WOMEN, SEX, AND POWER IN CHINESE HISTORY

Course Description:
This course explores issues of gender and sexuality in China from imperial times to the present. The first part of the course examines ways in which women gained, lost, and used power over time in the traditional Chinese family system, the imperial court, the entertainment quarters, and Chinese folk religion. The last section traces the experiences of women in China’s tumultuous twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and focuses on the question of how revolutionary the Chinese Communist Revolution was (or was not) for women. Throughout the course we will also examine changing understandings of femininity, masculinity, and sexuality in China.

Student Learning Outcomes -- Both individually and as a class, students will:
1. Employ gender as a category of historical analysis when examining China’s past.
2. Identify and unpack both Western stereotypes about Chinese/Asian women and foundational images of women in China’s classical texts.
3. Identify key ways that the status and roles of women in China changed over time.
4. Analyze how women in imperial China gained, lost, and used power via the traditional Chinese family system, politics, religion, sex, and writing.
5. Examine changing understandings of heterosexual and same-sex sexuality in imperial and modern China.
6. Analyze the complex relationship between the “liberation” of Chinese women and the “liberation” of the Chinese nation itself in nineteenth and twentieth-century China.
7. Evaluate to what degree, and in what particular ways, the Chinese Communist Revolution proved revolutionary for rural and urban women.
8. Identify and assess important ways that China’s One-Child Policy and other recent Reform-era policies have impacted women, family relations, and understandings of sexuality in contemporary China.

Skill Objectives:
This course also seeks to sharpen your skills in critical thinking, analytical writing, historical research, and historiographical debate by asking you to lead class discussions, write short analysis papers, and research and write a term paper. Your active participation in class discussions and your writing style and organization are important factors in determining your success in this course. Moreover, the ability to organize your thoughts and your writing in order to make thoughtful and convincing arguments about new information will serve you well for the rest of your life – both in college and in whatever career you choose to pursue.
**Course Requirements (For Undergraduates – Graduate students see supplement):**

- Attendance and Participation 10%  
- Spider Eaters Analysis 10%
- Quizzes (Hot Dates & Reading) 15%  
- Gender in the Media Presentation 10%
- Take-Home Paper I 20%  
- Final Exam 15%
- Take-Home Paper II 20%

1. **Class Participation - 10% of total grade**
   - Regular attendance is vital -- you cannot engage in course discussions if you are not present. I will pass around a written register of attendance at the beginning of class each day. Your class participation grade will drop by one full grade for every class that you miss after your third unexcused absence. This means that 4 unexcused absences will lower your class participation grade to an 80%, 5 to a 70%, and so on.

   - Active and informed participation in class discussions: Discussion and analysis of course readings is a crucial part of this course. We will spend the second half of one class session per week discussing the readings assigned for that week. Active participation in class means more than simply showing up; it means coming on time, taking notes during lectures, videos, and student presentations, completing the assigned readings for each class, bringing the readings to class for all discussions, and contributing constructively to discussions on a regular basis. I will call on you at random during discussions in order to ensure that everyone gets a chance to participate, so please come prepared to respond.

   - Make-up Activities: You may attend up to 2 out-of-class activities concerning China or Taiwan in order to make up for 1 missed or failed reading quiz and 1 unexcused absence (write-ups may **not** be used for the hot dates quiz). Relevant activities might include China-related lectures or films, a trip to a Chinese art exhibition, etc. I will announce relevant activities in class as I learn of them. To earn make-up credit, your write-ups must be typed, must relate the activity you attended to at least one theme introduced in History 583, and must be submitted on or before May 7th, the last day of class.

