Gender and Social Movements: North to South and Right to Left

First semester 2016/2017, L2, 24h (12x2h classes)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course aims to introduce students to the issues of gender, understood as a hierarchical mode of social categorisation, and social movements, understood as forms of collective action for social change. It will focus both on gendered social movements and on gendered participation to social movements across the political spectrum, in order to interrogate the articulation of social hierarchies and political participation at grassroots’ level.

To begin with, the course will initiate students to the key concepts of sex and gender, through the history of feminist movements. A chronological approach to key authors and movements will allow to shed light on the parallel evolution of feminism-as-a-movement and of feminism-as-a-discipline since the late 19th century. We will focus not only on the main stages of this double process and their socio-political context, but also on the different political and theoretical currents which can be recognized at each period (liberal, socialist, materialist, etc.), in order to highlight the tension between equality and difference which characterises feminist mobilisation and theory.

In the second part of the course, we will take a step back in order to demystify the widespread opinion that women’s participation to social movements is something “new” and/or eminently connected to contemporary western feminism. In order to do so, we will turn to history and ethnography in order to provide examples of women’s participation to social movements at different times and places: hunger riots, worker’s rights movements, guerrilla movements, environmental mobilisations, anti-colonial protests, etc. This will allow to focus on how social movements’ (and social sciences) tend to obscure gendered participation in ways which can be coherent— or in open contradiction— with the social change being pursued. It will likewise afford for a more nuanced understanding of different costs and advantages of gendered participation to social movements, and a discussion of “feminine” and “feminist” mobilisations, as exemplified by Latin American women’s movements.

Finally, we will tackle the idea of social movements and feminism as necessarily progressive in nature. In order to do so we will discuss right and left-wing feminisms, progressive men’s movements, and gendered participation to mobilisations at opposite ends of the political spectrum in Europe and Latin America (from revolutionary guerrillas to anti-gay marriage mobilisations in France in 2012/2013). This will lead us to approach gender as a factor of power, identity and social organisation amongst others: re-embedding gender in complex social relations allows to consider the intersection and interaction of different forms of social inequality (class, race, sexuality, etc.), and to reflect on the variety of political projects which feminist discourses may serve.

The course will rely on an interdisciplinary body of texts (history, anthropology, sociology, political science, etc.) combining gender studies with social movement studies. Students will be asked to read, research and discuss ethnographic case studies of same-sex and mixed social movements from different historical periods and social spaces. Statements produced directly by militants will also be analysed, in order to “ground” the gender and social movement theory dealt with in class. In some cases, excerpts of documentaries will be shown in class or assigned as homework (instead of readings) to exemplify case studies or issues raised in class. The case studies and authors presented will mainly focus on European, North and Latin American social movements, with a few South-East Asian and Middle-Eastern cases. The course will be taught in English, but end-of-term papers may handed in both in English and French.
EVALUATION:

- **In-class participation** (40% of final grade): active participation to discussion on the basis of assigned readings/films (1 per week)
- **Presentation** (by groups of 30% of final note): summary and discussion of one optional reading assigned of the day (max 15 minutes at beginning or end of lecture, with PPT) in order to introduce topic and start the discussion. Students may choose from a list of texts provided by the teacher or propose a text/case study of their own choice, with prior approval by the teacher.
- **Paper** (30% of final grade): In-depth discussion of one of the topics of case studies dealt with during the course, on the basis of the course bibliography and other pertinent texts (20,000 signs maximum).

All the articles assigned for reading will be made available in a shared platform (moodle) by the teacher, except for certain books (extra readings) which can be found in the library.

LESSON PLAN:

1. **Introduction to the topic, bibliography and evaluation modes**

What do we mean when we speak about «Gender»? and what when we speak about “Social Movements”? What are the connections between these two «objects», and why is it useful to deal with them together? How can the study of social movements help us understand gender structures, and vice versa?

**Readings:**

No readings (introductory session)

2. **First wave feminism(s): the movement for women’s suffrage**

This lesson will provide an overview to the movements for women’s suffrage across the world, from mid-19th century to the end of WWII. Particular attention will be devoted, on the one hand, to contextualising the differences between different national movements in the political environment of the time and, on the other hand, to describing the different currents within each national movement. Presenting the heterogeneity of early suffragist movements will allow to counter representations of suffragettes as being exclusively middle-class, white women residing in industrialised countries, and highlight both the differences and the tensions within the movement.


