

GESM 120G: SEMINAR IN HUMANISTIC INQUIRY
Women, Writing, and Visuality in Modern China

Spring 2020
Monday, Wednesday 2-3.20 p.m.
VKC 210

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1-3 p.m. and by appointment

SCOPE OF THE COURSE

Throughout most of China's long history, women were at the bottom of Confucian hierarchy and did not enjoy the social or political status afforded to men. This reality began to change during the late Qing dynasty (ca. 1895-1911), and in the modern period the liberation of women became linked to modernization and national salvation. In this course, we will first seek to understand the situation of women in traditional China, and then trace the dramatic changes that occurred in Chinese society as well as women's lives throughout the turbulent 20th century.

To achieve this goal, we will analyze literature, film and other media by both male and female authors who are concerned with the lives and realities of Chinese women. What do women wish to liberate themselves from, how do they enact this and to what end? How do some of the most influential men of modern Chinese letters understand and portray the situation of women? In what ways does the problem of gender complicate the ideological advent of modernity in China? And how do the paradigms of traditional Chinese culture and the contemporary situation of globalization impact Chinese women and their writings today? Throughout the course, we examine how several generations of intellectuals reconciled themselves to – and resisted – the expectations of women under Confucianism, communism and capitalism in the late nineteenth, twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The texts we will read include a variety of different genres, ranging from short stories and novellas to essays and autobiography, poetry, literary reportage and film. They represent authors, film-makers and cultural critics not only from mainland China but also from Taiwan, Hong Kong and the diaspora of writers who feel culturally connected to China but write from abroad. In our class discussions, we will engage questions of identity, nationhood, revolution and the constant mediation between the modern present and classical past, which still today fundamentally informs the development of literary and cultural discourse. At the same time, we will study relevant works of critical-theoretical scholarship and relate our textual readings to the body of literary and visual culture of which they are integral parts.

We will read all primary texts in English translation and all films will have English subtitles.

HUMANISTIC INQUIRY (GE-B): DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES

We all are self-reflective. We try to make sense of what it means to be human and how to relate to one another. We seek to understand ourselves and the world around us and always think about how things could be, or should be, or might have been. Humanistic inquiry takes us into realms that lie at the heart of what it means to be a thinking, feeling person, and into realms of interpretation and analysis beyond what facts and figures alone can tell us.

Seminars in humanistic inquiry encourage close engagement with works of the imagination - in words, sights, and sounds - understanding what it means to live another life and to see over the horizon. In this course, we explore language as a medium of artistic expression and communication. We study systems of language and thought. We seek to understand traditions that create different cultures - their concepts, values, and events in history - and see them in relation to one another. Students gain an appreciation for forms of representation and methods of interpretation, adopting broad perspectives that are chronological, disciplinary, and cross-disciplinary. By immersing ourselves in arts and letters, we will think about our own place in history and in contemporary society, and inquire into our shared futures.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of Chinese women throughout history, how women's lives were shaped by key cultural and social values, and how these changed over time.
2. Understand how and why the idea of the "new woman" was so crucial to modernization in China in the 20th century.
3. Gain an appreciation for key moments and developments in modern Chinese literary and cultural history.
4. Develop analytical skills through critical reading and clear writing.
5. Cultivate speaking and listening skills through in-class presentations and discussion.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

1. Attendance and Class Participation – 10%
2. 2 Discussion Board Posts (500 words each) – 10%
3. Session Opener Talk and Discussion Leading – 10%
4. 2 Response Papers (two pages, double-spaced) due on **Friday, February 14** and **Friday, April 24** – 20%
5. Midterm Essay (5 pages, double-spaced) due on **Friday, March 13** – 25%
6. Final Research Paper (7-8 pages, double-spaced) and Presentation due on **Friday, May 8** – 25%

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION (10%)

All students are required to attend all class sessions, do all readings ahead of time and come prepared and ready to participate in class discussion. Active and engaged class participation is an important component of this course.

