WS 320-4: Special Topic: Women and the Writing of Cultures

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In this course we will examine writings and films by women whose lives' journeys crossed linguistic and cultural boundaries. Foregrounding women in the writing (and visual images) of cultures, our goal is to learn about these non-English speaking cultures through the eyes of a woman and develop some skills in reading cultures and understanding today’s world through a glimpse of the not-too-distant past of different parts of the world. We will pay special attention to manifest feminist perspectives and standpoints and explore how they contribute to our knowledge of the world by making visible the often neglected inhabitants of the world and giving voice to the often silenced group.

Required readings/viewing:
- Carma Hinton, One Village in China: The Small Happiness (Women of Long Bow village talk about marriage, birth control, work, and daily life; color, 58 min. 1984); All Under Heaven (Change and continuity in Long Bow village, from the 1940s to the 1980s; color, 58 min. 1985); To Taste a Hundred Herbs (Portrait of a traditional Chinese doctor whose Catholic faith shapes his values and gives him a special role in his community color, 58 min. 1986)

Recommended Reading:
- Arkush and Lee, eds. Land Without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the Mid-19th Century to the Present, 1989
- Pamela Constable, Fragments of Grace: My Search for Meaning in the Strife of South Asia, Publisher: Brassey's Inc, 2004
- Carma Hinton, The Gate of Heavenly Peace (video)
- Agnes Smedley, Daughter of Earth, 1943, Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution
- J. Wang, ed. Westerners Through Chinese Eyes, 1990

Course requirements and Grading Structure:
20% - participation
10% - Reading Journal
15% - Pair Oral presentation and Defense paper
15% - Research paper proposal and bibliography
20% - Short Critical Paper
20% - research Paper

Prerequisites: 30 credit hours

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Description of Assignments

Participation: attendance and participation in class.

Reading Journal: a two-page response to the required reading of the week including but not limited to your observations of the author's point of view, use of evidence, and your responses to issues of difference. The journal is due in class on the day the reading is due.

Pair Oral Presentation: Two students will work together on a relevant topic of their choice and make an oral presentation in class. A 4-page defense paper is due on the day of the presentation.

Research Paper Proposal and Bibliography: A two-page paper outlining the ideas and approaches with a list of references.

Short Critical Paper: A five-page paper on an assigned question.

Research Paper: A 10-page (typed and double-spaced) critical paper on an author (e.g., Pearl Buck) or a genre (e.g., fiction, film, diary) using at least one source that has not been discussed in class.

Weekly Reading Schedule
(Students are expected to have completed the reading and ready to contribute to the class discussion by the class meeting time.)

Week 1 - May 4 - Introduction
Week 2 - May 11 - Pearl Buck, Pavilion of Women
Week 3 - May 18 - Video: Pavilion of Women
Week 4 - May 25 - Cathy Davidson, 36 Views of Mount Fuji.
Week 5 - June 1 - Carma Hinton: Small Happiness and All Under Heaven,
Week 7 - June 15 - Cooper and Liu, Grace in China, Guest Lecture: William Liu on his mother's life and writing
Week 8 - June 22 - Karen Connelly, Touch the Dragon
Week 11 - July 13 - Jan Wong, Red China Blues.
Week 12 - July 20 - Oral Presentation

The Department of Women's Studies encourages clarity of thought and expression and good writing. Students will be evaluated on these skills in all courses given by the Department.