

Pacific and Asian Studies

PAAS 209 Gender and Marriage in
Chinese Popular Media



Gender and Marriage in Chinese Popular Media



Angie Chau
angiechau@uvic.ca



Photo of movie poster for Last Women Standing

Gender and Marriage in Chinese Popular Media



This course examines the ways in which issues related to gender and the social institution of marriage have been depicted in Chinese popular media from the 1920s to the present day. Drawing from a diverse range of genres and modes of representation including mainstream film, fiction, TV and social media, our class will consider the shifts and continuities among images of masculinity, femininity, sexual and romantic desire from the Republican era, the socialist period, the Reform Era, and the first two decades of the 21st century. Key questions we will address include: How are gender ideals shaped by historical, political, and social changes in modern China? Has the role of marriage shifted since the 20th century, and what does its depiction in popular narratives reveal about Chinese society and culture's attitude toward family, sexuality, and work? How has popular media perpetuated or challenged conventional notions of gender binarism in the Chinese context? Additional secondary readings in English will be assigned.

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Proposed Assignments:

- Attendance, Participation 10%
- Weekly online commentaries 20%
- Midterm take home exam 25%
- Group presentation 15%
- Final Paper 30%



- Ding Ling. “When I Was in Xia Village” (1941)
- Liu Zhenyun. I Did Not Kill My Husband (2012)
- Su Tong. Wives and Concubines (1990)
- Zhang Jie. “Love Must Not Be Forgotten” (1979)

Additional selected readings and films.