GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY EAST ASIA

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First offered as an ExEAS course at Columbia University in Fall 2002

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Gender structures the situation of women and men in all societies, yet varies in shape and dynamics. The study of gender in contemporary East Asia provides a unique opportunity to explore differences in the articulation of gender between countries and regions, as well as compare and critically examine existing conceptualizations of gender. Going beyond dichotomies of East and West, traditional and modern, this course will examine gender issues from a theoretically informed and comparative perspective. In discussing different conceptualizations of feminism, gendered effects of economic change, women’s relationship to politics and the state, local and global processes of cultural production, and historical and transnational contexts which shape gender relations, the course will provide insight into the situation of women in contemporary East Asia, as well as extend our understanding of the dynamics of gender in the contemporary world.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Coursepack
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Midterm and final take-home exams
Topics for the two exams will be distributed in class two weeks prior to the due date. In your essay, you will be asked to discuss particular issues raised by the assigned readings and class discussion so far. The essay should be no more than five pages long.

Film reviews:
You are required to write critical reviews of two of the three films we will watch during the semester. Your reviews should integrate relevant class materials and be no more than two pages long.

Final paper:
You should submit a one-page proposal with a bibliography, which outlines the major questions you intend to address in your paper. The final paper should be fifteen to twenty pages long.

Class participation and web-memos:
You should read the assigned materials in time for class and actively participate in class discussion. In addition, you should make at least one web-memo posting per week on the course website, in which you discuss the assigned class readings.

Evaluation:

Take-home exams: 30%
Film reviews: 10%
Final paper: 40%
Class participation and web-memos: 20%
CLASS SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON EAST ASIA

1. Introduction

2. Feminisms, East and West


3. Feminism in Japan


Recommended:


4. Democracy and women’s movements in South Korea

5. Feminism and Socialism
Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, “From Gender Erasure to Gender Difference: State feminism, Consumer Sexuality, and Women’s Public Sphere in China,” in Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (ed.), Spaces of their Own, pp. 35-67, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)
Li Xiaojiang, “With What Discourse Do We Reflect on Chinese Women? Thoughts on Transnational Feminism in China,” in Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (ed.), Spaces of their Own, pp. 261-277, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

6. Women and the Japanese labor market

7. The Japanese company
Thomas P. Rohlen, For Harmony and Strength (Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1974), Chapters 1& 3

8. Office Ladies: powerless subjects or agents of resistance?
Yuko Ogasawara, Office Ladies and Salaried Men, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Chapters 3-6, Conclusion
9. Men and marginalized masculinities in Japan


Recommended:


10. Economic growth, class and consumption in South Korea

Laura Nelson, Measured Excess: Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), Chapter 1-3


Recommended:


11. Patriotism and women’s consumption

Laura Nelson, Measured Excess: Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), Chapters 4-6

Recommended:


12. Redefining modernity


Lisa Rofel, Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China After Socialism, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), Introduction

13. Discourses of liberation
Lisa Rofel, Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China After Socialism, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), Chapters 1-3

14. Shifting meanings of authority
Lisa Rofel, Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China After Socialism, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), Chapters 4-6


15. Marriage, motherhood and femininity after socialism
Lisa Rofel, Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China After Socialism, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), Chapter 7, Coda


16. Midterm essay due

Film Screening: Through Chinese Women’s Eyes (1997), directed by Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (52 min).

WOMEN, POLITICS, AND EMPOWERMENT

17. Housewives and citizenship in Japan


18. Women and politics in Japan

19. Women, politics, and the One-Child Policy in China

Recommended:

GENDER, NATION, AND TRANSNATIONAL GENDER RELATIONS

20. War, memory, and the ‘Comfort Women’ issue

Habitual Sadness: Korean Comfort Women Today, directed by Byun Young-Joo (1999, 70 min)

21. Women, military bases, and international relations

22. Women and military bases in Okinawa

Recommended:

23. International migration and intermarriage

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

TRANSCENDING GENDERS AND BORDERS

24. Beyond ‘male’ and ‘female: Takarazuka theater
Screening of: Dream Girls, directed by Kim Longinotto and Jano Williams (1993, 50 mins.)
25. Fantasies of empowerment

Napier, Susan, *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke*, (New York, Palgrave, 2000), Chapters 1, 2, 10


26. Cross-border fantasies and desires

*Final essay due*