2 DISCUSSION BOARD POSTS (10%)

As part of your participation grade, you will write and post two discussion board posts. **Choose two lecture topics** on the course syllabus and compose **one discussion question and thoughtful response for each**. Your post should engage a text or topic in the reading assignment for that day and should be analytical, thought-provoking and about 500 words in length. It is your responsibility to upload your discussion board post (consisting of thoughtful question and response) to the discussion thread on the Blackboard web site by noon on the day before class. During class you should share the question, reflections and ideas that you addressed in your discussion board post.

SESSION OPENER TALK AND DISCUSSION LEADING (10%)

Each student will serve as discussion leader at least once during the semester. Your job is to open the seminar with a 15-20 minute session opener talk and then use that to drive our discussion of the themes that emerged from that day's readings. In addition, the student discussant will also post a set of two to three substantive questions or issues for class discussion which should connect the primary texts and films to the secondary/theoretical readings. **The discussion questions should be posted to the relevant discussion thread on the Blackboard course website by noon on the day before class.** All students are expected to read these questions before class and participate actively in class discussion. To access the course web site, log on using your USC account at www.blackboard.usc.edu.

TWO RESPONSE PAPERS (20%)

You will each write **two response papers**, in which you will be asked to identify relevant themes in the assigned readings, raise questions or critical objections, locate difficulties, and respond or make connections to other readings. Your response paper should be well-organized, have a clear focus and present a well thought-out, structured argument in a concise style. You may choose the specific primary and/or secondary text(s) you would like to discuss. **Your paper may not be longer than two pages, double-spaced**, and you must submit it via Turn-it-in by the deadline.

MIDTERM ESSAY (25%)

For the midterm, you will write a well-crafted, clearly-argued response to a specific exam essay prompt. The paper should present a clear thesis and a well-organized critical reading of one or two primary sources to substantiate your argument. You may engage theoretical readings if they are relevant for your analysis. The paper should be about 5 pages long (double-spaced), written in correct format and contain a title page, footnotes (or endnotes) and a complete bibliography according to the MLA Style or Chicago Manual of Style.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (25%)

For this assignment, you will choose one or two modern Chinese primary texts and/or films, research the text(s) thoroughly and present a concise, clearly-written, original 7-8 page paper that

proves a central argument by means of textual analysis and evidence. Your critical essay must critically engage at least one or more of the secondary and/or theoretical readings we have discussed in the course. You may choose primary texts from our list of readings, or you may choose another text of any genre (literature, film, critical essay, poetry, theater) that interests you. The text(s) you choose must either be written by a Chinese woman writer or be concerned with issues pertaining to women's realities, feminism and/or femininity. Your paper should include a title page, footnotes (or endnotes) and a complete bibliography according to the MLA Style or Chicago Manual of Style. **A one-page proposal for the paper should be written and submitted to me via e-mail by Friday, March 27.** I strongly encourage you to come see me during my office hours to discuss your paper proposal, research plan, argument and plans for the final presentation. You will be paired with another student to participate in a peer-review process. **The final research paper will be due on Friday, May 8. Please submit it to Blackboard via Turn-It-In.**

FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATION

At the end of the semester, each student will give a brief presentation to convey the findings and unresolved issues of his/her final research project. **These presentations will take place during our last class sessions on April 27 and April 29.** You should use this opportunity to 1) introduce your work to your classmates in a well-organized, effective and engaging manner and 2) receive and reflect upon the critique others may have about your work.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS

You are responsible for obtaining and reading the required texts listed below, which are available at the USC Bookstore. Please be sure to obtain these books well ahead of the sessions in which we will discuss them. These books are also available on the course reserve list at Leavey Library.

1. Ding Ling and Lu Xun. *The Power of Weakness: Stories of the Chinese Revolution*. New York: The Feminist Press, 2007. (ISBN-13: 978-1558615489).
2. Eileen Chang. *Lust, Caution: The Story*. (Translated and with a Foreword by Julia Lovell). New York: Anchor Books, 2007. (ISBN-13: 978-0307387448).
3. **Recommended:** Joseph Lau and Howard Goldblatt, eds. *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* (Second Edition). New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. (ISBN-13: 9780231138413).

