

Spring 2009
Sociology 455
Sex and Gender in Contemporary China
Tuesday/ Thursday 4:00-5:20
221MCK

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Course Description

The opening up of China's economy and its integration into the global capitalist world has dramatically transformed the situation of women in all sectors of society. As China moves from a society characterized by relative equality to extreme inequality, relationships between men and women at work, in the family, in cities and in rural areas and well as norms of sexual intimacy are also rapidly shifting and becoming increasingly unequal. This course investigates these changes. We do so by first briefly examining gender relations in the late-Imperial and Mao-eras to establish an historical baseline for the changes currently taking place. The course will also briefly review current theories of gender that understand masculinity and femininity as socially constructed rather than biologically ordained. This will give us the conceptual tools to understand the cultural and relational formation of contemporary relationships between men and women. Because social and economic change has impacted groups diversely, we will examine how gender relationships have been transformed in a variety of arenas: work, family, and state policy within both rural areas and in urban areas. Hence we will understand gender in contemporary China, not as a homogeneous construct but as an axis of inequality that combines with other forms of inequality and difference so as to fundamentally affect the character of gender identity.

Course Materials:

Three books are required for this class. They are listed below. They are available for sale at the campus book store.

- Ngai, Pun. 2005. *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace.*
- Yan, Yunxiang. 2003. *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999.*
- Yang, Rae. 1997. *Spider Eaters: A Memoir.*

In addition to these three books, course readings are posted on blackboard under course documents. The readings schedule is organized by week in the syllabus. Daily assignments for reading will be announced in class.

Course Assessment and Grade

Your grade will be based on class participation, a paper proposal, a midterm and a final paper.

Class Participation 35%

Students are required to come to class having completed the readings. Each session 2-3 students will lead a discussion of the readings. This will require that you briefly summarize the readings, outlining the main point of each. You will also then raise 3-4 questions about the readings to be discussed by the class. For each class, ALL students should also come prepared with 2-3 questions, typed and printed out. Questions should raise issues about the central arguments and themes of the readings. They should reflect a careful and thoughtful reading of the material. Students are encouraged to ask questions that compare readings. Each student should come to class prepared with a print out of their questions. I will collect them periodically throughout the quarter. I will not announce beforehand when they will be collected.

Each student will be responsible for choosing one session to summarize and analyze (this will be a different session from the one you prepare). Along with one or two other students you will compose a 3-5 page critical assessment of one session's discussion. The assessment should point out major themes and points of contention raised in discussion and weigh in with your own viewpoints, providing justification for your perspective. These will be posted on blackboard for the class to read. Your summary analysis will be due one week after the class discussion.

Midterm 30%

The in-class midterm will consist of essays and short-answer questions.

Final Paper 35%

The final paper will engage a discussion of a topic relevant to contemporary gender relations in China. Possible topics include: labor, sexuality, family, the feminization of rural work, childrearing, religion, media representations, ethnicity, consumption, adoption and orphanages. The paper should compare two specific groups (for example, rural women and urban women, men from two different regions, women across different generations). The paper should include the discussion of at least four scholarly articles not included on this syllabus and can also include references to non-academic sources. The paper should directly engage themes discussed in class and also cite relevant readings assigned in class. The paper should be between 10-12 pages long, double-spaced.

Graduate students will not take the midterm exam and are required to submit a 20 page research paper at the end of class.

Note on Classroom Conduct: The use of cell phones and pagers is prohibited during the class time. Students who leave the class (or begin to make preparations to leave class before the professor has indicated the class is over) will be asked to withdraw from the class. No talking beyond class discussion is allowed. Questions about scheduling, tests, assignments, etc. may be asked at the beginning of lecture.

I expect that everyone will participate in discussions respectfully and be considerate of one another. This class should be a space in which everyone feels comfortable expressing their views, and I see it as my responsibility to help make this possible. If you have any concerns about the course, or how lectures, discussions or class in general are being conducted, please come and talk to me.

Reading Schedule

Week 1 Social Construction of Gender and Orientalism

3/31-4/2

- Bodies and Difference. R.W. Connell
- Cinderella's Sisters. Dorothy Ko (1-6)

Week 2 Gender Legacies

4/7-4/9

- House of Lim. Marjorie Wolf
- Cinderella's Sisters. Dorothy Ko

Guest Lecture: Professor Epstein

Video: Small Happiness

Week 3 Maoist Revolution

4/14-4/16

- Spider Eaters. Rae Yang

Week 4 Marriage, Family and Work in Urban China

4/21-4/22

- Past, Perfect or Imperfect: Changing Images of the Ideal Wife. Harriet Evans.
- Exploring Nonnormative Co-residence in Urban China. Pimentel and Liu
- Transforming Family Law in Post-Deng China. Palmer
- Gender Ideology, Household Behavior and Backlash in Urban China. Ellen Pimentel et al.
- From Revolutionary Comrades to Gendered Partners: Marital Construction of Breadwinning in Post-Mao Urban China. J. Zuo
- Inequality in the Rewards for Holding up Half the Sky: Gender Wage Gaps in China's Urban Labor Market, 1988-1994. Maurer-Fazio et al.
- Gender Dynamics and Redundancy in Urban China. Jieyu Liu.

Week 5 One-Child Policy

4/27-4-29

- From Resisting to "Embracing?" the One-Child Rule: Understanding New Fertility Trends in a Central China Village. Hong Zhang
- Prenatal Sex Determination and Sex-selective Abortion in Rural Central China. C Junhong.
- Fertility and Distorted Sex Ratios in a Rural Chinese County. Rachel Murphy.
- Controlling Birth and Bodies. Susan Greenhalgh.

- China's One-Child Policy and the Empowerment of Urban Daughters. Vanessa Fong.

Week 6 Rural Family

5/5-5/7

- Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999. Yunxiang Yan

Talk: Wendy Larson, Professor of Chinese Literature. "From Ah Q to Lei Feng: Freud and Revolutionary Spirit in 20th Century China." Friday, May 8, 3:30 pm. 109 Friendly Hall

Week 7 Midterm and Masculinities

5/12-5/14

Midterm 5/12

- Qi and Masculinities in Post-Mao China. Nancy Chen
- Proper Men and Proper Women: Parental Affection in the Chinese Family. William Kankowiak.

Week 8 Migration and Work

5/19-5/21

- Made in China. Pun Ngai

Video: China Blue

Week 9 Part I: Who is He Sleeping with....?

5/26

- Cool Masculinity: Male Client's Sex Consumption and Business Alliance in Urban China's Sex Industry. TianTian Zheng
- Beyond the Industrial Paradigm. Eileen Otis
- Governing the Buyers of Sex in the People's Republic of China. Elaine Jeffries.

Week 9 Part II: Gay Politics

5/28

- Imagined Comrades and Imaginary Protections. R. Jones
- Qualities of Desire: Imagining Gay Identities. Lisa Rofel.
- Legislating Desire: Homosexuality, Intellectual Property Rights, and Consumer Fraud. Lisa Rofel.

Week 10 Hooking up with Chinese Characteristics?

6/2 – 6/4

- Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai James Farrer.

Video: Love and Sex in China