2. **Quizzes (Hot Dates & Reading) – 15% of grade**
   - Hot Dates and Dynasties Quiz (5%): Tracing change over time is a crucial part of this course (and any history course). Familiarizing yourself with the chronology of China’s major dynasties, and the timing of key twentieth-century events, will make it much easier for you recognize and analyze changes and continuities in Chinese gender norms across different periods. The Hot Dates quiz will be given at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, February 10**th. It will ask you to put a list of major dynasties and historical events in chronological order, and to identify the year that certain key events in Chinese history occurred. **There will be no make-up for the Hot Dates Quiz unless you contact me before the quiz with a documented reason (illness or emergency) why you are unable to be present to take it as scheduled.**

   - Reading Quizzes (10%): To encourage lively class discussions and help everyone keep up with the assigned readings, I will give several short reading quizzes at the beginning of class on discussion days. I will announce these quizzes one day in advance.
No make-ups will be given for missed reading quizzes, but you may make-up for ONE missed or failed reading quiz by submitting a typed write-up of an out-of-class activity concerning China.

3. First Take-Home Paper - 20%
Your first take-home paper is due in class on **Tuesday, February 24th**. This 6-8 page paper will draw on the readings, lectures, and films introduced during the first 5 weeks of class to identify and evaluate ways in which women in imperial China gained, lost, and used power within the Chinese family system. The specific topic and detailed guidelines will be handed out one week in advance. Your paper should be no less than 6 full pages and no more than 8 full pages in length, double-spaced and typed in 11 or 12 point font with 1 inch to 1 and ½ inch margins. Papers will be graded down for poor grammar and spelling. A successful paper will make extensive and effective use of a wide range of in-class readings. *Late papers will not be accepted without written documentation of a genuine emergency.*

- CITATIONS: You are required to cite your sources after every direct quote AND after every paragraph of information. **Use full Chicago-style footnotes for all citations.**

- **For detailed guidance on how to write a history paper and for specific examples of the proper use of Chicago style footnotes, please see the Writing Guides listed on the SDSU History Department’s website, found at: [http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/histweb/index.htm](http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/histweb/index.htm) (Click on “Writing Guides” and then “Chicago Format for Citations”) For additional examples of Chicago Style, consult the SDSU Library’s guidelines on Chicago style. [http://infodome.sdsu.edu/research-guides/styles/chicago_style.shtml](http://infodome.sdsu.edu/research-guides/styles/chicago_style.shtml)**

4. Second Take-Home Paper - 20%
Your second 6-8 page take-home paper is due in class on **Tuesday, March 24th**. It will be based on the readings, lectures, and films introduced in weeks 6-9 of the course. The specific topic will be handed out one week in advance. See the guidelines for the first take-home paper for expectations about citations. *Late papers will not be accepted without written documentation of a genuine emergency.*

5. Spider Eaters Analysis (4-5 pages) - 10%
This assignment asks you to analyze what Rae Yang’s Cultural Revolution memoir can tell us about a particular gender-related aspect of the Chinese Communist Revolution. I will provide a list of suggested topics 10 days before the essay is due. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, April 21st**. Your essay should be 4-5 pages in length, double-spaced, and typed in 11 or 12 point font with 1 inch margins. Papers will be graded down for poor grammar and spelling. Use Chicago-style footnotes throughout, and be sure to number your pages. *Late papers will not be accepted without written documentation of a genuine emergency.*

6. Gender in the Media Small-Group Presentations - 10%
Midway through the semester each of you will join a pair or small group that will be responsible for collecting news articles from both American and Chinese newspapers on a particular topic related to gender and/or sexuality in 21st century China or Taiwan.
On **May 5th or May 7th**, you and the classmates in your group will present your findings to the class in a 15-minute presentation. In addition to summarizing and critiquing recent media discussions of your selected topic, your presentation should compare and contrast Chinese and American perspectives on your topic, and draw on course readings and lectures that help contextualize those perspectives. Each presentation must include a Powerpoint presentation or other visual or audio aids.

**7. Final Exam - 15% (for undergraduates only; graduate students see supplement)**
The final exam will be held from **8:00-10:00am** in our classroom on **Thursday, May 14th**. Please bring a small bluebook and a pen. The final will be essay in format, and will focus primarily on the material covered in the last third of the course. A study guide will be handed out during the last week of class.