BLACKBOARD AS A RESOURCE / COURSE RESERVE LIST

In this course, Blackboard will be a vital means of communication and an important research tool. Required journal articles and book chapters listed in the syllabus will be made available on the Blackboard course web site, for you to download and read before our class meetings. For every class session, I will also upload PowerPoint slides, information about the topic at hand, additional suggested primary texts and secondary readings, as well as a list of important concepts to know.

The books from which the required readings are taken and all films listed on the syllabus will be available on course reserve at Leavey Library. Other useful books will also be available on course reserve, and a complete list of all reserve materials will be posted on Blackboard.

NOTE ON READINGS AND FILMS

When a film is assigned, it is your responsibility to view the film prior to the class meeting. Some films will be made available via a link on Blackboard. Others will be available at Leavey Library course reserves. We may view only brief excerpts of the films during our in-class discussions. You should approach films the same way as you would a literary text. Take your time to view a film and jot down any ideas or questions that may come to mind.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND PLAGIARISM POLICY

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with USC’s plagiarism policy in *SCampus* in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>. Discrimination, sexual assault and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the Department of Public Safety <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 offers confidential support and the Sexual Assault Resource Center web page sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international students. The Office of Disability Services and Program http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus not feasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND LECTURES

January 13: Introduction to the Course

January 15: Traditional Chinese Beliefs and Social Structure: Confucianism and Daoism

Tao Jie, "Introduction" in Tao Jie. *Holding Up Half the Sky: Chinese Women Past, Present, and Future*. xxi-xxxvi (focus on xxi-xxx).

Reading on Daoism; Reading on Confucian Virtues and Social Order (on Blackboard)

***** January 20: Martin Luther King Day! No Class! *****

January 22: Women's Education in Traditional China

Sources of Chinese Tradition. 819-840.

January 27: The Birth of Chinese Feminism

Liu, Karl and Ko, eds. *The Birth of Chinese Feminism*. 27-48.

Liang Qichao, "On Women's Education," 186-204.

January 29: On the Question of Women's Liberation

Amy Dooling, "Introduction: Writing Women in Modern China" in *Writing Women in Modern China*. 1-38 (focus on 18-23).

He-Yin Zhen, "On the Question of Women's Liberation," 50-71.

Chen Xiefen, "Crisis in the Women's World," 79-87.

February 3: Qiu Jin: China's First Feminist

Yan Haiping, "Qiu Jin and Her Imaginary," 33-68.

Qiu Jin, Preface to *Stones of the Jingwei Bird*. 39-46.

Film: *Autumn Gem: The True Story of China's First Feminist*.

February 5: Constructing the "New Woman" in May Fourth: Lu Xun

Christina Gilmartin, "Introduction: May Fourth and Women's Emancipation," ix-xxv.

Lu Xun, "New Year's Sacrifice" and "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home," 27-53 and 84-92.

Film: *New Year's Sacrifice* by Sang Hu (1956, 94 minutes).

February 10: Constructing the "New Woman" in May Fourth: Ding Ling's Early Texts

Tani Barlow, "Introduction" in Barlow, ed. *I, Myself Am a Woman*. 1-45.

Ding Ling, "The Diary of Miss Sophia" in *I, Myself Am a Woman*. 49-81.

February 12: Ding Ling's National Defense Stories

Tani E. Barlow, "Introduction" in *The Power of Weakness: Stories of the Chinese Revolution*. 1-26.

Ding Ling, "New Faith" in *The Power of Weakness*. 54-83.

***** First Response Paper Due on Friday, February 14! Submit on Blackboard via Turn-it-in.*****

***** February 17: President's Day! No Class! *****

February 19: Ding Ling's Later Writings

Tani Barlow, "Thoughts on March 8' and the Literary Question of Funü" in *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, 219-230.

Ding Ling, "Thoughts on March 8" in *The Power of Weakness*. 93-100.

February 24: Tracing Subjectivities: Negotiating Gender, Body and Space

Ling Shuhua, "Intoxicated" and "Once Upon a Time" in *Writing Women in Modern China*. 175-195.

Bing Xin, "Loneliness" in *One Half of the Sky: Stories from Contemporary Women Writers of China*. 1-14.

February 26: The New Woman on Screen: 1930's Chinese Cinema and Ruan Lingyu

Kristine Harris, "The Goddess: Fallen Woman of Shanghai" in Chris Berry, ed. *Chinese Films in Focus II*. 128-136.