**Suggested Movie**: The Suffragettes (2015) - actually a good film, which presents the less well-known, militant face of the movement for women’s suffrage in England.

3. **Second wave feminism(s): the women’s liberation movement(s)**

In this lesson we will present what is perhaps the best known face of feminism: the women’s liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s in its North American version, issued from a convergence of the civil rights...
movement, the anti-war movement and the “new left” inspired by Herbert Marcuse. We will focus on these different political currents and social actors in order to highlight the diversity of the feminist movement(s), and the strategies which were brought forth both to acknowledge and to bridge this internal difference. Second wave feminism best known also for this paradigmatic shift summarized by the phrase “the personal is political”, and from the demand for equality to the right to difference, which coincides to a more general shift towards identity politics in post-war social movements’. To this extent, second wave feminism can be considered as a paradigmatic “new social movement”.

**Compulsory Reading** : Hanisch, C., 2006, "The Personal Is Political: The Women’s Liberation Movement classic with a new explanatory introduction"


**Suggested Movies** : She is beautiful when she is angry (2014) ; Free Angela and all political prisoners (2011)

4. **Third wave feminism(s) : from sexual difference to gender as a system**

After the 1970s, feminist movements undergoes a process of gradual political de-mobilisation, which leaves the place to an increasing academic activism and theorisation. During the 1980s and 1990s feminist studies, gender studies, queer studies and critical race studies make a place for themselves in (mainly Anglophone) academia. This transition also coincides with a growing theorisation and debate on the difference between biological sex and social gender. The term gender hence comes to be identified as a criterion of social differentiation and hierarchy, which does not merely concern sexual difference but also social relations of race, class, and coloniality


**Suggested Movies** : Boys don’t cry (1999); Danish Girl (2016); Je ne suis pas féministe, mais... (2015) ; L’Abécédaire de Christine Delphy (2015) ; Judith Butler : Philosophe en tout genre (2008)

5. **History and Herstory : women and social mobilisation through time and space**

After having provided a comprehensive overview of feminism as a social movement, we will turn our topic upside down in order to look at other social movements and women’s militancy therein. This change in approach will serve the double end of de-mystifying feminism as the “only” women’s movement in history, and of highlighting the plurality of forms of women’s participation to social movements at different historical and cultural contexts. It will therefore allow to further challenge the private/public divide, as the foundation of modern and contemporary (democratic) politics.

**Compulsory Reading** : Bouton, C.A. “Gendered Behaviour in Subsistence Riots: The French Flour War of 1775” *Journal of Social History* Vol. 23, No. 4 (Summer, 1990), pp. 735-754

**Optional readings (for presentation)** : Bohstedt, J. “Gender, Household and Community Politics: Women in English Riots 1790-1810” *Past & Present* No. 120, pp. 88-122 (1988)


**THIS WEEK THERE WILL BE TWO PRESENTATIONS**

**Suggested Movies** : La révolution au féminin (2004) ;
6. Gender and social change: participation as a means, participation as an end

Having extended our understanding of women’s participation social mobilisation (and politics more generally), we will proceed to identify the commonalities and differences which can be observed. More in particular, we will present some Latin American women’s movements, which do not take issue with the structure of gender relations but on the contrary build on the essentialisation in order to legitimate political participation. This will lead us to discuss the distinction which Maxime Molyneux (1985) operated between “feminist” and “feminine” movements, and raise the question as to whether participation can be conceived not only as a means, but also as an end in itself.


Suggested Movie: The Mothers: Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo (1985)

7. Gendered costs and advantages of participation

Following up on the last lesson, we will continue to delve in to the relative costs and advantages which can be identified in connection with gendered participation. On the basis of different case studies, we will discuss and try to find answers to the following questions. What are the particular costs and benefits of gendered participation to social movements? Does women’s participation lead to a “democratisation” of gender relations in everyday life (Melucci 1988)? If gender equality is not perceived nor put forward as an issue at stake, can these movements still promote women’s rights? If the costs of participation are generally higher for women than for men, why do they continue to join in mobilisations?


