

Course Title: WOMEN AND REVOLUTION IN CHINA, 1890-1990
HIST 470 3 CREDITS

Prerequisite(s): HIST 260 or instructor's permission.

Course Description: This course explores women's participation and the role of women's emancipation in the one hundred years of Chinese revolutionary activities from the late nineteenth century to the 1990s. It discusses the reconciliation of and conflict between women's emancipation and general revolutionary objectives. It also traces the origins and evolution of the Chinese feminist movement, which paralleled the Chinese revolutionary experience.

Course Objectives:

1. To introduce feminist activism in the Chinese revolutionary experience, and the relationship between women's emancipation and the Chinese revolution.
2. To delineate the critical position of women's emancipation in the Chinese revolution.
3. To trace the origins and evolution of feminism in China and their interconnection with the Chinese revolution.
4. To understand the accomplishments and setbacks in Chinese women's struggles for independence and emancipation. To understand some of the different interpretations of the development of the women's emancipation, e.g. women's situation under the communist regime.
5. To familiarize students with the essential readings of feminist literature and the most prominent feminist authors of this period.
6. To equip students with background knowledge as an aid to understanding and analyzing the current developments of the women's movement in China.
7. To situate the Chinese feminist movement in a global context, and to provide a basis for students to compare the women's movements in modern China with that in other parts of the world.

Course Content:

1. **Women in the 1911 Revolution:** To discuss the historical background of the rise of women's activism and feminist movement in the late 19th and early 20th century. To look at important issues raised by women's rights pioneers of this period: anti-foot-binding and women's education. To examine women's active involvement in the 1911 Revolution. Finally, to discuss the first outcry for universal suffrage shortly after the birth of China's Republic in 1912. The failure of this early trial in gaining the right to vote for women in 1912 presaged the troublesome relationship between the women's movement and the revolution in modern Chinese history.

2. **Women and the May Fourth Cultural Revolution:** To examine the most critical episode in modern Chinese history, the May Fourth movement, and its impact on women's emancipation. As the most fierce challenge to Chinese tradition, the May Fourth movement purported to repudiate Confucianism, which had been the ruling ideology and the base for all social norms since the 13th century. Since the family system was the core of Confucian ethics, which fixed women in a subordinate position, women's emancipation became a central issue of the May Fourth movement. It is against this backdrop that the first feminist literature, represented by Ding Ling's "Miss Sophie's Diary," appeared. Nevertheless, the May Fourth movement, as a pure intellectual movement, did not provide means of women's emancipation. The paradoxical repercussions will also be examined in this section.
3. **Women in the Nationalist Revolution of 1925-1927:** To discuss the highest peak in women's movement, the nationalist revolution of 1925-1927, in modern Chinese history. This revolution, led by a United Front of the Nationalists and Communists and orchestrated by the Comintern, was aimed at eliminating warlords and restoring the spirit of democracy. Meanwhile, the revolution witnessed the widespread mobilization of the masses. The ideas of women's liberation spread from a small circle of intellectuals of the May Fourth era to becoming a popular movement of laborers and peasants. This section will examine how both the Nationalists and Communists formed and developed their own strategies in controlling the popular women's movement, and in subordinating the objectives of women's liberation to the general revolutionary objectives of their own party. It will also look at the bloody split between the Nationalists and Communists in 1927, which inflicted a heavy blow to the women's movement and in which thousands of women activists were brutally murdered.
4. **Women under the Nationalist Regime (1927-1937):** To discuss a low point at the women's movement in modern China, the one-decade Nationalist rule. Terrified by the surge of women's activism in the Nationalist Revolution, the newly established regime abandoned its earlier support for women's liberation. On the contrary, the new government launched the "New Life" movement in an attempt to reorient the nation to Confucianism by re-instilling family values and traditional morality, and by discouraging women's activism and involvement in politics. The focus of economic reconstruction ushered in a new urban culture that again placed women's position primarily in family, though a family of more enlightened type.
5. **Women in Communist Revolution (1927-1937):** To examine the Communist experience during the decade of the Nationalist regime and the ebbing of feminism of the Chinese communist revolution. The outbreak of women's activism during the Nationalist Revolution of 1925-1927 not only scared the Nationalists, but also shocked the Communists, who feared the women's movement could endanger the main goals of the communist revolution. During this decade, women continued to participate in the communist revolution. Yet women's emancipation was no longer on

the agenda of the communist revolution. Leading woman revolutionaries lost independence and initiatives they once possessed during the Nationalist Revolution and became important primarily because of marital relationships with communist leaders. The patriarchal structure of the CCP was thus consolidated during this period in spite of feeble challenges to it by a few surviving feminist revolutionaries.