Kristine Harris, "The New Woman: Image, Subject and Dissent in 1930's Shanghai Film Culture."

Films: *The Goddess* by Wu Yonggang (1934, 85 minutes) and *New Women* by Cai Chusheng (1935, 106 minutes).

March 2: Women, the Literary Left and the Ideology of Socialism

Chen Duxiu, "The Woman Question and Socialism" in *Women in Republican China*. 213-217.

Bai Wei, "Third-Class Hospital Ward" in *Writing Women in Modern China: The Revolutionary Years, 1936-1976*. 56-69.

Hu Lanqi, "In a German Women's Prison" in *ibid.* 70-80.

March 4: Reportage and Beyond: Xiao Hong

Xiao Hong, "Abandoned Child" and "A Sleepless Night" in *Writing Women in Modern China*. 343-366.

Xiao Hong, "Hands" in Goldblatt, transl. *The Dyer's Daughter: Selected Stories of Xiao Hong*. 71-117.

Optional Film: *Falling Flowers* by Huo Jianqi (2013, 120 minutes).

March 9: Shanghai Modern: The Erotic, the Fantastic, and the Uncanny in Shi Zhecun's Experimental Stories

Leo Ou-fan Lee, "The Erotic, The Fantastic and the Uncanny: Shi Zhecun's Experimental Stories" in Lee. *Shanghai Modern*. 153-189.

Shi Zhecun, "One Evening in the Rainy Season" in *CAMCL*. 116-124.

Shi Zhecun, "Devil's Road" in *One Rainy Evening*. 56-80.

Film: *Song at Midnight* by Ma-Xu Weibang (1937, 113 minutes).

March 11: Mu Shiying: The Dance Hall and The City

Andrew David Field, "Mu Shiying, An Appreciation of His Life, Times and Works" in *Mu Shiying: China's Lost Modernist* xv-lii.

Mu Shiying, "The Man Who Was Treated as a Plaything" and "Shanghai Foxtrott," 1-34 and 103-118.

***** Midterm Paper Due on Friday, March 13. Submit on Blackboard via Turn-it-in. *****

***** March 15-22: Happy Spring Recess!! *****

March 23: Urban Cosmopolitanism: Shanghai Women Writers During and After the War

Leo Lee, "Shanghai Cosmopolitanism" in Lee. *Shanghai Modern*. 307-323.

Su Qing, "Waves" in *Writing Women in Modern China: The Revolutionary Years*. 178-206.

Lu Xiaoman, "The Imperial Hotel" in *ibid.* 223-246.

March 25: Eileen Chang I: Writing of One's Own

Nicole Huang, "Introduction" in Jones, transl. *Written on Water: Eileen Chang*. ix-xxvii.

Eileen Chang, "Writing of One's Own" and "Speaking of Women" in *Written on Water*. 15-22 and 81-92.

Eileen Chang, "Sealed Off" in *CAMCL*. 174-183.

***** Research Paper Proposals Due on Friday, March 27 / Please send to me via e-mail at gfiss@usc.edu *****

March 30: Eileen Chang II: Lust, Caution

Julia Lovell, "Foreword." 1-2.

Eileen Chang, *Lust, Caution*. 3-57.

Ang Lee, "Afterword" in *Lust, Caution*. 59-61.

James Schamus, "Why did she do it?" in *Lust, Caution*. 63-68.

Film: *Lust, Caution* by Ang Lee (2007, 157 minutes).

April 1: Repositioning the Self Through Autobiography

Terry Siu-Han Yip, "Women's Self-Identity and Gender Relations in Twentieth Century Chinese Fiction" in Tam and Yip, eds. *Gender, Discourse and Self in Literature*. 1-18.

Xie Bingying, "Midpoint of an Ordinary Life" in *ibid.* 151-166.

April 6: Writing in the First Person: Jumping Through Hoops

Jing Wang, "Introduction" in Wang. *Jumping Through Hoops: Autobiographical Stories by Modern Chinese Women Writers*. 1-24.

Bai Wei, "Jumping Through Hoops" in *ibid.* 43-73.

