

## **CHES5101 Selected Themes on Gender in China: Prostitution and Chinese Modernity**

2018-19, Term 2, Fridays 13:30 - 16:15  
 WMY 402 (Wu Ho Man Yuen Building)

**Teacher:** Professor Yau Ching

**Teaching Assistant:**

### **Course Description**

This seminar course examines the representation of prostitution in China and its complex relations with notions of modernity from late Qing through the first half of the twentieth century. The figure of the artistic elite courtesan—typically idealized and romanticized—has been popular in classical Chinese literature but growing female presence in leisure establishments in early 20th century China transgressed orthodox mores in many ways. The images of the Chinese “New Woman”/ *xin nǚxing* and its complementary “fallen woman” were productive sites for generating representation, which we will study in context and as parts of a web of historical discourses informing and informed by discussion of regulation of women’s bodies; of their sexuality, mobility and consumption. Sexual discourses were inseparable from a larger discussion about what kinds of sex/gender arrangements characterize the modernity aspired to by a certain population at given times. We will examine primary materials including guide books, periodicals, news stories, films, alongside discursive works in English, to foster understanding of how the early Chinese working women have served as central figures in shaping China’s as well as colonial senses of modernity.

In most if not all urban areas of early modern China, prostitution was the largest female profession; its regulation highlighted the intricate relations between Confucian moralism, state control, elitist feminist discourses, street/leisure economy and popular needs. This course investigates the ways in which the management of cities presented a major challenge to the Chinese state, as reformers struggled to promote social order through tightening control of brothels and theatres and introducing public health programs. Yet, sex as work and its crossovers with pleasure/service sectors; its professionalized agents including waitresses, songstresses, sing-song girls, drinkers, musicians, escorts, beauticians, and concubines; their operations, virtues, mannerism, different ethnicities catering for different populations—persisted as popular subjects for voyeurism, consumption and engagement. The figure of the Chinese prostitute in media culture epitomized many ambiguities and contradictions in having signaled feudalism, class and gender inequalities, disease, female agency, Western imperialism and the Oriental Other—issues still relevant today. While most scholarly research has focused on the Jiangnan area, this course seeks a more regionally diverse perspective in introducing studies on various parts of China, including Chengdu and Pearl River Delta for example, whereas Shanghai remains a major site of reference. Students are expected to be able to spend outside class time in conducting independent research on historical archival materials. Although this course has no formal prerequisites, it assumes a basic knowledge of Chinese history. This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class.

### **Learning Outcomes**

After completing the course, students should:

- draw connections between personal observations, dominant preconceptions, archival materials and existing scholarship;
- develop a capacity to engage in sensible and informed dialogue on issues of gender and sexuality with people from diverse backgrounds and with opinions different from your own;
- possess preliminary understanding of China’s evolving relations to its early generations of working women mediated through print and cinema;
- cultivate an informed sensitivity towards cultural politics around the historically popular but controversial subject of “public/working women”;
- have a basic grasp of how issues of state control and sexuality in modern China (re)produce hierarchies of gender, work, class and ethnicity with continuing relevance.

### Learning Activities

Students are expected to come to the seminars on time having completed the assigned readings and screenings, and fully prepared to participate in the discussions. Attendance and class participation for the entire semester count for 20% of your final grade. Class participation is an extremely important part of this course and if you consistently make very insightful contributions to class discussions, you may be eligible for bonus points in your final grade.

Our classroom should be an inclusive place where you feel comfortable, safe and free to express your opinions in a respectful manner. Students are likely to hold a range of different views on the topics covered in the course. If anyone feels at all uncomfortable about the tone of class discussions, I encourage you to approach me confidentially to express your concerns.

Each student is required to give two 15-20 minute, in-class presentations of key themes in the week's assigned reading, each worth 20% of your final grade. Your time management skills in presentation will also be evaluated.

You will write one 2,800-3,500 word final paper, which is due 2 hours before class time in week 12 (11:30am on 29/3). Detailed criteria for this paper will be announced by week 9. A hard copy of the paper, together with a Veriguide receipt, should be put in the teaching assistant's mailbox on the 11th floor of the Yasumoto International Academic Park. Students should also submit a soft copy to the Veriguide system and include the Veriguide receipt on the hard copy they submit to the teaching assistant. See: [https://services.veriguide.org/academic/login\\_CUHK.jspx](https://services.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx). This paper will be evaluated on the quality and originality of your argument, how well you demonstrate concepts learned in the class to support your argument, and the clarity of your writing.

You are required to hand in a proposal of your final paper (2-3 pages) during the seminar in week 11. This paper proposal should be in hard copy and presented to class (10-15 min). It should include your major research question(s), methodology, and key references.

### Assessment Scheme

Attendance and class participation	20%
Individual presentations of readings	40%
Paper proposal presentation	10%
Final paper	30%

*Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of the policies, regulations and procedures.*

### Recommended General Reading

Gail Hershatter, "State of the Field: Women in China's Long Twentieth Century," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (Nov., 2004), pp. 991-1065.

Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Matthew Sommers, *Polyandry and Wife-Selling in Qing Dynasty China*. Berkeley and LA: University of California Press, 2015.

### Tentative Schedule (subject to change according to class needs)

#### Week 1 (11/1) Introduction

Class expectations. Presentation assignments.

Lu Xun, "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?" In Hua R. Lan and Vanessa Fong (eds.), *Women in Republican China: A Sourcebook*, pp. 176-181.

