

## ASIA 2609W: Writing and Gender in Traditional China

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Time and Place: TBD Office Hours: TBD



### Course Description:

This course introduces major gender issues in pre-modern China (ca. 1<sup>st</sup> century CE-20<sup>th</sup> century CE) through reading literary texts. One part of the course focuses on women writers in traditional China, and another part on the writings on gender relations mostly by male authors. Readings cover most genres of Chinese literature from poetry and prose to drama and fiction, supplemented by visual materials.

Through reading these texts, you will learn about women's life, roles, and thoughts in traditional China. More importantly, you will think critically about such issues as gender inequality, body and cross-dressing, gender and religion, and above all, writing as media for gender expression and representation. This course will also help you understand gender issues in today's world, both in China and elsewhere.

This is an intensive writing seminar. Writing assignments include weekly online-posting, one response essay, and two papers. We will discuss and practice specific skills for critical writing on Chinese literature and literary analysis in general. All readings are in English. Class is taught in English. It is recommended that you take a survey course on pre-modern Chinese literature or history prior to taking this course. If you are not sure whether this course fits you, please consult me.

### **Required Texts:**

- 1) Kang-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy, eds., *Women Writers of Traditional China* (Stanford University Press, 1999).
- 2) Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, eds., *The Red Brush* (Harvard University, 2004).
- 3) *Li Ch'ing-chao: Complete Poems*, translated by Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung.
- 4) *Daughters of Emptiness: Poems of Chinese Buddhist Nuns*, translated and annotated by Beata Grant (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003).
- 5) Additional readings will be made available in electronic format.

### **Course Requirements:**

#### Writing Requirements

- 1) Papers: Written requirements include three papers. The first paper (4-5 pages) is one of close reading on an assigned topic. The second paper (4-5 pages) requires both close reading of some primary text(s) and reference to secondary studies (I'll provide topics and materials). The final paper (10-12 pages) should be a research paper, in which you discuss an issue in some primary text(s) and engage with some secondary studies.

Revolving around these three papers, we will have a series of writing exercises and workshops including a special session on writing course papers, in-class peer review exercises, and a field trip to the library. You are required to visit the Writing Studio at least once during the semester to discuss some of your writings.

Papers will be graded on originality, compelling argumentation, and clarity of style. You are allowed to revise your final paper based on my comments on your draft. The final grade of the paper will be based on the revised version. Late papers are NOT accepted. If you need an extension, please contact me in advance. Extensions are given with higher expectations.

- 2) Online Posting: Please submit a post about the readings in the discussion section on Blackboard at least once a week (I encourage you to develop a habit and write a post for every class meeting). Your post must be one of three types: a question about some problem in the primary reading (specify page numbers) and a tentative answer; a clarification question about difficult or confusing parts of the primary texts (explain why it's difficult); response to other students' posts. I will provide sample post at first class meeting.

## Other Requirements

- 1) Class Participation; All weekly readings are due before class. We will frequently refer to the texts in class, especially during the discussion, so you should bring the readings to class, in electronic or printed forms. Active participation in class discussion is very important. Please come to class with questions and opinions about the readings.
- 2) Presentation: Early in the semester, please sign up on Blackboard for a presentation.
- 3) Absent Policy: You are allowed two unexcused absences for the semester. Beyond that, you will need to contact me in advance and provide verifiable excuses for absence to avoid losing grade.
- 4) Computer Policy: Electronic devices (computers and phones) are allowed in class ONLY for reading and note taking. Non-class-related activities such as texting and web-surfing are prohibited.

NB: Instead of the essay and papers, graduate and professional school students will write a 4-5-page paper proposal and a 20-25-page research paper. There will also be additional secondary readings based on your specific interests. All the other requirements and grading scheme apply to graduate students.

