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:

**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?


**January 15**: “Footbinding IS History”


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


**January 22**: National Feminisms


**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

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**


**February 5: Feminism and Labor**


**February 10: No presentations**


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


February 24:

The Sick (wo)Man of Asia I


February 26:

The Sick (wo)Man of Asia II


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

***Reading Week***

March 10: Masculinities


Recommended:


March 12:
The Body Revisited


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)


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

March 24: Failures in Life


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


April 2

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


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

April 7: Feminist Writing and the Environment


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


By Friday, Complete on the Wikipedia Dashboard: 2-5 page reflective essay about the experience of the Wikipedia project.
April 14: Contemporary Feminist Poets


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


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