Optional Film: *Hibiscus Town* by Xie Jin (1986, 164 minutes).

April 8: The Cultural Revolution and Literary Memory: Chen Ruoxi

Perry Link, "Introduction" in Goldblatt, ed. *The Execution of Mayor Yin and Other Stories from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*. ix-xxxii.

Chen Ruoxi, "The Execution of Mayor Yin" and "Jingjing's Birthday" in *ibid.* 3-61.

Film: *Farewell my Concubine* by Chen Kaige (1993, 171 minutes).

April 13: Post-Mao Avant-Garde Women Writers and The Liberation of the Feminine I: Zhang Jie

Rosemary Roberts, "Images of Women in the Fiction of Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin" in *The China Quarterly*, Dec. 1989, 800-813.

Zhang Jie, "The Boat I Steer: A Study in Perseverance" in Martin and Kinkley, eds. *Modern Chinese Writers: Self-Portrayals*. 118-122.

Zhang Jie, "Preface," "Love Must Not be Forgotten" in *Love Must Not Be Forgotten*. 1-15.

Film: *To Live* by Zhang Yimou (1994, 132 minutes).

April 15: Post-Mao Avant-Garde Women Writers and The Liberation of the Feminine II: Zhang Kangkang

Lai-Fong Leung, "In Search of Love and Self: The Image of Young Female Intellectuals in Post-Mao Women's Fiction" in *Modern Chinese Women Writers*. 135-151.

Zhang Kangkang, "The Right to Love" in *One Half of the Sky*. 51-81.

Optional Film: *Through Chinese Women's Eyes* by Mayfair Yang (1997, 52 minutes).

April 20: Fin-de-siècle Masters of the Lyrical: Wang Anyi

Wang Zheng, "Interview with Wang Anyi" in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, Vol. 4, No. ½, *Gender, Writing, Feminism, China* (Fall 1988).

Wang Anyi, "Needed: A Spirit of Courageous Self-Examination" and "Why I Write" in Arthur Sze, ed. *Chinese Writers on Writing*. 123-127 and 200-205.

Wang Anyi, "Granny" in *CAMCL*. 462-469.

***** Second Response Paper Due on Friday, April 24! Submit on Blackboard via Turn-it-in.*****

April 22: Women Poets in Post-Mao China: Zheng Min, Zhai Yongming and Zhang Ye

Lisa Lai-ming Wong, "Liberation of Femininity? Women's Poetry in Post-Mao China" in *Gender, Discourse and Self in Literature*. 91-108.

Zheng Min, "The Heart's Voice" and "The World of Heraclites: A Tree of Dialectics" in *Twentieth-Century Chinese Women's Poetry*. 14-23.

Zhai Yongming, "Black Night Consciousness" and "The Chrysanthemum Lantern is Floating Over Me" in Arthur Sze, ed. *Chinese Writers on Writing*. 157-164.

Zhang Ye, "Endurance is a Kind of Invisible Sacrifice," "Hope," "Old Maid: No. 2" and "Pearls" in *ibid.* 35-41.

April 27: Ambiguous Subjectivities: Reading Can Xue

Can Xue, "A Particular Sort of Story" in Arthur Sze, ed. *Chinese Writers on Writing*. 206-210.

Can Xue, "Dialogue in Heaven" in *Contemporary Chinese Women Writers*. 136-141.

Can Xue, "Raindrops in the Crevice between the Tiles" and "Soap Bubbles in the Dirty Water" in *Dialogues in Paradise*. 23-36.

Final Project Presentations

April 29: Sinophone Women Writers from Taiwan and Hong Kong

Li Ang, "Flower Season" in Carver and Chang, eds. *Bamboo Shoots After the Rain*. 125-133.

Shih Shuqing, "The Ritual of the Clay Idol" in *ibid.* 115-124.

Xi Xi, "Goatskin Raft – In Lieu of Preface" in Arthur Sze, ed. *Chinese Writers on Writing*. 211-213.

Xi Xi, "A Woman Like Me" in *Bamboo Shoots After the Rain*. 134-146.

Final Project Presentations

***** Final Research Paper Due on Friday May 8 via Turn-It-In *****