### **Grading:**

In-class participation: 20%  
Presentation: 10%  
Online Posting: 15%  
First Paper: 15%  
Second paper: 15%  
Final Paper: 25%

**Honor Code:** The Vanderbilt Honor Code governs all work done in this class. For more information, visit <http://www.owen.vanderbilt.edu/about-us/honor-code.cfm>

**Schedule and Readings** (readings with \* are optional)

First Meeting: About the course and the basics of writing

## **Part I Conditions for Gender and Gendered Writing**

### **Week 1 Foundations of Gender Distinction**

First Meeting: *Yinyang*— Philosophical foundations of gender distinction  
Selections from Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China*

Second Meeting: *Nannü*---The Confucian Idea of Gender distinction  
Selections from Theodore de Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*

## **Week 2 Materials for writing**

First Meeting: Writings on walls, fans, leaves, and silk  
Su Hui's palindrome of brocade, in Idema and Grant, 127-131;  
Writing on the wall: "Kuaji nuji", in Chang and Saussy, 178-179, 82-83, 200-202;  
\* Judith T. Zeitlin, "Disappearing Verses: Writing on Walls and Anxieties of Loss," in *Writing and Materiality in China*.

Second Meeting: **Special session on critical writing, with guest discussant from the Writing Studio**

## **Part II Writing Women in Family and Society**

### **Week 3 Women in Family and Court (1)**

First Meeting: *Nü shu* (Women's Script)  
"In a Script of Their Own", In Idema and Grant, 543-566;  
\* Wilt L. Idema, "Introduction," in *Heroines of Jiangyong: Chinese Ballads in Women's Script*.  
Writing Activity: Discussion on how to do close reading

Second Meeting: Women as family teachers  
"Wang Duan" in Idema and Grant, 620-629;  
Huang Yuanjie and Wang Duanshu, in Chang and Saussy.  
\* Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (1994), Chapter 3.

### **Week 4 Women in Family and Court (2)**

First Meeting: Widow poets  
Chang and Saussy, 302-313 (Gu Ruopu), 314-320 (Shang Jinglan);  
"Gu Ruopu," "A Loyalist Widow: Shang Jinglan", in Idema and Grant, 108-111, 414-421; 426-431;  
\* Kang-i Sun Chang, "The Literary Voice of Widow Poets in the Ming and Qing," in *Ming Qing Studies* 2012.  
Writing Activity: peer review of paper drafts [focus on close reading]

Second Meeting: The Scholar Ban Zhao and Empress Wu Zetian

“Ban Zhao”, “Thoughts upon Reading the ‘Biography of Ban Zhao,’” in Idema and Grant, 17-42, 657-658.

Selected poems by Wu Zetian

\* Lee, Lin-Lee. "Inventing familial agency from powerlessness: Ban Zhao's lessons for women." *Western Journal of Communication* 73.1 (2009): 47-66.

\* Jay, Jennifer W. "Imagining Matriarchy: "Kingdoms of Women" in Tang China." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1996): 220-229.

**First paper due**

## **Week 5 Women Writer’s Poetry Clubs**

First Meeting: The Banana Garden Poetry Club

“Chai Jingyi”, “Zhu Rouze”, “Lin Yining”, “Qian Fenglun”, etc., in Idema and Grant, 471-495;

\* Robertson, Maureen. "Voicing the Feminine: Constructions of the Gendered Subject in Lyric Poetry by Women of Medieval and Late Imperial China." *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (1992): 63-110.

Second Meeting: Yuan Mei’s Female Disciples

Chang and Saussy, 485-487 (Jin Yi), 477-484 (Xi Peilan), 487-495 (Dai Langying, Qu Bingyun, Gui Maoyi), 703-706 (Luo Qilan), 777-781 (Yuan Mei on Jin Yi).

\* Arthur Waley, *Yuan Mei: Eighteenth Century Chinese Poet* (1956; rpt. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970).

## **Week 6 Buddhist Nuns**

First Meeting: Poems of Buddhist nuns

*Daughters of Emptiness: Poems of Chinese Buddhist Nuns*, translated and annotated by Grant.

“Buddhist Nuns,” in Idema and Grant, 153-158.

Second Meeting: Poems of Buddhist nuns (after 1600)

*Daughters of Emptiness*, 60-100.

\* Selection from Kathryn Ann Tsai, ed. *Lives of the Nuns: Biographies of Chinese Buddhist Nuns from the Fourth to Sixth Centuries: a Translation of the Pi-ch‘iu-ni Chuan*. University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

## **Week 7 Courtesans (1)**

First Meeting: Courtesan in Tang capital

“Li Wa zhuan” (The Tale of Li Wa)

\* Dudbridge, Glen, and Hsing-chien Pai. *The tale of Li Wa: Study and critical edition of a Chinese story from the ninth century*. Ithaca Press, 1983.