**PLAGIARISM POLICY:** Students who cheat or plagiarize on any paper or exam will receive a zero on that assignment, and I will formally document the incident in an Academic Dishonesty Incident Report. Academic integrity is expected of every student. This means that if you quote from any work (including internet sites), you must put quotation marks around that material, and you must cite it in a footnote. Plagiarism also includes using someone else’s phrases, strings of words, special terms, or ideas and interpretations without citing your source, even if you have not quoted directly from that source. In short, you must give credit where it is due. If you have doubts, please consult me, or check the SDSU General Catalogue for more information.

**Course Readings:**

**Required Books to Purchase:** The following books have been ordered from KB Books at 5187 College Avenue (Tel. 619-287-2665). I urge you to purchase all of these books because they will be very useful for class discussions and course assignments. If you are unable to purchase them, however, you will find one copy of each book on reserve at the library. You may also find these books at the Aztec Bookstore.


*All other required readings listed in the syllabus will be posted on blackboard or, in the case of journal articles, can be accessed online via the SDSU Library’s online catalog (the PAC). The readings on blackboard (BB) will be posted under the week for which they are assigned.*
Course Outline:

INTRODUCTIONS

Week 1: Introduction
Thurs. Jan. 22 Introduction to the course; gender as a useful category of historical analysis in the China field.

Week 2: Challenging Stereotypes; Building Foundations
Tues. Jan. 27 Engendering Chinese history
Film clips: Red Sorghum & Sense and Sensibility

Discussion: Based on Bailey’s introduction and first chapter, what are some key characteristics of the new or “revisionist” studies of women and gender in Chinese history that have come out since the 1990s? What common depictions of the role of women in imperial China does Bailey argue against? What types of examples does he provide to support his revisionist argument? (**Be sure that you come to class prepared to discuss Bailey pp. 1-23. Bailey is on reserve at Love Library if you have not had a chance to purchase the book**).

Thurs. Jan. 29 Changes in the status of women -- across dynasties and over the life course; Chinese pronunciation guide
Reading: Susan Mann, Precious Records, pp. 45-75.

WOMEN, SEX, AND POWER IN ANCIENT AND IMPERIAL CHINA

Week 3: Foundational Images of Women, and their Later Implications
Feb. 3 Oracle bone inequalities; Yin and Yang; Inner and Outer
Reading: Patricia Ebrey, The Inner Quarters, “Separating the Sexes,” pp. 21-44;
“Women’s Work,” pp. 131-151

Feb. 5 Liu Xiang and Ban Zhao – Han lessons for women
Reading: BB: Wang: Liu Xiang’s “Biographies of Women,” pp. 149-161; Ban Zhao’s “Lessons for Women,” pp. 177-188.
Discussion: Definitions of the “Proper” Role of Women in early China.

Week 4: Marriage and Concubinage in Imperial China
*Feb. 10 Hot Dates & Dynasties Quiz at beginning of class
Match-making and marriage
Film clip: The Wedding Banquet
Reading: Ebrey, The Inner Quarters, Introduction and chapters 2-4 (pp. 1-20; 45-98).
Feb. 12  Concubines
Film clip: Raise the Red Lantern
Reading: Ebrey, Inner Quarters, chapter 12 (pp. 217-234);
Discussion: Sex and status in the traditional Chinese family system.

Week 5: The Power of Filial Piety and Chastity
Feb 17  Wise mothers; filial children
Reading: Ebrey, Inner Quarters, ch. 9 (pp. 172-187);
Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, “Family and Gender in Famine: Cultural Responses to Disaster in North China, 1876-1879,” Journal of Women’s History 16.4 (2004), 119-147. (Access online by clicking on “Periodical Title” on the SDSU online library catalog (the PAC) and then typing “Journal of Women’s History” and finding the correct volume and year via Project Muse).

