EAST 351 WOMEN WRITERS OF CHINA (Fall 2021)
Instructor: Wang Wanming
Time: 10:05 AM-11:25 AM, Tuesday and Thursday
Office hours: Tuesday 11:30AM-12:30 PM, or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:
The course examines a variety of textual forms and genres of writing – poetry, fiction, drama, letters, diaries, travelogues, auto/biography, etc. – by women in imperial China from the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) to the twenty-first century.

Close readings of texts will focus on the manipulation of language and literary devices and the construction of voice and subject positions from the perspective of gender. We will also pay attention to women’s lives, gender relations, and the socio-historical contexts and thematic contents of their writings. Central questions that we will explore and attempt to answer include: what class and category of women wrote and under what social and historical circumstances did they write? Why, how, and what did they write in imperial China? What motivated them? What genres were especially favored by and/or considered “appropriate” for women writers in imperial China? Can we detect or intuit a “feminine voice” in the writings of women that distinguishes their works from those written by male scholar-officials? How did women construct their identity and subjectivity within the more complex literary, historical, cultural, and political contexts after the last dynasty fell in 1911? How did feminist movements and new technologies (e.g. internet) influence gender relations as well as women’s roles, education, marriage, friendship, etc. in post-imperial China? Our consideration of these and other questions will enhance and deepen our understanding of the range and contents of Chinese women’s literary production, the forces shaping women’s writing in China, the significance of writing in women’s lives and culture, and the role of women writers in the literary-historical tradition.

COURSE FORMAT:
Lecture and discussion of critical readings and close analysis of the themes, literary methods, and discursive constructions in selected works by women.

COURSE MATERIALS:
All required readings will be available in myCourses or are available through the online library catalogue.

METHODS OF EVALUATION:
1. Class participation (5%)
Students must read the assigned materials before each class and come prepared with questions and observations on the readings for the week. You are encouraged to raise questions and comments in class on issues arising from the assigned texts and critical studies. Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion are required. One point will be deducted from the participation grade for each unexcused absence.

2. Two short essays (30%): 4-5 typed, double-spaced pages
1) Choose one scholarly article from the assigned readings to respond to these questions: What are the main points of the article? What approach does the author take to analyze the selected texts? How does the article advance your understanding of the topic or issues concerned? 2) Close reading of a text by a Chinese woman writer and comment on the text’s gendered aspects or lack thereof. The first essay is to be submitted in class on Sept. 28; the second on Oct. 21.

3. Oral Presentation of reading material (10%)
From Sept. 16, each class will have 1-2 students to give a 10-20 minute prepared presentation. The presentation should critically summarize the main points and arguments of weekly readings, engage the topic in a creative manner, and raise thought-provoking questions.

4. Paper proposal with preliminary bibliography (15%)
A two-page double-spaced proposal (plus a bibliography of at least four items) is due in class on Nov. 11. The purpose of the proposal is to identify the feasibility of your research project (i.e., select a topic, identify key works that will serve as the basis for the paper) and ensure that you begin research on the final project early in the term.

5. Final paper (40%): 8-10 typed, double-spaced pages
Due Dec. 9 before 23:59pm.

Late submissions: 1% per day will be deducted from the assignment.

COVID-19 POLICIES:
Students are required to wear a procedural mask in classroom even if they are seated two metres or more apart. For more requirements and information, please check:

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).
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.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1
Sept. 2 (TR) COURSE OVERVIEW

UNIT 1: Early Models

WEEK 2
Sept. 7 (T) The Han Dynasty: Scholars and Neglected Palace Ladies
*The Red Brush*, 11-42 (Ban Zhao), 73-82 (Concubine Ban)

Sept. 9 (TR) The Tang Dynasty: Scholars and Poets
*The Red Brush*, 54-57 (the Song sisters), 174-195 (Li Ye, Xue Tao, Yu Xuanji).

WEEK 3
Sept. 14 (T) The Tang Dynasty: Shangguan Wan’er
*The Red Brush*, 61-71 (Shangguan Wan’er).

Sept. 16 (TR) The Song Dynasty: Li Qingzhao

UNIT 2: The Flourishing of Women’s Literature in Late Imperial China

WEEK 4
Sept. 21 (T) Courtesans
Ropp, Paul S. “Ambiguous Images of Courtesan Culture in Late Imperial China.” In *Writing...*

Sept. 23 (TR) Ideal

WEEK 5
Sept. 28 (T) Literary Families
Essay 1 due in class
Ko, Dorothy. “Domestic Communities: Male and Female Domains.” In Teachers of the Inner Chambers, 179-218.

Sept. 30 (TR) The Cult of Qing

WEEK 6
Oct. 5 (T) Ming-Qing Transition
Li, Wai-yee. “Female Voices Appropriating Masculine Diction.” In Women and National Trauma in Later Imperial Chinese Literature, 146-84. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014.

Oct. 7 (TR) Women’s Literary Lives (I)

WEEK 7
Oct. 12 (T) Fall Reading Break

Oct. 15 (F)
Women’s Literary Lives (II)
WEEK 8
Oct. 19 (T) Women’s Literary Networks (I)

Oct. 21 (TR) Women’s Literary Networks (II)
Essay 2 due in class
Hamilton, Robyn. “The Unseen Hand: Contextualizing Luo Qilan and Her Anthologies.” In The Inner Quarters and Beyond, 107-140.

WEEK 9
Oct. 26 (T) Women’s Literary Networks (II)

UNIT 3: Modern and Contemporary Women’s Literature
Oct. 28 (TR) Late Qing Reformers and Feminists

WEEK 10
Nov. 2 (T) Revolutionary Martyr Qiu Jin

Nov. 4 (TR) Autobiographical Writings: Lu Yin
Yin, Lu. “Autobiography (excerpts).” In May Fourth Women Writers: Memoirs, edited by Janet Ng and Janice Wickeri, 97-119. Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1996.
Wang, Jing. “Writing Her Own Identity: Autobiography of Lu Yin.” In When ‘I’ was Born: Women’s Autobiography in Modern China, 103-119. Madison, Wis.: University of
WEEK 11
Nov. 9 (T) Bing Xin

Nov. 11 (TR) Ding Ling
Barlow, Tani. “Gender and Identity in Ding Ling’s Mother.” *Modern Chinese Literature* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 123-142.

WEEK 12
Nov. 16 (T) Eileen Chang: A Legendary Writer (I)
*Paper proposal due in class*

Nov. 18 (TR) Eileen Chang: A Legendary Writer (II)

WEEK 13
Nov. 23 (T) A New Era: Shu Ting and Wang Anyi
McDougall, Bonnie. “Self-Narrative as Group Discourse: Female Subjectivity in Wang Anyi’s

Nov. 25 (TR) The 21st Century: Internet Literature (I)

WEEK 14
Nov. 30 (T) The 21st Century: Internet Literature (II)
Feng, Jin. “Rewriting Classics, Righting Wrongs.” In Romancing the Internet, 109-137.

Dec. 2 (TR) Conclusion

Dec. 9 (TR) Final Paper Due