historical Context,” pp. 1–51.
- He Yinzhen. 1907. “On the Question of Women’s Liberation,” in Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, 2013, Columbia University Press, pp. 53–72.

February 5: Feminism and Labor

- Lu Yin. 1921. *Factory Girl*, in Chinese Women Writers (Jennifer Anderson & Theresa Munford, trans.) pp. 85–96.
- He Yinzhen. 1907. “On the Question of Women’s Labor” “Economic Revolution and Women’s Revolution” In Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, 2013, Columbia University Press, pp. 67–92.

February 10: No presentations

The Woman Question: Workshop on the poet Xu Zhimo’s MA Thesis.

In Class Workshop on Xu Zhimo’s MA Thesis (1921): *The Status of Women in China*. You will be divided into five groups. Each group will be allotted 1 chapter of this MA thesis (about 10 pages). You will be asked to meet before class, via zoom or emailing, and discuss what are the main points of this thesis and how we should understand it in light of our broader discussion. **In Class:** each group has 10 minutes to present its analysis. You will select one or two presenters and they represent the group so as to enable those who cannot make the live session still be involved.

February 12: No presentations

In Class Workshop on Xu Zhimo’s MA Thesis (1921) Continued: Remaining Presentations.

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: “choose a topic and find 3 sources” training + 2 exercises. You may find [the Guide\(s\) for writing articles in your topic area \(Women’s Studies\)](#) useful. Post your choice on mycourses discussion board so that we avoid duplications.

February 17: Women and Superstitions: Lu Xun

- Lu Xun. *The New Year's Sacrifice; Medicine*; In Yang and Yang (trans.) *Lu Xun Selected Works* Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

February 19: Disobedient Worshippers. Guest Speaker: Yurou Zhong, University of Toronto.

- Xu Dishan. 1941. "Yu Guan" Tr. Cecile Chu-chin Sun. In Lau, Hsia, Lee, eds., *Modern Chinese Stories and Novellas 1919-1949*. NY: Columbia UP, 1981, 51-87;
- Yurou Zhong. [*Chinese Grammatology*](#), NY: Columbia UP, 2019, "Introduction"+"Phonocentric Antinomies" pp. 1-23; 67-99.

February 24:

The Sick (wo)Man of Asia I

- Ding Ling. 1989. "The Diary of Miss Sophia" (1927) In *I Myself am a Woman* (Tani E. Barlow, trans.) Beacon Press. pp. 49-82.
- Katherine Byrne. 2011. *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination* Cambridge University Press. pp. 12-44

February 26:

The Sick (wo)Man of Asia II

- Xiao Hong. 2007. (1936) "Hands" In: *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* Columbia University Press. Pp. 162-173.
- Ari Larissa Heinrich. "Handmaids to the Gospel: Lam Qua's Medical Portraiture" In Lydia Liu (ed) *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*, 1999, Duke University Press.

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: Exercise: "Finalizing Your Topic."

Finalize your topic and find at least 3 sources. Be sure to update on mycourses discussion board topic list.

*****Reading Week*****

March 10: Masculinities

- Yu Dafu. 1921. *Sinking*, in H. Goldblatt and Joseph Lau, eds., *Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature*. NY: Columbia UP, 1995, 44-69.
- Hugh Shapiro. "The Puzzle of Spermatorrhea in Republican China," *Positions* 1998 6(3): 551-595.

Recommended:

- Susan Glosser. “The Truths I have Learned”: Nationalism, Family Reform, and Male Identity in China’s New Culture Movement 1915–1923,” In Susan Brownell and Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities: A Reader*, 2002, Berkeley University of California Press, pp, 120–144.
- Susan S. Lanser. “Towards (a Queer and) More (Feminist) Narratology” In Robyn Warhol and Susan S. Lanser (eds) *Narrative Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions* 2015, Ohio University Press. pp. 23–43.