6. **Women in the War Years (1937-1945):** To examine the rise of woman activism in the war against the Japanese invasion and the tension in the discourse on the relationship between women's emancipation and nationalism. Again, women's cause was sacrificed for the survival of the nation. Although women were mobilized by the state in an unprecedented scale to participate in the Resistant Movement against Japan in all different ways, including fighting on the battle field, there was little room for the revival of feminist movement, for it was considered incompatible to the urgent issue of national security. Feminist outcries were reduced to a minimum or were channeled into a uniform nationalist chorus.
7. **State Feminism of the Communist Regime (1945-1979):** To introduce students to a complicated issue: whether the Communist Regime had helped women in their emancipation. The scholarship on this issue assumes two conflicting positions, by and large. One strongly argues that the Communist regime achieved tremendous success in liberating women from oppressions. Another, the most recent one, argues, equally strongly, that the Communist regime did not make any substantial progress in women's emancipation even though women were forced out of the family and into professions, and that what the communists did was not the liberation of women, rather, a gender erasure, which oppressed femininity and masculinized female sex. What the Communist regime did to women can be dubbed "state feminism," according to the latter school. This section will expose students to both positions and direct the students to make their own judgment based up the facts provided to them in the reading, lecture and films.
8. **Women in the Post-Mao Era (1979-1999):** This last section will continue the discourse started in the previous section: how to assess women's position under the Communism. This section deals with the reform era. As many believe, Chinese women's conditions seriously deteriorated after capitalism was ushered into the economic life. Along with the economic boom, came the predicament of women: prostitution returned as did widespread discrimination against women employees in the workplace, and female sexuality is widely used for commercial and social purposes. This section will introduce students to the current situation of women in China and engage them in the discourse regarding how to understand and interpret the changing situation of women in China today.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. To gain a basic understanding of women's position in pre-revolutionary China. Students will be able to make an assessment of women's role inside and outside of

family, various authorities that had power over women's lives, and society's attitude towards women.

2. To be able to identify women's roles as well as key issues, figures, and incidents during the one hundred years of Chinese revolution.
3. To be able to locate the key issues that intertwined women's emancipation with the Chinese revolution. To be able to analyze the relationship between women's movement and the Chinese revolution.
4. To be familiar with the most important feminist literature produced during this period. To be able to analyze it in light of the historical backgrounds.
5. To be able to conduct a research project by making use of secondary material and first-hand records, such as memoirs available in English.

Outcomes Assessment:

Assessment includes classroom discussion, a term-long research project and a term paper, an oral presentation, two midterm examinations and final examination. Classroom discussion will be conducted after each main topic is covered in class (there are eight topics). Students must participate in the discussions with preparation, and demonstrate their mastery of the course content and assigned readings. Each student will locate, propose and conduct a semester-long research project and produce a term paper of no shorter than 15 pages. Students must show in their papers their familiarity with the scholarship on the topics they choose and engage themselves in the discourse. Each student will give a 20 minutes presentation on their research project to the class at the end of the semester. All examinations will only consist of essay questions and will be designed to test students' ability to analyze the problems discussed in this course and evaluate the scholarship on those issues.

Teaching Methods: The pedagogical means in teaching this course includes lecture, film, discussion, research project and presentation and take-home examinations.

Suggested Texts:

Chang, Jung. *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*. Anchor Books, 1992.

Ding, Ling. *I Myself Am A Woman: Selected Writings of Ding Ling*, ed. by Tani Barlow. Houghton Mifflin Co. 1989.

Hsieh, Ping-ying. *Autobiography of a Chinese Girl*. Translated by Tsui Chi. New York: Routledge & K. Paul, 1943. Reprint, New York: Pandora, 1986.

Gilmartin, Christina K. *Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics and Mass Movements in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Gilmartin, Christina K. et al. ed., *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*. Harvard University Press, 1994.

Ono, Kazuko, ed. by Joshua A. Fogel, *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850-1950*. Stanford University Press, 1989.

Yue, Ta-iyun & Carolyn Wakeman. *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman*. University of California Press, 1985.

Wang, Zheng. *Women and the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Course Outline:

Week I. Introduction

1. Course Introduction
2. A Survey of Women's Position in Chinese History

Reading:

Ono, Kazuko, *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850-1950*, pp. 1-53.

Susan Mann, "Learned Women in the Eighteenth Century," in Christina Gilmartin *Engendering China*, pp. 27-46.

Week II. Women in the 1911 Revolution

1. Discussion: What are the social and cultural background for the rise of the feminist movement in the late 19th and early 20th century?

2. Women and the Overseas Student Movement
3. Qiu Jin and Other Women Activists in the 1911 Revolution
4. The First Outcries for Women's Rights and Liberation: Anti-Footbinding,

Women's education and Universal Suffrage

Readings:

Ono, pp. 54-92;

Alison R. Drucker, "The Influence of Western Women on the Anti-footbinding Movement, 1840-1911;" Charlotte L. Beahan, "In the Public Eye: Women in Early Twentieth-Century China" in Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johannesen ed. *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship*, pp. 170-199, pp. 215-238.

Week III. Women and the May Fourth Movement (I)

1. Discussion: What did the 1911 Revolution achieve for women?
2. The May Fourth Movement
3. "Down with Confucianism" and Challenge to Family System
4. The Rise of Romantic Literature

Readings:

Ono, pp. 93-111;

Wang, Zheng. *Women and the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories*, selected chapters;

Chang, Jung, *Wild Swans*, pp. 1-62.

