

GLOBAL FEMINISM: RACE AND GENDER IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

WS 360 Tuesdays, 4:00 - 7:00 PM

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Office hours: T/Th 2:00-3:45 (or by appointment)

DESCRIPTION

This seminar explores critical issues concerning women through the intersection of sexism and race in the context of an international perspective. These issues include women and the global economy, reproductive health and freedom, violence against women, sexual exploitation and the sex industries, gender inequalities, and others. In addition we will examine and discuss controversial policies such as abortion, "population control," veiling of women, and prostitution.

We will examine the growth of an international women's movement, its effect on women's lives globally, and the challenges that still need to be faced in countries throughout the world. In addition, we will look at controversial questions involving the tension between universal human rights and cultural relativity: strong government policies versus women's rights to self-determination.

REQUIRED READINGS

Antrobus. *Global Women's Movement.*, 5th ed. 2004. (GWM)

Burn, Shawn Meghan. *Women Across Cultures: A Global Perspective*, 2nd ed. McGraw Hill: Mountain View, California, 2000. (WAC)

Henderson, Sarah L., and Jeydel, Alana S. *Women and Politics in a Global World*, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press: New York, 2010. (WAP)

Jeffreys, Sheila. *The Industrial Vagina: The Political Economy of the Global Sex Trade*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

READER

ACADEMIC CODE OF CONDUCT

Handing in someone else's work as your own, failing to properly cite words and ideas taken from others, and copying answers and unauthorized conversation during exams are clear violations of the Code that can lead to dismissal from the university.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and class participation. (20% of final grade)

This seminar involves discussions and small group activities. The quality of the seminar depends on your active participation. Finding your voice, articulating informed opinions, synthesizing the materials, and asking questions are an essential part of the semester. Since the seminar meets only once a week, only one absence during the semester is allowed. Fifteen percent of your class grade is based on class participation.

2. Reflection papers. (30% of final grade)

During the semester you are to hand in four 4-6 page typed, double-spaced reflection papers. The papers should include research from class readings and outside sources, interviews, and your own thinking and analyses. You can choose from the following topics:

1. *The intersection of gender, culture, and race in your life.* Write in autobiographical piece on how you have experienced sexism, as a male or female, through the perspective of your culture, race or nationality. You can use examples from your readings to help you. You can also interview at least two women from countries outside of the United States about how they have experienced sexism with respect to race and/or national identity.
2. *Female human rights and cultural relativity.* Choose one issue in which there is a conflict or potential conflict between female human rights and cultural relativism. You can explore that conflict by examining the issue from one country (preferably outside the United States), or two or more countries comparatively (may include the United States). Issues may include religious traditions (i.e., the use of the veil, dowries, birth control regulations, etc.), female circumcision, other institutions such as the beautification industry (body modification, plastic surgery, etc.). How would you describe the conflict? What are different points of view around the conflict? How would you resolve the conflict?
3. *Global Institutions.* This paper needs to examine one global institution that was not studied in class, e.g., the beautification industry, education, sports, marriage, child raising, prisons, the military, and others. Describe how the institution affects women globally, and highlight specific examples.
4. *Women's organizations and politics.* How are women trying to change their political systems? Take at least one case study outside the United States, or consider several countries and show how women are trying to change the situation for women in politics by challenging structural male domination. You also may choose women's leadership around global issues such as war and peace, and the environment.
5. *Public Policies.* This paper needs to include an examination of public policies on one of the following issues: family policy, reproductive policies, sexual discrimination in the workplace, violence against women, and prostitution/sex industries. In your paper you can consider one country outside the United States, or several countries and address the following: what are the policies? How do

they affect women's lives? What controversies surround the policies? How are women's groups trying to change present policies? What should the policies be?

3. Final paper. (30% of final grade)

At the end of this seminar you are to turn in a 12-15 page typed, double-spaced paper (not including footnotes and bibliography) on a critical issue related to women internationally. There are many possible topics, including women in religion, politics, reproductive health, violence, health care, child raising, marriage, the beautification industry, women and work, education, and the sex industries. It may also include women changing general issues facing all people, i.e. women and war, women and the environment, women and poverty.

It can compare women's movements in different countries, women leaders, or public policies. It can include a comparison of women's lives from different countries or cultures, and dialogues among women from different nations.

The paper needs to be a combination of your original thinking and research. It should combine a well thought-out perspective or analysis, and research based on primary and secondary sources.