March 12:

The Body Revisited

- Xiao Hong. 1935. *The Field of Life and Death*, 1979, Indiana University Press. pp. 3–110.

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: complete: “start drafting your contributions” training. EVERYONE HAS STARTED WRITING.

March 17:

The New Woman Visualized

- Film: [Goddess](#) (1934): please watch at home at your won convenience. **No Class discussion.**

March 19:

The New Woman and the Modern Girl in Shanghai Cinema

- Discussion of *Goddess* (please prepare thoughts and questions)
- Zhang Zhen. 2005. *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, “Fighting Over the Modern Girl: Hard and Soft Films,” pp. 244-298.

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: “continue improving your article” and “practice moving your work to wikipedia”

March 24: Failures in Life

- Zhang Ailing. *Love in a Fallen City* (1941) (Karen S. Kingsbury, trans). New York Review Books. pp. 109-169.
- Deborah Tze-lan Sang. “Eileen Chang and the Genius Art of Failure.” In Carlos Rojas and Andrea Bachner, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Chinese Literatures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 765-78. E book in McGill Library:
<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199383313.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199383313-e-39#p765>

March 26: Check In Session: One on One meetings.

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: “polish your work” and “adding citations”

March 31: Enter the Party

- Mao Zedong. “Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art,” in Denton. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought* pp. 458–485.
- Ding Ling. “Thoughts on March 8,” in *I Myself am a Woman* (Tani E. Barlow, trans.) 1989, Beacon Press, PP. 316–32.

April 2

Revolution and Its Narratives: Guest Lecturer: Krista Van Fliet, University of South Carolina

- Yang Mo. 1958. *The Song of Youth* 1978, Peking: Foreign Languages Press (Selections).
- Cai Xiang. 2016. Revolution and Its Narratives: China’s Socialist Literary and Cultural Imaginaries 1949–1966. “Introduction” “Youth, Love, ‘Natural rights’ and Sex” 1–27; 145–188. McGill Library E Book: <http://read.dukeupress.edu/content/revolution-and-its-narratives>

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: “Begin Finalizing Article”

April 7: Feminist Writing and the Environment

- Can Xue. *The Hut on the Mountain* Tr. Michael S. Duke. In Duke, ed., *Worlds of Modern Chinese Fiction*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991, 41–44. *Crow Mountain* Trs. Karen Gernant and Chen Zeping. In *Asymptote* (July 2015) available here: <http://www.asymptotejournal.com/fiction/can-xue-crow-mountain/>
- Karen Warren. “The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism” In *Environmental Ethics* 1990, 12(2): 125–146.

April 9: Female-Female Love in the Post-Mao era

- Lin Bai. “The Seat on the Veranda” *Manoa* 15,2 (2003): 83-109
- Tze Lan Sang. 2003. “Lin Bai’s narratives of female homoerotic desire” in *The Emerging Lesbian* (Chicago: Chicago University Press): 175-199.

By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: 2-5 page reflective essay about the experience of the Wikipedia project.

April 14: Contemporary Feminist Poets

- Zhai Yongming, “Three Poems” (translated by Ondi Lingenfelter) *Almost Island* (2019): 1-13.
- Nan Z. Da, “On the Decipherment of Modern China and Spurned Lovers: Zhai Yongming’s Most Tactful Phrases” *Signs* 40, 3 (2015): 667-693.

April 16: The Chinese #metoo movement Guest Speaker: Leta Hong Fincher

- Mirela Violeta David, “#MeToo in Post-Socialist Countries: A Comparative Analysis of Romanian and Chinese Feminist Activism Against Sexual Violence” in *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*, edited by Giti Chandra and Irma Erlingsdóttir (Routledge, 2020): 320-342
- Leta Hong Fincher, *Betraying Big Brother: The Feminist Awakening in China*, (London, Verso, 2018): “Introduction” “The Feminist Five”: 1-32.

By Monday, April 26, 23:55 PM: Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: Submit your articles.
****Final Article Submitted****