

## [New Perspectives on Nursing History from East Asian Contexts](#)

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Conference

Date:

February 14, 2020 to February 15, 2020

Location:

North Carolina, United States

Subject Fields:

Chinese History / Studies, East Asian History / Studies, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Public Health, Women's & Gender History / Studies

### *New Perspectives on Nursing History from East Asian Contexts*

International conference at Duke University  
Durham, North Carolina, USA

February 14 - 15, 2020

#### *Call for Proposals*

Women's and gender histories have made a significant impact on the field of East Asian history, and recently many scholars have examined the histories of women and gender in relation to medicine. This scholarship calls attention to important commonalities across East Asia, as well as key distinctions between China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea. Our conference will bring together an international group of scholars working on all regions of East Asia so as to pay equal attention to the unique stories of each nation while also advancing what we know about East Asia as a whole.

Our conference will focus on the history of nursing in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We seek to address the following questions:

- How does the history of nursing in modern East Asia inform new understandings of the region?

- How does the experience of nursing in East Asia shape perspectives on the history and future of nursing more generally?
- What roles did nurses play in the imagination and implementation of the Japanese Empire? Does the close relationship between empire and nursing in East Asia shift our understanding of the nursing profession as a whole?
- When did nursing become a female profession and how was this gendering of nursing part of the process of nation building? What effects did this have on men? On women? How did this process vary across East Asia?
- What is the relationship between nursing and female identity? Is that relationship distinct in East Asia?
- How did warfare and military conflict shape the development of nursing in East Asia?
- What international circuits of knowledge did the profession of modern nursing tap into as it developed in East Asia? How did international NGOs like the Rockefeller Foundation shape the formation of nursing in East Asia? How did Protestant and Catholic missionaries shape it?
- Where did the capital that supported nursing schools and the development of modern nursing in East Asia come from? How did the paths through which funding flowed shape the profession?
- What exactly does a nurse do? Who gets to apply the label? Where do the boundaries of the profession lie?
- In what ways did nursing push the boundaries of acceptable behavior between the sexes?
- How did nursing practice provoke new conceptualizations of physical and emotional intimacy between the bodies of the healer and the healed?
- Can nursing serve as an exemplary model of women's struggle for professional recognition and authority as leaders in a Confucian society?
- How was women's fight for visibility related to the indigenization of scientific medicine?
- How can knowledge of East Asian nursing history inform current nursing practice?

Send a 500-word proposal and 2-page CV to Nicole Elizabeth Barnes ([nicole.barnes@duke.edu](mailto:nicole.barnes@duke.edu)) and Zhang Dewen ([dewenzhang@rmc.edu](mailto:dewenzhang@rmc.edu)) by October 20.

Please indicate whether you would need assistance with airfare in order to attend the conference.

In addition to the conference, we will invite approximately twelve conference participants to contribute essays to an edited volume. Two factors make this a worthy endeavor. First, many scholars of East Asian history have been doing innovative work on this topic in recent years, and we believe that a single book bringing this literature together can enhance its impact on our fellow scholars of East Asia. Second, the field of nursing history suffers from a paucity of information on East Asia. Two books published by Manchester University Press in 2015 contain virtually nothing on the region. Jane Brooks and Christine E. Hallett's edited volume, *One Hundred Years of Wartime Nursing Practices, 1854-1953* covers Europe, the U.S., South Africa and Australia. One essay considers the work of Australian nurses in Korea, but not from a Korean perspective. *Histories of Nursing Practice*, edited by Gerard M. Fealy, Christine E. Hallett and Susanne Malchau Dietz, is limited to western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Similarly, the *Routledge Handbook on the Global History of Nursing* (Routledge, 2014), edited by Patricia D'Antonio, Julie Fairman, and Jean C. Whelan, includes one essay on Malaysia but mostly focuses on North America and Europe. It is clear that recent scholarship on East Asian nursing has not thus far been adequately reflected in published works that historians of nursing refer to in order to understand the history of the profession. Our conference and volume stand to make a major contribution to scholarship in two important fields - East Asian history and the history of nursing - and we will provide an honorarium to all authors who contribute to the edited volume.

Thanks to funding from the History Department, Asian/Pacific Studies Institute (APSI), and the Josiah Charles Trent Memorial Foundation Endowment Fund at Duke University, we will cover lodging costs for all participants.

Who we are: Nicole Elizabeth Barnes is Andrew W. Mellon Assistant Professor in the Departments of History and Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies at Duke University. She recently published a book on gender analysis of Chinese women who worked as nurses, midwives and doctors during the War of Resistance against Japan. *Intimate Communities: Wartime Healthcare and the Birth of Modern China, 1937-1945* (University of California Press, 2018) is an open access e-book available at [luminosoa.org](http://luminosoa.org). The book argues that female medical workers used emotional labor not only to heal bodies, but also to foster the feelings of intimacy that formed the bedrock of the national community. In order to feel that they belonged to a

country-wide collective, people had to learn to communicate with and relate to one another. People learned to do this throughout the war in medical encounters, and the accumulation of many such moments between people of different sexes, regions, mother tongues and social classes fostered a sense of belonging that transcended social divisions.

Zhang Dewen is Assistant Professor of History at Randolph-Macon College. She is completing a book in which she argues that the war granted women the space to re-create themselves as patriotic female subjects through activism such as nursing, caring for orphans, serving soldiers at the front, and creating war propaganda. She argues that in order to project female voices and to participate in China's war effort, women strategically used their own resources to build communities in which they hoped to create bonding between Chinese soldiers and civilians. By focusing on military and civilian affairs, Chinese women faced the decision either to fight or to employ traditional gender norms to facilitate the making of patriotic female subjects. The war was an occasion for gender redefinition and reconfirmation.

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