4. Final exam. (20% of final grade)

5. Individual conferences. Each student is required to meet with me at least once during the semester. This is chance to talk about your individual participation in the seminar and any help you may need.

6. Keep a separate copy of each paper you submit for your files.

LATE POLICY

If you have any problems with a due date you must speak with me beforehand.

Extensions are always a possibility, but you must work out an agreement with me first.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES

Sept. 20	First reflection paper due
Sept. 27	Topic for final project due
Oct. 4	Second reflection paper due
Oct. 11	Outline for final project due
Nov. 1	Third reflection paper due
Nov. 15	Fourth reflection paper due
Nov. 22	Final paper due
Nov. 29	Fifth reflection paper due

CALENDAR AND COURSE READINGS

Week 1 **Introduction to the Seminar**

This is a once-a-week seminar in which we will examine the definition of global feminism, explore the critical questions pertaining to global feminism, and review the syllabus for the semester.

Weeks 2 & 3 **Gender, Culture and Race**

In this section of the seminar we will look at the importance of racial oppression as it impacts gender. Two-thirds of the world's female population is people of color, and race is a critical divide among women in the world. The intersection between gender and race is critical to any analysis of global feminism. In addition, women carry many identities such as gender, ethnic, national, sexual, class, etc., and all of these identities affect us as women. In our growing analysis of global feminism, we will address the question, in both historical and present day contexts, of how much do we, as women, have in common, and where are the differences? We begin to look at the question of universal human rights and women's rights, and cultural relativity.

Readings:

(WAC) Chapters One and Two
READER

Week 4 **Global Womanhood, the International Women's Movement, and Global Feminism**

This section will look at the history of international women's conferences, particularly those organized by the United Nations and the contemporary integration of women's rights with human rights. Within that, the questions that will be asked are, "what are women's issues?," "do they only include gender, or do they include broader issues of economic and political change?," "how do we understand the differences between women from the wealthier and women from the poorer nations of the world?," "how do western women come to understand the experiences of women from non-western parts of the world?," "can we eliminate a western bias?" "how do

we integrate the contemporary formulation of women's rights as human rights?," and, "how important have the international platforms been in changing women's lives in comparison to more local grassroots organizing efforts?"

Readings:

(GWM), Chapters 1-4

(WAC), Chapters 10, 11

(Reader) Robin Morgan, Introduction to *Sisterhood is Global*

Aihwa Ong, "Colonialism and Modernity: Feminist Representations of Women in Non-Western Societies."

(WAP) Part One, Chapter 2

Week 5

Global Issues: Health and Reproductive Rights Issues

This section will look at the critical global issues of health and reproductive rights. It will also examine and compare different policies of a variety of countries related to abortion, "overpopulation", population control, sex selection, and the one-child policy.

Readings:

(Reader) Session Two: "Health and Reproductive Rights"

(WAC) Chapter 3

(WAP) Chapters 6, 9,12

Week 6

Global Economy

The globalization of the economy has had major effects on women's lives in both the developing and developed nations. The feminization of poverty; stratification of work by gender; the restructuring of women's work; the double/triple combination of mothering, wage work, and agricultural labor are all trends that need to be studied. We also need to look at the effects of structural adjustment programs, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

Readings:

(WAC) Chapters 5, 6, 7

(GWM) Chapter 3

(WAP) Part III, Chapter 8

Week 7 & 8 **Sex Industries**

The growing sex industries throughout the world have created multi-billion dollar global markets involving millions of women and affecting all women. This session examines the nature of those sex industries, their rapid and increasing growth, and their affects on women.

Readings:

(WAC) pp 160-169

(TIV) Selections to be assigned in class

Week 9

Religion

This session examines the issues related to sexism in all religions and also evaluates the complex effects of religions on women's lives globally. The conflict between the concept of cultural relativism and universal human/women's rights will be examined in issues such as the veil and state controlled religion.

Readings:

(WAC), Chapter 8 ("Women and Religion")

Article on the veil

Week 10, 11 **Women and Politics**

We will investigate the ways women have organized in different nations and together internationally to work toward institutional and political change.

Readings:

(GWM) Chapter 6-10

(WAC) Chapter 9

(WAP) Part I, Chapter 1

Week 12

Feminist Activism: National and Local Women's Movements

This session will look at the wide forms that women's activism has taken globally and the diversity in women's activism.

Readings:

(WAC) Chapter 10

(WAP) Part 1, Chapters 2 & 3

Week 13, 14 **Final Classes**

Presentation of selected papers