Suggested Movies: The suffragettes (2015); Bread and Roses (2004); The Mothers: Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo (1985)

8. Women’s radical movements, left and right.

Having deepened our understanding of forms of gender subversion and conservatism in social movements, we will proceed to widen the political spectrum under study in order to include revolutionary and reactionary social movements, and gendered forms of participation therein. How do extreme left and right wing projects interact with dominant gender roles? To what extent do they demand activists to re-envision and re-define gender roles and relations, and to what extent do they build on existing or “traditional” ones? How coherent (or dissonant) are movements’ representations and gender models with militants’ actual experience and activities?


THIS WEEK THERE WILL BE TWO PRESENTATIONS (RIGHT WING + ONE LEFT-WING CASE STUDIES)

9. Conservative feminisms and men’s rights movements

After having dealt with women’s activism in social movements at both ends of the political spectrum, we will delve further in to the relationship between gender and grassroots politics by providing an overview of same-sex conservative and progressive social movements ranging from Femen to the Men’s Right’s movement. These case studies will allow us to further develop our understanding of femininity, masculinity and social change, namely by highlighting the diverse and often contradictory combinations of gender conservatism/subversion and progressive/conservative politics.


THIS WEEK TOO, WE HAVE TWO PRESENTATIONS!

10. “There is no hierarchy of oppression” : re-embedding gender in social relations

After having dealt with the many forms and functions which gendered participation can assume in both in conservative and progressive, same-sex and mixed social movements, we will proceed to re-embed gender in social relations of race, class, sexuality and coloniality. Starting from Audre Lourde’s famous text “there is no hierarchy of oppression”, we will focus on the intersectional nature of forms of oppression and inequality, and on the challenges this raises to forms and discourses of mobilization. In order to exemplify the contradictory relationship of subalternity, mobilisation and “voice” (Spivak 1989), we will focus the mobilisation of indigenous women in the Global South.


11. Feminism, capitalism, and the cunning of history

In conclusion to the course, we will widen our focus in order to discuss the relationship(s) between capitalism and the politics of difference well represented by multiculturalism (Hale, 2002) and feminism (Fraser, 2009). Looking back on the parallel evolution of neo-liberal capitalism, on the one hand, and the mainstreaming of gender and multiculturalism on the other, we will discuss the appropriation of a “cosmetic” diversity. Beyond forcing us to rethink the tensions between individual and collective rights, equality and difference, social solidarity and social change, these topics will allow to return to the issue of participation and “the problem of speaking for others” (Alcoff, 1991).


12. Recap lesson

The last lesson will be dedicated to a general summary of material and topics dealt with throughout the course. Students will be invited to choose a case study each – either amongst those dealt with in class or new ones which raised their interest – in order to contribute to in-class discuss and application of concepts and interpretations raised in prior lessons.

No readings – bring a case study to discuss!

Bibliography

(not all readings are listed)

On social movements:


Eckstein, S. *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements* (University of California Press, 2001);


Fillieule, O. « Propositions pour une analyse processuelle de l’engagement individuel - Post scriptum », Revue française de science politique 2001/1 (Vol. 51


Mathieu, L. « Rapport au politique, dimensions cognitives et perspectives pragmatiques dans l’analyse des mouvements sociaux », Revue française de science politique 2002/1 (Vol. 52)


**On feminist movements:**

*Herstory : feminists before feminism*


Bohstedt, J. “Gender, Household and Community Politics: Women in English Riots 1790-1810” *Past & Present* No. 120, pp. 88-122 (1988)


“First Wave feminism”: women’s suffrage and the struggle for political equality

Ellen DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869*


Davis, Angela “Working Women, Black Women and the History of the Suffrage Movement,” pp. 73-78.

“Second wave feminism”: sex, race, sexuality and the right to difference


“Third” wave: from sex to gender


**Gender and social movements:**


Bayard de Volo, L., Mobilizing mothers for war: Cross-national framing strategies in Nicaragua’s Contra War, *Gender & Society* 18(6), pp. 715-734, 2004


Moore, H. “‘Divided We Stand”: Sex, Gender and Sexual Difference’, *Feminist Review* 47, no. 1, pp. 78–95, 1994