Feb. 19  Chaste widows; faithful maidens
Reading: Ebrey, Inner Quarters, ch. 10 (pp. 188-203);
Discussion: Filial piety and chastity as two-edged swords

Week 6: Taking Power Outside the Home
*Feb. 24  First Take-Home Paper due at the beginning of class
Women and politics: From Empress Wu to Madam Mao
Film clip: The Last Emperor

Feb 26  Woman warriors and writers
Mann, Precious Records, “Writing,” pp. 76-120.
Discussion: Chinese takes on powerful women.

Week 7: Women in Chinese Religion and Folklore
March 3  Goddesses, nuns, and female spirituality
Reading: Mann, Precious Records, ch. 7 (pp. 178-200);

March 5  Ghosts and fox spirits: Stories of the Strange
Discussion: Gender in Chinese religion and folklore
Week 8: Sex and Sexuality in Imperial China
March 10  Sexual relations between women and men
Reading: Ebrey, *Inner Quarters*, chapter 8 (pp. 152-171);
Mann, *Precious Records*, pp. 121-142 (Entertainment/Courtesans)

March 12  Same-sex love in Imperial China
Discussion: Sexual relations in Imperial China

Week 9: Femininity, Masculinity, and the Body in Late Imperial China
March 17  Footbinding and Female Beauty

March 19  Chinese Masculinities
Discussion: Defining and embodying femininity and masculinity in Late Imperial China

REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN, REVOLUTIONARY CHINA: INTO THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY

Week 10: Building a New China: Attacking Traditional Gender Norms
*March 24  Second take-home paper due at the beginning of class*
Origins and Long-Lasting Influence of the May 4th Narrative
Reading: Bailey, *Women and Gender*, chapters 2-3 (pp. 24-67);

March 26  Women and Warfare in Nationalist China
Reading: Bailey, *Women and Gender*, chapters 4-6 (pp. 68-113).
Video: *China Rising*

March 30-April 3 SPRING BREAK Start Spider Eaters

Week 11: Women and the Communist Revolution: Promises and Realities
April 7  The Chinese Communists and Women’s Liberation
Video: *Chinese Women: The Great Step Forward – From Mao to Full Equality (2001)*
April 9  The Excitement and Exhaustion of “Holding up Half the Sky” (or more); Family, Gender, and Famine during the Great Leap
Film clip: To Live
Reading: Bailey, Women and Gender, ch. 7, pp. 114-127; Spider Eaters, chapters 9-15 (pp. 66-158).

*Graduate student term paper proposals due in class. (No assignment is due for undergraduates).

Week 12: Gender and the Cultural Revolution
April 14 Female Red Guards and Maoist Androgyny
Film clip: To Live
Reading: BB: Emily Honig,“Maoist Mappings of Gender: Reassessing the Red Guards,” pp. 255-268, in Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities; finish Spider Eaters (pp. 159-285)
Discussion: In what particular ways was the Chinese Communist Revolution most or least revolutionary for women? (What changed, and what remained largely the same?) How did the Cultural Revolution (1966-67) impact gender expectations for young women like Rae Yang?

April 16  CLASS AND OFFICE HOURS CANCELLED -- Professor out of town at a colloquium. Review Spider Eaters; work on Spider Eater analysis.

CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Week 13: Gendered Impact of Reform and Opening
*April 21 Spider Eaters analysis due at the beginning of class
Ambiguous impact of Reform and Opening policies on rural and urban women
Video: Small Happiness (1987)
Reading: Bailey, Women and Gender, ch. 8 and conclusion (pp. 128-150);

April 23  Changes and continuities
Discussion: Positive and negative impacts of reform-era policies; changes and continuities between pre- and post-1980 gender relations.

Week 14: The One-Child Policy and Its Impact
April 28 Origins, implementation, and impact of the One-Child Policy
Video: China’s Only Child
April 30  Chinese responses to the policy and its implementation

**Discussion:** Evaluating the gendered impact of and responses to the One-Child Policy

Week 15: Gender and Sexuality in 21st Century China via the U.S. and PRC Media
May 5    Gender in the Media Presentations 1-4

May 7    Gender in the Media Presentations 5-8

**Final Exam:** The final exam (undergraduates) will be held in our classroom on Thursday, May 14th from 8:00am to 10:00am. It will be essay in format, and will focus primarily on the last unit of the course (weeks 10-15).