Week IV. Women and the May Fourth Movement (II)

1. Discussion: What were the major themes of the feminist movement in the May Fourth era?

2. Ding Ling and the Self-Consciousness of Women Writers

3. The Pitfall of the Feminist Movement of the May Fourth Era

Readings:

Ding Ling, "Miss Sophia's Diary;"

Lun Xun, "My Views on Chastity," "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?"
"The Case of Mrs. Qin Lizhai," "Regret for the Past," "The New Year's Sacrifice."

Week V. Women in the Nationalist Revolution (1925-1927)

1. Discussion: Ding Ling's "Miss Sophia's Diary" and Lun Xun's three articles and two novels.

2. Women Radicals of the 1920s

3. The Rise of the Popular Women's Movements

4. Women's Movements Divided

Readings:

Ono, pp. 112-154.

Christina Gilmartin, *Engendering Chinese Revolution*, chapters 1, 3, and 5-7;

Hsieh, Ping-ying. *Autobiography of a Chinese Girl*, chapters 1-5.

Week VI. Women under the Nationalist Regime (1927-1937)

1. The First Midterm Examination

2. Discussion: What were the common grounds and differences between the feminist movement among elites and the popular women's movements in the early Republican period?

3. The New Life Movement and the Reorientation of Feminist Movement

4. Women and the Urban Life in the 1930s

5. The Song Sisters

Readings:

Gail Hershat, "Modernizing Sex, Sexing Modernity: Prostitution in Early Twentieth-Century Shanghai," in *Gilmartin Engendering China*, pp. 147-174.

Hsieh, Ping-ying. *Autobiography of a Chinese Girl*, remaining chapters.

Week VII. Women in Communist Revolution

1. Discussion: Had women's position and life been improved during the Nanjing period?

2. Women in the Communist Uprisings

3. The Soviet Period

4. The Long March

5. The Ebbing of the Feminist Theme

Readings:

Ono, pp. 154-161;

Lily Xiao Hong Lee and Sue Wiles, *Women of the Long March: The Never Before Told Story*;

Chang, *Wild Swans*, pp. 62-150.

Paper prospectus due.

Week VIII. Women in the War Years (1937-1945)

1. Discussion: What made Chang Jung's mother a revolutionary?
2. Nationalism versus Feminism
3. Women's Participation in the Anti-Japanese War
4. Revolutionary Women in Yanan

Readings:

Ono, pp. 161-170.

Ding Ling, "Thoughts on March 8," "When I was in Xia Village."

Week IX. Women in Mao's Revolution

1. Discussion: What is the overtone in Ding Ling's article? Do you think that the feminist politics were compatible with communist revolution?
2. Movie: *China in Revolution*

Readings:

Ono, pp. 170-175.

Chang, *Wild Swans*, pp. 151-203.

Yue Daiyun and Carolyn Wakeman, *To the Storm*, pp. 1-24.

Week X. State Feminism of the Communist Regime (1949-1966)

1. Discussion: What were the feelings to be a women revolutionary according to Chang Jung's mother and Yue Daiyun's experience?
2. Making of Women's Liberation
3. New Marriage Law of 1953 and Its Impact
4. The Formation of "State Feminism"

Readings:

Ono, pp. 176-186;

Yue and Wakeman, pp. 25-150;

Chang, pp. 204-255.

Week XI. State Feminism of the Communist Regime (1966-1979)

1. Discussion: Do you think that the communist state was successful in emancipating women? What was the impact of communist revolution on family?
2. The Era of Cultural Revolution
3. Masculination of Women's Image
4. Birth Control Policy and Its Impact on Women
5. Collapse of State Feminism

Readings:

Yue and Wakeman, pp. 151-250 (Optional, the remaining of the book);

Chang, pp. 256-322.

Week XII. Women in the Reform Era (I)

1. The Second Midterm Examination
2. Discussion: What do you think about women's position in the Mao's era?
3. Coming of the Reform Era
4. Awakening of Women's Consciousness in Literature

5. Movie: *Small Happiness*

Readings:

Chang, pp. 323-405;

Li Ziyun, "Women's Consciousness and Women's Writing," in Gilmartin, pp. 299-317.

Week XIII. Women in the Reform Era (II)

1. Discussion: Do you think that Chinese women's position declined after the reform? Why?

2. Dilemma of Women in the Post-Reform Era

3. New Order in Sexuality, Marriage and Family

4. The Revival of Feminist Movement in China

Readings:

Chang, pp. 406-457;

Gao Xiaoxian, "China's Modernization and Changes in the Social Status of Rural Women," in Gilmartin, pp. 80-97, Tani Barlow, "Politics and Protocols of Funu: (Un)Making National Woman," and Li Xiaojang, "Economic Reform and the Awakening of Chinese Women's Collective Consciousness" in Gilmartin pp. 339-382.

Week XIV. Paper Presentations

Readings:

Chang, pp. 458-508.

Week XV. Summation

1. Discussion: What do the stories of Chang Jung's grandmother, mother and herself suggest in terms of the change of position of women in contemporary Chinese history and the role women played in the communist revolution?

2. Summation

3. Distribution of Take-Home Final Examination Questions

Final Week. Take-Home Final Examination

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