

## **Topics in World History: Body Politics in Modern China**

Fall 2015  
26:510:543  
Tuesday, 5:30-8:10 pm  
Conklin 352

Instructor: Daniel Asen  
Office hours: Mondays, 4:00-5:00 pm and by appointment, Conklin 328  
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### **1. Course description**

From the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century notion of China as the “Sick Man of East Asia” to the opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games, the body has been integral to Chinese conceptions of nationalism, race and ethnicity, population, and power. China’s unequal engagements with industrializing Europe, United States, and Japan during the mid-late 1800s gave rise to new perceptions of the Chinese body as “pathological,” a potent symbol of national weakness which was connected to broader discourses of race and civilization. Over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, China’s drive to modernize has likewise involved a series of attempts to control and “improve” bodies by implementing a modern healthcare system, new regimes of physical training and sport, population control policies, and even eugenics. In the process, some traditional ideas about the body have been displaced while others – for example, Traditional Chinese Medicine – have been successfully adapted to modernity.

In this class, we will draw on methods and insights from the history and anthropology of the body to rethink core narratives of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese history and, more broadly, global history. Our readings and class discussions will touch on an eclectic set of concerns drawn from social and political history, history of science, technology, and medicine, and critical approaches to the study of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. This reading seminar will address questions of broad relevance for students who work in different regional fields and with varied thematic interests. Given that the “body politics” examined in this class have parallels in many other modern societies, students will be encouraged to think about comparative cases and transnational connections.

### **2. Goals of this course**

1. Modern Chinese history: The period which this course covers (roughly 1800-present) is one which saw profound changes in every aspect of Chinese history, whether politics, society, economy, culture, foreign relations, or science, technology, and medicine. It was a period which

saw the weakening and collapse of China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing (1644-1911), decades of internal political struggle, war, and unequal international relationships with the West and Japan, the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the turbulent Maoist period, and a no less transformative period of economic reform which was initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s. One of the goals of this class will be to explore modern Chinese history in the context of larger themes such as industrialization, imperialism and colonialism, revolution and reform, and globalization. We will also examine the impact of larger political, economic, and social shifts on patterns of everyday life and notions of social identity.

2. History of the body: The body is usually taken for granted as an unquestioned reference point for many dimensions of our social identity and lived reality. Yet, the meaning and experience of bodies – even our own – have been shaped by specific historical circumstances, particular ideas about personhood, health, and difference, and technologies which have made it possible for bodies to be identified, healed, and governed in particular ways. People who have lived in other times and places have had different understandings of the body and its social and cultural meanings. In addition, how bodies are perceived, disciplined, and healed have been crucial questions in the new patterns of global interaction, exchange, and conflict which have defined the modern era. Another goal of this class will be to examine how scholars have studied the history of the body and, more broadly, what the history of the body can tell us about the modern condition as it has affected China and the rest of the world.

3. Active and critical reading of scholarly monographs and articles: Over the course of the semester, we will spend a lot of time talking about how we read scholarly books and articles. Specifically, we will work on identifying the thesis or main arguments, putting different scholars into dialogue with each other, critically thinking about the approaches, concepts, and debates which inform the study of history as well as the primary sources which are used, and drawing on these analytical skills to make compelling historical arguments in writing.

### **3. Assignments and grading**

Class participation – 25%

Two presentations on class readings – 15%

Short paper (5-6 pages) – 20%

Final paper (12-15 pages) – 40%

1. Class participation (25%). Because this is a discussion-based class it is essential that everyone actively participates in every single class session. This means asking questions when something is unclear, engaging with your classmates' ideas, being respectful when doing so, and contributing as much as you can to the intellectual atmosphere of the class. Because our class only meets once a week it is crucial that you attend every single class session.

2. Two presentations on class readings (15% total). Over the course of the semester you will give two ~8 minute presentations on assigned readings. We will arrange the schedule of

presentations at the start of the semester. Each presentation must contain a succinct overview of the following: (1) the main argument(s) of the reading, (2) the major historiographical concerns, (3) a critical assessment of the reading (Were you convinced by the argument/evidence? Why or why not?), and (4) questions for discussion later on in the class session.

3. Short paper, 5-6 pages (20%): For this paper, I would like you to take a look at the assigned readings for the first five weeks of class (up to and including 10/13) and choose two class sessions that have topics and readings that particularly interest you. For the paper I would like you to identify a common theme or question that emerges from the assigned readings from these two class sessions and write a 5-6 page paper that puts the authors into conversation with each other around this topic. No outside research or reading should be done. I would like you to be creative in drawing connections between weeks and readings and will grade the paper in part on how well it goes beyond what we have discussed in class. I would also like to see you discuss similarities and differences in the ways that the authors address the issue that you have identified. We will discuss the paper assignment, writing strategies, as well as my expectations for the paper in class. **This paper is due on Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. Please email it to me before class on that day.**

4. Final paper, 12-15 pages (40%): For this assignment, I would like you to write a 12-15 page paper which explores a larger question or issue of your choosing pertaining to the kinds of “body politics” which we have examined in this class. You can choose the topic and approach, but you must do the following: (1) identify a question of historical significance on the basis of the readings that we have done over the semester, which should be the only sources which you use in the paper. (2) Include some discussion of the different approaches which scholars have used to study the history of the body and its significance – in other words, questions of historiography. We will discuss these approaches in class and by the time that you write the paper you will have a good sense of what they are and how they can inform your own work. **We will spend time discussing this assignment in class and will also go over the feedback which I give you on your first paper, in preparation for writing this paper.**

#### **4. Course readings**

Weekly reading assignments will include either an entire book or several journal articles and book chapters. All readings will be posted on Blackboard, except for the following books:

- Larissa N. Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body between China and the West*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780822341130.
- Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. ISBN: 9780520253902.
- Susan Greenhalgh, *Cultivating Global Citizens: Population in the Rise of China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780674055711.