*Graduate student term papers are due in my office by or before 2:00pm on Thursday, 5/14.

*Note: I reserve the right to make changes in this syllabus if it is necessary for the well-being of the course.*

** Graduate students see the supplementary information posted below.**
**WRITING TIPS:**

**ABBREVIATIONS:**
I will use several abbreviations when grading your papers. Here is my abbreviation “code.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TS</td>
<td>Topic sentence needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EV</td>
<td>Lack of concrete evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Sentence fragment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANS</td>
<td>Insert a transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWK</td>
<td>Awkward wording; rephrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Verb tense: keep verb tense consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLOG</td>
<td>Illogical. The sentence/idea does not logically follow from the previous one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will mark all grammatical errors in your first few weekly papers. It is up to you to take note of the stylistic errors you made and **refrain from repeating them** in later assignments. Here is a list of the most common errors I see in student writing assignments. Please seek to avoid them.

a. Subject-Pronoun agreement errors, such as:
   - Incorrect: “China is a large country. They have 1.3 billion people.
   - Correct: China is a large country. It has about 1.3 billion people. OR: There are 1.3 billion Chinese people. They are concerned about overpopulation.

b. Use of it’s instead of its (it’s = it is)

c. Incorrect use of their, there, and they’re

d. Subject-Verb agreement errors.

e. Confusion over when to use effect (noun) versus affect (verb). Example: What effect did the 9/11 attacks have on the U.S.? The attacks affected America’s economy and political landscape in complex ways.

f. Incorrect use of two, to, and too

g. Confusion over when to use an apostrophe

h. Incorrect use of commas versus semicolons versus colons

i. Gandhi, not “Ghandi” or “Ghandhi”

j. Oppressed pheasants instead of peasants

k. Sentence fragments and run-on sentences

l. Frequent changing of verb tense in the same paragraph or even the same sentence. Choose a tense and stick with it. As a general rule, **write in the past tense when discussing past events.**

m. Lack of or incorrect use of citations. You must use Chicago style footnotes or endnotes for all formal writing assignments in the course.

**For detailed guidance on how to write a history paper and for specific examples of the proper use of Chicago style footnotes or endnotes, please see the Writing Guides listed on the SDSU History Department’s website, found at:** [http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/histweb/index.htm](http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/histweb/index.htm)
HISTORY 583: Women, Sex, and Power in Chinese History
SUPPLEMENTARY ASSIGNMENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Course Requirements for Graduate Students:
- Attendance and Participation 10%  - Spider Eaters Analysis 10%
- Quizzes (Hot Dates & Reading) 10%  - Gender in the Media Presentation 10%
- Take-Home Paper I 15%  - Term Paper 25%
- Take-Home Paper II 20% (5% for proposal; 20% for paper)

As a graduate student, you are required to complete additional work in order to receive credit for this course.
1. First, the two take-home papers you submit for History 583 must be 8-10 pages in length rather than 6-8 pages in length. Both papers must draw on at least 2 out-of-class sources in addition to the readings assigned for the class, and must display additional analytical rigor.

2. Second, in place of taking the final exam, you will instead research and write a 15 page term paper on a topic related to gender studies in the China field. We will meet together during Week 15 of the course (5/4 – 5/8). During that meeting, each of you will present your research findings orally. Your presentation will be counted as part of your class participation grade.

