

HIEA 167/267: TOPICS IN MODERN CHINESE HISTORY CHINESE FAMILY HISTORY

Time: Monday 1:00 – 3:50

Place: H&SS 3086

Instructor: Joseph W. Esherick

Office: 3070 H&SS

Hours: Monday 10-12 and by appointment

Purpose of course: The primary purpose of this course is to give you an opportunity to read some good (and interesting) books related to the Chinese family, to analyze and comment on them, and to write a paper discussing some aspect of Chinese family history. (In a past version of this course, many students researched their own family background, and that worked very well.) We will be reading a wide variety of books: autobiographical works, novels, anthropological studies, and works of historical analysis. All relate in some way to life in a Chinese family, and we will want to pay attention to how Chinese families work – and how they have changed over time. We are all familiar with clichés about the strength of the Chinese family, or the Chinese family as the basis of Chinese society. Like all clichés, they contain important elements of truth – but they also greatly oversimplify matters. More importantly, they often tend to suggest that the Chinese family was some unchanging essential nucleus of Chinese society. That is a notion we will want to examine closely – for history tells us that the world is constantly in flux, and it would be surprising if the Chinese family were not changing along with the rest of the world.

While this is a Chinese history course, I have not insisted on any formal background in Chinese history, though enrollment is limited and **by consent of instructor** and I will give priority to students with some course background in Chinese history, Chinese Studies majors and History majors. Inevitably, however, we will be referring to different dynasties, periods and key events in Chinese history and it would be to your advantage to be familiar with these things. Thus, if any admitted students have not taken any courses on Chinese history, they are encouraged to at least get a textbook that you can refer to and look things up in, and if you have time, give a quick read to the sections relating to the modern era (say 1700 to the present).

Course Requirements: (1) Introductions of the readings. One student (to be assigned in the first meeting of class) will be primarily responsible for introducing the discussion of each book. You should say something about the author, about the nature of the study and its sources, and its main point or argument. You should also prepare a few (perhaps 3-4) questions that you think are worth discussing. (2) Two book reviews. You may select the books from your readings. The first review will be due in class in the fourth week of class; the second will be due in the seventh week. Book reviews should be 3-5 double-spaced pages in length. (3) Final paper. This may be on any topic you choose within the field of family history, and as noted above many students in the past have done oral history interviews of their older relatives and written very interesting papers. You are not expected to do much (if any) extra reading. There will already be a fair amount of reading in this course. Sometime in the seventh or eighth week of class, you should come to see me in office hours to discuss your topic and how you should approach it. Final papers should be 10-15 pages in length and include full, proper footnoting and bibliographic references. Final papers are due Friday, June 3, by 5:00 p.m. During exam week, you will give presentations to share your findings with your fellow students.

Readings: The following books are available for purchase at Groundworks Books:

Marjery Wolf, *The House of Lim*

Ba Jin, *Family*

Ida Pruitt, *Daughter of Han*

Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*

Yue Daiyuan & Carolyn Wakeman, *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Chinese Revolutionary Woman*

Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century*

The following out-of-print or hardbound books are available on Reserve in Geisel Library:

Frank Ching, *Ancestors: 900 Years in the Life of a Chinese Family*

Joanna Meskill, *A Chinese Pioneer Family*

Jon Saari, *Legacies of Childhood: Growing Up Chinese in a Time of Crisis*

Syllabus and Reading Schedule

Week 1 (March 28): Introduction and Background

In class, read selections from Olga Lang, *Chinese Family and Society* (pp. 54-56) and Francis Hsu, *Americans and Chinese* on differences between Chinese and American families (pp. 72-87). Discuss the ideas – and the clichés.

Week 2 (April 4): An anthropologist's view of a Chinese family in Taiwan (1950s)

Marjery Wolf, *The House of Lim*

Week 3 (April 11): A Chinese novelist's view (1920s)

Ba Jin, *Family*

Week 4 (April 18): Extended family and lineage.

James Watson, "Lineage...?" *China Quarterly* (all read)

One of the following:

Frank Ching, *Ancestors: 900 Years in the Life of a Chinese Family*

Joanna Meskill, *A Chinese Pioneer Family*

Week 5 (April 25): Women in the late imperial era family.

Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century*

Week 6 (May 2): Peasant and working families.

Ida Pruitt, *Daughter of Han*

or

Marjery Wolf, *Women and Family in Rural Taiwan*

Week 7 (May 9): The **changing family** of 20th century China.

Olga Lang, *Chinese Family and Society*

or

Jon Saari, *Legacies of Childhood: Growing Up Chinese in a Time of Crisis*

Week 8 (May 16): Three-generations of a **modern family**

Jung Chang, *Wild Swans*

Week 9 (May 23): A family story from **contemporary China**

Yue Daiyuan & Carolyn Wakeman, *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Chinese Revolutionary Woman*

Week 10 (May 30): Memorial Day (no class)

Exam Week: TBA. Presentation of Final Papers.

Other readings on the Chinese Family

Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*

Hugh D.R. Baker, *Chinese Family and Kinship* (New York: 1979)

Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung* (New York: 1966)

Marion J. Levy, Jr. *The Family Revolution in Modern China* (New York: 1968)

Francis L. K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestors' Shadow: Kinship Personality and Social Mobility in Village China* (Garden City: 1948/1966)

Janice Stockard, *Daughters of the Canton Delta*

Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro, *Son of a Revolutionary*