Second Meeting: Courtesans in Ming Fiction

“The Oil Peddler Courts the Courtesan,” in *Traditional Chinese Stories*.

## **Week 8 Courtesans (2)**

First Meeting: Liu Rushi as Courtesan, Writer, Lover, and Wife

“Liu Shih”, in *Idema and Grant*, 374-382.

\* “Twenty Songs by Liu Shih”, in Kang-I Sun Chang, *The Late-Ming Poet Ch’en Tzu-Lung*, 123-126, 19-37;

Second Meeting: Review and Discussion

Writing Activity: Discussion on how to make an argument and structure a paper

## **Part III Writing Gender Relations**

### **Week 9 Types of Romance**

First Meeting: The male invention of a feminine ideal

“An Unhappy Marriage: Zhu Shuzhen,” in *Idema and Grant*, 244-256.

“Lyrics on flower Petals: Shuangqing,” in *Idema and Grant*, 520-541.

\* “Chu Shu-chen,” “Ho Shuang-ch’ing,” in Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, *Women Poets of China*, 45-48, 66-67.

Second Meeting: The alien beauty

Selected Tang Tales

Selections from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*

\* Rania Huntington, “Introduction,” in *Alien kind: foxes and late imperial Chinese narrative* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2003).

Writing Activity: peer review of paper drafts [focus on argument and structure]

### **Week 10 Foot-Binding**

First Meeting: Foot-binding and sexuality

Selected primary sources on foot-binding.

\* Dorothy Ko, *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet* (Univ. of California, Berkeley, 2001).

**Second paper due**

Second Meeting: The Chinese Cinderella

“Ye Xian,” in *Youyang zazu* (Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang)

\* Arthur Waley, “The Chinese Cinderella Story,” *Folklore* 58.1 (1947): 226-238.

### **Week 11 Cross-dressing**

First Meeting: Cross-dressing on Stage

Selections from Xu Wei’s plays in *The Four Cries of the Gibbon*

\* Shiamin Kwa, *Strange Eventful Histories: Identity, Performance, and Xu Wei's 'Four Cries of a Gibbon'*, Harvard University Asia Center, 2012.

#### Second Meeting: The Ye Sisters

Ye Xiaowan's play *Dream of the Mandarin Ducks*

\* Entries on the Ye sisters in Lily Xiao Hong Lee, and Sue Wiles, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: Tang Through Ming, 618-1644*, ME Sharpe, 2014, 554-60.

Writing Activity: Field trip to library; getting familiar with basic research tools;

#### Week 12 Homosexuality

##### First Meeting: Male Homosexuality

Pu Songling, "The Human Freak"

Li Yu, "A Virtuous Male Mother Moves Three Times for His Son's Education"

##### Second Meeting: Female Homosexuality

Li Yu, "Cherishing a Fragrant Companion"

Writing Activity: In-class group discussion of final paper proposal

#### Week 13 Women and National Trauma

##### First Meeting: The War Experiences of a Female Lyricist

*Li Ch'ing-chao: Complete Poems*, translated by Rexroth and Chung.

\* Ronald Egan, "Why Didn't Zhao Mingcheng Send Letters to His Wife, Li Qingzhao, When He Was Away?"

##### Second Meeting: Women and Dynastic Transition

"Ming Loyalist: Wang Duanshu", "Exiled to Manchuria: Xu Can", in Idema and Grant.

\* Li, Wai-ye. "Heroic transformations: Women and national trauma in early Qing literature." *Harvard journal of Asiatic studies* (1999): 363-443.

#### Week 14 Traditional Women, Modern Women

##### First Meeting: The woman poet Qiu Jin (1875-1907) as a revolutionary

Chang and Saussy, 632-657;

"The Beheaded Feminist: Qiu Jin", in Idema and Grant, 765-808.

##### Second Meeting: Criticizing the (Invented?) Gender Tradition

Lu Xun, "Zhufu" (New Year's Sacrifice)

**Final paper first draft due**

#### Week 15

Review and Discussion [paper critique]

**Final paper revised version due**

(class schedule and readings are subject to change)