Screening: *New Women* (Cai Chusheng, 1935)

#### Week 2 (18/1) The New ("Fallen") Woman

Lydia H. Liu, Rebecca E. Karl and Dorothy Ko (eds). *The Birth of Chinese Feminism: Essential Texts in Transnational Theory*, 2013.

He-Yin Zhen, "On the Question of Women's Liberation", pp. 51-71.

He-Yin Zhen, "On the Question of Women's Labor", pp. 72-91.

Gail Hershatter, "Introduction: Knowing and Remembering." *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. Berkeley and LA: University of California Press, 1999, pp. 3-33.

### Week 3 (25/1) Culture

Paola Zamperini, "Chapter One Paradise Lost: The Fantastic Childhood of a Courtesan to Be." *Lost Bodies: Prostitution and Masculinity in Chinese Fiction*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010, pp. 21-52.

Shen Fu (1809) "Chapter 4." *Six Records of a Floating Life*. Trans. Leonard Pratt and Chiang Su-Hui. Penguin, 1983.

Recommended:

Yip Hon Ming, "Between Drawing and Writing: Prostitutes in the Dianshizhai Pictorial." In Clara Wing-chung Ho, ed. *Overt and Covert Treasures: Essays on the Sources for Chinese Women's History*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2012, pp. 462-487.

### Week 4 (1/2) Cities

Peter. J. Carroll, "The place of prostitution in early twentieth century Suzhou," *Urban History* Vol. 38 Special Issue 03 (December 2011), pp 413 - 436.

Christian Henriot, "Houses of Prostitution in the Urban Space," *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849-1949*. Trans. Noel Castolino. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 201-225.

Recommended:

Wang Di, "The Struggle for the Street," *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Commoners, and Local Politics*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford, 2003, pp. 163-205.

### Week 5 (8/2) Lunar New Year. NO CLASS.

Screening outside class:

*In the Face of Demolition* (Lee Tit, 1953): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fi9GtAmfRwo>

### Week 6 (15/2) The Working Girl

Angelina Y. Chin, "Labor Stratification and Gendered Subjectivities in the Service Industries of South China in the 1920s and 1930s: The Case of Nü Zhaodai." *Research on Women in Modern Chinese History* Vol. 14 (Dec 2006), pp. 125-178.

Andrew David Field, "Important Attractions: Cabaret Hostesses and the Popularization of Cabaret Culture in Chinese Society." *Shanghai's Dancing World: Cabaret Culture and Urban Politics, 1919-1954*. Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2010, pp. 119-152.

Recommended:

Angelina Chin, "Conclusion: Lower-Class Women, 'Emancipation,' and Urban Citizenship." *Bound to Emancipate: Working Women and Urban Citizenship in Early Twentieth-Century China and Hong Kong*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012, pp. 239-247.

### Week 7 (22/2) Class

Gail Hershatter, "Chapter 7: Trafficking." *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. Berkeley and LA: University of California Press, 1999, pp. 181-202.

Johanna S. Ransmeier, "Introduction," *Sold People: Traffickers and Family Life in North China*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2017, pp. 1-23.

Recommended:

Kristin Stapleton, "Sedan-Chair Bearers, Beggars, Actors, and Prostitutes: The Worlds of the Urban Poor." *Fact in Fiction: 1920s China and Ba Jin's Family*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016, pp. 111-130.

### Week 8 (1/3) Ethnicity

Eileen P. Scully, "Prostitution as Privilege: The 'American Girl' of Treaty-Port Shanghai, 1860-1937." *The International History Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Dec., 1998), pp. 855-883.

Philip Howell, "Prostitution and racialised sexuality: the regulation of prostitution in Britain and the British Empire before the Contagious Diseases Acts." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2000, volume 18, pp. 321-339.

Recommended:

Roderick Moore, "Josephine Butler (1828-1906): Feminist, Christian And Libertarian," pp. 1-7. <http://www.libertarian.co.uk/lapubs/libhe/libhe010.pdf>

Josephine Butler (1870), "An Appeal to the People of England on the Recognition and Superintendence of Prostitution by Governments." In Sheila Jeffreys ed., *The Sexuality Debates*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1987, p. 111-150.

Week 9 (8/3) Disease

Gail Hershatter, "Chapter 9: Disease." *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*. Berkeley and LA: University of California Press, 1999, pp. 226-241.

Frank Dikötter, "'Civilization is syphilization': The Cultural Meanings of 'Disease.'" *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China: Medical Science and the Construction of Sexual Identities in the Early Republican Period*. Hong Kong University Press, 1995, pp. 122-145.

Week 10 (15/3) Media and Memory

Screenings: *The Amorous Lotus Pan* (Li Han-hsiang, 1963)  
*The World of Suzie Wong* (Richard Quine, 1960)

Recommended:

Norman Miners, "The State Regulation of Prostitution, 1857 to 1941," *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule, 1912-1941*. Hong Kong: Oxford, 1987, pp. 191-206.

Carl T. Smith, "Ng Akew, one of Hong Kong's 'Protected Women.'" *A Sense of History: Studies in the Social and Urban History of Hong Kong*, Hong Kong Educational Publishing Co., 1995, pp. 267-275.

Week 11 (22/3)

Proposal presentations and discussion.

Week 12 (29/3) Contemporary Hong Kong

Talks by visiting professionals.

Term paper due 2 hours before class. **No extensions allowed. Plagiarism is fatal.**

Week 13 (5/4)

Ching Ming. NO CLASS.

Week 14 (12/4)

Discussions and conclusions.