Graduate Student Term Paper Guidelines:
Topic:
Your 15-page term paper gives you the opportunity to select a topic in Chinese gender studies of interest to you and engage it on a graduate level. Rather than simply reporting facts, your paper should grapple with an interesting historical problem. Therefore, after selecting a topic that interests you, you must raise a HISTORICAL QUESTION that will help you narrow the scope of your research. A historical question should be concerned with cause and effect, comparison, evidence, interpretation, significance, or bias. It will most likely begin with “why” or “how” rather than “what” or “when.” Moreover, a graduate-level term paper must include a historiographical component. In other words, the first few pages of your paper should address how scholarly views of your topic have changed over the past several decades. (For example, how are the focal points, methodological approaches, or arguments in works about your topic published in 1962 different from those found in works published in 2015?)

Here are some possible topics to get you thinking (select a particular time period for each):
- Footbinding in Chinese history
- The cult of widow chastity
- Women in Chinese religion
- Women’s work in Chinese history (specify time period).
- Same-sex love in imperial or modern China.
- The role of eunuchs in Chinese history.
- The body in Chinese history.
INSTRUCTIONS

Due Dates:
Due dates: Your paper proposal is due in class on Thursday, April 9th. Your final paper is due in my office by or before 2:00pm on Thursday, May 14th (the day of the final exam). I will not read your paper unless I have accepted your proposal on it beforehand.

Paper Proposal: *You are required to meet with me individually during my office hours to discuss your topic before spring break.*
Your paper proposal (due on 4/9) must be typed and must include all of the following:
a. A possible title
b. The general topic and the particular historical question (or questions) you plan to address in your paper.
c. A short discussion (1 paragraph) outlining specific questions or issues related to your topic that have generated scholarly debate.
d. A brief overview of your tentative understanding of how scholarly views on your topic have changed over the past several decades (this will change as you read more, but you need to show me that you have some sense of this by 4/9).
e. A list of at least 2 in-class sources that you plan to use for background. Be sure to cite the specific chapters, documents, or page numbers that you intend to use.
f. A list of at least 5-7 out-of-class scholarly books and journal articles you plan to base your paper on. (Be sure to include sources published over the span of
several decades so that you will be able to trace how scholarly views of your topic have changed over time.) Give full citations for all sources.

**Term Paper:**
The completed paper is due in my office by or before 2:00pm on Thursday, May 14th (the day of the final exam. **Attach your accepted paper proposal to your completed paper when you hand it in.** Papers turned in late will be graded down.

**Format:**
The body of the paper should be 14-15 pages long, double-spaced, and typed in 11 or 12 point font with with 1-inch to 1½-inch margins.
- Your **title page** should include the title of your paper and your historical question.
- Use **Chicago-style footnotes** to document your sources in the paper itself.
- Your paper must include a formal **bibliography** listing all the sources you used in your paper. Follow Chicago-style for your bibliography. Your bibliography should be on a separate page. Be sure to include at least 2 relevant in-class sources in your bibliography and citations as well.
- Please attach your accepted paper proposal to your completed paper when you hand it in.
- Late papers will not be accepted without written documentation of a genuine emergency.
- Papers will be graded down for poor grammar and spelling, so please proofread.

**Sources:**
- You should base your research on roughly 5 out-of-class books, 7 journal articles, or a combination of the two. You also must draw on a minimum of 2 in-class sources for background. You may include one reputable internet source, but the bulk of your sources must consist of primary sources, scholarly books, or journal articles.
- Useful primary sources in translation include poetry by or about women, government documents, biographies, religious documents, Red Guard memoirs, newspaper articles, government documents, missionary memoirs, translations of the speeches of Chinese leaders, etc.
- Top journals in the field include: Late Imperial China, Modern China, The China Quarterly, the Journal of Asian Studies, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, T’ung Pao, and East Asian History.
- To find good scholarly journal articles on your topic, click on “Article Databases” on the SDSU library website. Browse through issues of a particular journal, or search the BAS Online (Bibliography of Asian Studies Online) and JSTOR, among other sites, for articles on your topic.
- The North China Herald, an English-language newspaper published by British editors in Shanghai, is an excellent primary source for those of you interested in events that occurred between 1850 and 1950 in China. The SDSU library has the Herald on microfilm.

END