These books are available for purchase at the Campus Bookstore or other sources (i.e. Amazon.com).

## **5. Course policies**

1. Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508 which mandate that reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities and accessibility of online information. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact the Paul Robeson Campus Center, which administers disability services on the Rutgers-Newark campus. For more information, please see the following link: <http://roberson.rutgers.edu/>

2. Academic dishonesty in this class will not be tolerated. Period. This includes plagiarism, cheating, or any other behavior described in the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy. **For this reason it is absolutely crucial that you familiarize yourself with this document, which describes the actions that will be counted as violations of academic integrity:** <http://policies.rutgers.edu/10213-currentpdf>

You must include the following Rutgers Honor Code Pledge statement on every assignment which you turn in: "On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment. (Print your name) (Signature) (Date)".

If anyone has any questions at all about this policy, what counts as a violation of academic integrity, or even simply how to cite sources on a paper, I am always willing to discuss these issues with you. Students who plagiarize assignments or otherwise violate academic integrity will receive serious penalties, ranging from a failing grade in the class to suspension.

## **6. Schedule**

**Sept. 1            Introduction / Overview**

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**Sept. 15            Legal Bodies: Punishments and False Accusations in Qing China**

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- Timothy Brook, Jérôme Bourgon, and Gregory Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008, 1-34.
- Melissa Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture: Litigation Masters in Late Imperial China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, 195-227.
- Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock, "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1987): 6-41.

**Sept. 22      Gendered Bodies: Sex, Law, Family, and Work**

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- Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 335-368.
- Matthew H. Sommer, "The Gendered Body in the Qing Courtroom," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, no. 2 (2013): 281-311.
- Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, 1-35.

**Sept. 29      Medical Bodies: Healing and Bodily Knowledge in Late Imperial China**

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- Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999, 147-159 ("Chinese Medicine").
- Judith Farquhar, "Multiplicity, Point of View, and Responsibility in Traditional Chinese Healing," in *Body, Subject & Power in China*, edited by Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994, 78-99.
- Yi-Li Wu, "Body knowledge and western learning in late imperial China: the case of Wang Shixiong (1808-68)," in *Historical epistemology and the making of modern Chinese medicine*, edited by Howard Chiang, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015, 80-112.

**Oct. 6          Pathological Bodies, Weak Medicine, and China's New Global Encounters**

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- Larissa N. Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body between China and the West*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

**Oct. 13        Spectacular Punishments and the Reimagining of Chinese Law**

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- Brook, Bourgon, and Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, 152-221.
- Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1975], 3-31.

**Oct. 20        The Problem of Footbinding I**

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- Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, 1-106.
- **Continue working on Paper #1**

### **Oct. 27      The Problem of Footbinding II**

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- Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, 107-229.
- **Paper #1 Due**

### **Nov. 3      The Question of Race in Late 19<sup>th</sup>/Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century China**

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- Frank Dikötter, "Racial Discourse in China: Continuities and Permutations" (pp. 12-33), and Kai-wing Chow, "Imagining Boundaries of Blood: Zhang Binglin and the Invention of the Han 'Race' in Modern China" (34-52), in Frank Dikötter ed., *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997.
- Malcolm Thompson, "Foucault, Fields of Governability, and the Population-Family-Economy Nexus in China." *History and Theory* 51, no. 1 (2012): 42-62.
- Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, 240-244 ("Case III: The Eugenicist").
- Furuhata Tanemoto, "The difference of the index of finger prints according to race," *The Japan Medical World* 7 (1927): 162-5.

### **Nov. 10      Identifying Persons and Bodies**

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- Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, 217-291.
- Simon A. Cole, "Twins, Twain, Galton, and Gilman: Fingerprinting, Individualization, Brotherhood, and Race in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *Configurations* 15 (2007): 227-265.

### **Nov. 17      Improving Persons and Bodies**

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- Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1975], 195-228.
- Andrew Morris, "'To Make the Four Hundred Million Move': The Late Qing Dynasty Origins of Modern Chinese Sport and Physical Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 4 (2000): 876-906.
- Robert Culp, "Rethinking Governmentality: Training, Cultivation, and Cultural Citizenship in Nationalist China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 3 (2006): 529-554.

- Mark Swislocki, "Nutritional Governmentality: Food and the Politics of Health in Late Imperial and Republican China," *Radical History Review* 110 (2011): 9-35.

**Nov. 24 "Traditional" Medicine in the People's Republic of China**

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- Volker Scheid, "The People's Republic of China," in TJ Hinrichs and Linda L. Barnes eds. *Chinese Medicine and Healing: An Illustrated History*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013, 239-283.
- Volker Scheid, *Chinese Medicine in Contemporary China: Plurality and Synthesis*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, 27-61.

**Dec. 1 Economic Reform and Population Policies**

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- Susan Greenhalgh, *Cultivating Global Citizens: Population in the Rise of China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

**Dec. 8 Body Politics and Genetics / Final Discussion**

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- Dikötter, Frank. "Reading the Body: Genetic Knowledge and Social Marginalization in the People's Republic of China." *China Information* 13.2/3 (1998): 1-13.
- Sung, Wen-Ching. "Chinese DNA: Genomics and Bionation." In *Asian Biotech: Ethics and Communities of Fate*, edited by Aihwa Ong and Nancy N. Chen, 263-92. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, 263-292.

**Final paper due date: TBA**