

History 444

Gender, Marriage, and Kinship in China
Fall 2013

M: 2:30-4:20

Peters 212

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Hours: WF 11-12 Rice 312, and by appointment

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Blackboard: <https://blackboard.oberlin.edu/>



This course is a colloquium that meets once a week for approximately two hours. The most important feature of a colloquium is close reading and thoughtful, carefully argued discussion. Therefore, notes should be taken on the readings and reviewed before class so that you have already thought over issues of fact, interpretation and analysis. This also means that the week's reading assignment should not be left until the night before class. In order to facilitate and encourage thoughtful and engaged reading, every week each member of the group should prepare a position paper of 500 words or so based on the readings for the upcoming class. The paper should address some key issue or problem raised by the reading; it will form a basis for discussion in class. By Saturday afternoon, you should post your position paper on the Discussion Board on the Blackboard website for this course. This will insure that we all have a chance to read each other's thoughts and have the opportunity to respond.

Besides completing the reading and participating in class discussions (which includes preparation and submission of the weekly essay), students will be responsible for three short papers, spaced approximately evenly throughout the semester. The last will be due at the end of reading period. A topic will be assigned for each paper that will require around 5-8 pages of analysis of issues arising from

the reading and class discussions. Please submit work through the Assignment link in Blackboard.

All assignments must be completed to receive credit for the course. Because we only meet for twelve substantive sessions and because participation in discussions is so central to our common project, excessive absences will adversely affect your grade. (No absences are expected; more than one is excessive.) If a situation arises where more than one absence is unavoidable, come talk to me about it; I try to be a reasonable person.

The topic of this semester's colloquium is gender, marriage, and family in China. We will mainly focus on the period from late imperial times to the present (17th century on). While the three categories in the title of the colloquium are closely interrelated our focus on each will allow us to explore various important dimensions of Chinese conceptions regarding these three areas of human experience, as well as the convergence and contestation of norms in Chinese society over time.

In examining gender we will explore traditional ideas concerning male and female as fundamental and interrelated forces running through all phenomenal existence, as well as more mundane notions of male/female difference in Chinese society. Gender roles and the relation of gender and sexualities will be explored. The status of women in this patriarchal and largely patrilineal society will also be a central theme, especially focusing on how the category of "women" has been constructed as an ideological means to voice concerns about norms and social order in Chinese society.

The focus on marriage will allow us to examine changing forms of marriage across time, variant forms of marriage, the social and individual power dynamics of marriage, and the interrelationship of forms of exchange surrounding marriage, such as dowry or bride price, with changing social formations.

Family is a core category of Chinese social and political forms, and reading and discussion around this topic will allow us to bring into focus many of the themes developed in other sections of the course, and in particular to look at the important role of the state and the literate elite in shaping norms regarding gender, marriage, and family.

The reading for the semester will focus on a number of important works and a selection of articles that have arisen out of the conjunction of women's and gender studies, on the one hand, and Sinological research on the other. The books are listed immediately below.

Books available at the Oberlin Bookstore and on Reserve:

Watson, Rubie S. and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, eds. *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991

Bray, Francesca. *Technology & Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

NOTE: Other than the books listed above, all readings for the course can be found on the Blackboard site under Course Documents in PDF file format. Both books and the Susan Mann book are in electronic form through OBIS, and can be had through OHIOlink.

Honor Code: All work in the course is governed by the Honor Code. See <http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/2011-2012/11-Policies-Honor.pdf>

If you are eligible for and need academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability, please speak to me early in the semester, or contact the Office of Disability Services at <http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/>.

Course meetings:

Gender in Late Imperial and Contemporary China

Sept. 9: Introduction to course: Looking at Gender in Chinese Society

Sept. 16: Gail Hershatter, "State of the Field: Women in China's Long Twentieth Century," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63.4 (Nov., 2004) :991-1065

Jinhua Emma Teng, "The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman' in the Western Academy: A Critical Review," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 22.1 (Autumn 1996) :115-151

Joan Scott, Selections from *Gender and the Politics of History*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), ix-50

Sept. 23:

Dorothy Ko, "The Body as Attire: The Shifting Meanings of Footbinding in Seventeenth-Century China," *Journal of Women's History* 8.4 (Winter, 1997) :8-27

Patricia Ebrey, "Gender and Sinology: Shifting Western Interpretations of Footbinding, 1300-1890," *Late Imperial China* 20.2 (December 1999) : 1-34

Hung-Yok Ip, "Fashioning Appearances: Feminine Beauty in Chinese Communist Revolutionary Culture," *Modern China* 29.3 (Jul., 2003) : 329-361

Lin Chun, "On Feminism and China: Foot-binding as an Aesthetic, History and Dialogue" *ASIANetwork Exchange* 14.3 (Spring, 2008): 14-16

Sept. 30: Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century*, 1-177, 201-226

Marriage and Social Formations

Oct. 7: Watson and Ebrey, *Marriage and Inequality in Chinese Society*, Introduction, Chapters 2-3, 5-6.

Oct. 14: Mary Jo Maynes and Ann Waltner, "Childhood, Youth, and the Family Life Cycle, Women's Life-Cycle Transitions in a World-Historical Perspective: Comparing Marriage in China and Europe." *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 4 (2001): 11-21.

Watson and Ebrey, *Marriage and Inequality*, Chapters 7-Afterword.

Oct. 19-27: Autumn Recess

Material and Domestic Life from a Gendered Perspective

Oct. 28: Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*, Introduction, Parts 1 and 2

Nov. 4: Bray, *Technology and Gender*, complete

Courtship, Marriage, and Children in Contemporary China

Nov. 11: Gail Hershatter, "Making a Friend: Changing Patterns of Courtship in Urban China" *Pacific Affairs* 57.2 (Summer, 1984): 237-251

Meiling Southwell-Lee, "Campus Courtship in China: A View into Modern Marriage Practices and the Reach of the State," paper presented at 16 Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, June, 2006

"Dating Chinese Girls: Dating Etiquette, Relationships, and Sex," from <http://middlekingdomlife.com/guide/dating-etiquette-sex-relationships-china.htm>

Nov. 18: Ellen R. Judd, "Niangjia: Chinese Women and Their Natal Families" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48.3 (Aug., 1989): 525-544

Weiguo Zhang, "State, Gender and Uxorilocal Marriage in Contemporary Rural North China" *The China Journal* (Australian National University) 60 (Jul., 2008): 111-132

Margery Wolf, "Marriage, Family, and the State in Contemporary China" *Pacific Affairs* 57.2 (Summer, 1984): 213-236

- Nov. 25: Weiguo Zhang, "Implementation of State Family Planning Programmes in a Northern Chinese Village" *The China Quarterly* 157 (Mar., 1999): 202-230
- Hong Zhang, "Bracing for an Uncertain Future: A Case Study of New Coping Strategies of Rural Parents under China's Birth Control Policy" *The China Journal* (Australian National University) 54 (Jul., 2005): 53-76
- Weiguo Zhang, "Who Adopts Girls and Why? Domestic Adoption of Female Children in Contemporary Rural China" *The China Journal* (Australian National University) 56 (Jul., 2006): 63-82
- Orna Naf'tali, "Empowering the Child: Children's Rights, Citizenship and the State in Contemporary China" *The China Journal* (Australian National University) 61 (Jan., 2009): 79-103
- Dec. 2: Selections from Christina Gilmartin, et al., eds. *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994)
- Dec. 9: Concluding Discussion