GENDER & WOMEN’S STUDIES 325: GLOBAL FEMINISMS

OBJECTIVES

Women’s rights globally have come into the public awareness in recent years in ways we have not seen before, with both interesting and troubling consequences. This course explores these changing understandings and critically examines their impact. Journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, for example, have made the powerful argument that saving the world’s women from sex trafficking, bride burnings, female genital cutting, and mass rape is the paramount moral challenge of this century, in the same way slavery was in the 19th century and totalitarianism in the 20th century. Today women’s rights are being variously depicted as critical to addressing problems of third world poverty; women’s education is being described as an essential component in the fight against global terrorism; women politicians are seen by some as a key defense in the fight against government corruption; and gender equality, some argue, serves as the crucible in the clash of civilizations and fight against extremism and Islamic fundamentalism. While these are not new ideas, they have increasingly captured the popular imagination, influencing policymakers, foundations and even military strategists. This course takes a critical look at the implications of these new discourses surrounding women’s rights.

The main goal of this class is to explore key global debates regarding contemporary feminism in a variety of areas, ranging from reproductive rights to violence against women, trafficking, religious expression, female genital cutting, and other such concerns. The course will examine how feminists worldwide — all of whom share a desire to improve the status of women — may have diametrically opposed views about how to do so both within and between countries. The perspectives in this course are interdisciplinary, ranging from legal perspectives to medical, anthropological, sociological, and cultural. The readings include academic studies, articles by journalists and activists, blogs, memoirs, video clips, and many other sources.

We ask, what accounts for these shifts in emphasis in the US and around the globe and what is their significance? How should we evaluate the claims made regarding the importance of women’s rights? What are the main tensions within feminist and women’s movements regarding how best to understand and advance women’s rights? How have these understandings changed over time?

REQUIREMENTS

Any changes to the course and email notifications will be posted on the course wiki. It is your responsibility to check these notices on a regular basis.

Reading: I expect students to have read the assigned material and come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

Class attendance: Class attendance is critical in order to engage the material in an effective way. The exams draw to a large extent on lectures and class discussion and cannot be adequately completed.
without participating in and attending class. Please come to class on time out of respect for other class participants, but mostly for your own sake since being late adds stress to your life and causes you to feel you are not in control.

**Participation:** Debates and commentary are especially encouraged. I also strongly encourage class participation in various forms, especially through discussion in class. Participation can improve one’s grade, especially if it is borderline between grades.

**Reaction Posts:** You are required to submit through the course of the semester at least five reaction posts (minimum 200 words) to class discussions or issues raised on the wiki forum (Express Yourself). These should be thoughtful reflections on course readings and class lectures, discussions and videos, particularly on issues that peak your interest. Students might also want to share with the class recent relevant articles, blogs, or videos that caught their interest by posting them on the course wiki. Posting material from other sources is welcome, but not considered a reaction post.

**Assignments:** There will be at least three short assignments throughout the course of the semester in lieu of the class to be done wherever you please. These are a form of blended learning involving individual/group projects that last a little longer than the duration of the class, requiring you to draw on your readings to analyze a real world problem or dataset.

**Papers:** One (8-10 page) term paper is required of undergraduate students and a 20-page research paper is required of graduate students. The papers must use course themes as a starting point. An abstract (paragraph summary) of the paper should be submitted to the Learn@UW Dropbox. Students are welcome to meet with me before turning in their summary. If the topic is later changed, a new abstract must be submitted and approved.

**Exams:** Two exams are required. The exams will involve essays that integrate material.

**NOTE:** All exams, papers, book reviews and the abstract must be submitted in Learn@UW in the Dropbox. Please do NOT email them to me or give me a hard copy unless you experience difficulties uploading to Learn@UW.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

Participation (10%); quiz and 5 reaction posts (required but not assigned grade); assignments (5%); paper (30%); mid-term exam (25%); final exam (30%).

**DEADLINES**

- February 13  Abstract due
- March 7    Mid-term exam
- April 22  Term paper
- May 18    Final exam

**OFFICE HOURS**

Please use the wiki to sign up for appointments with Professor Tripp. You will need to have a google account (can use your wisc.edu email address but gmail is easiest).
WIKI

You are strongly urged to explore the course wiki, which is a key resource for course updates, sources for your paper, videos, maps, links to additional readings, suggested movies, and other useful information. Add information about yourself on the About Us page, including fun facts, photos, connections to Africa if any, background and interests. Please bookmark the wiki when you receive the link via email. Or type in the link https://sites.google.com/site/globalfeminisms/home

LAPTOPS AND CELL PHONE USE

Students can bring laptops to class for note taking on the condition that they can be freely called upon to engage the class. Cell phones must be turned off and put away. As interesting as the class is, I am utterly incapable of competing with the lure of FB. Therefore I must stack the deck squarely in my favor.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

You should be familiar with the University's standards for academic honesty as described in the pamphlet, Academic Misconduct: Rules and Procedures, published by the Dean of Students' Office. Your paper and exams cannot be written even partially by someone else: they must be a product of your own efforts. Books, articles and class notes may be consulted in writing papers, but you must cite such sources, referencing or footnoting any facts or ideas that are not your own. Quoted material must be enclosed in quotation marks. Students who fail to heed this warning risk failing the course or an even worse fate. Please watch YouTube video on plagiarism that is linked to the wiki on the page “Quoting.”

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

People with disabilities will be fully included in this course. Please inform the professor if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. Certain accommodations may require the assistance of the McBurney Disability Office on campus. The McBurney Disability Center can be reached at (608) 263-2741 or via email at mcburney@odos.wisc.edu.

READINGS

The required books are available for purchase from A Room of One’s Own, 315 West Gorham Street; (phone: 257-7888), and can be borrowed from the Helen C. White Reserve Room. A packet of xeroxed readings can be purchased from Social Science Copy Center (6120 Sewell). Links to scanned versions are available on the course wiki. Short additional topical readings from the news with links to the wiki will be assigned throughout the course as they appear in the media.


COURSE OUTLINE

January 22
Introduction to Course: Conceptualizing Feminism

January 24
A Very Brief History of Women’s Rights and Citizenship I

Saving the World’s Women (links on wiki) New York Times Magazine August 17, 2009 Links on wiki
Kristof, Nicolas and Sheryl WuDunn, “The Women’s Crusade”
Landler, Mark “A New Gender Agenda”

January 29, 31
A Very Brief History of Women’s Rights and Citizenship II


February 5, 7
Global and Local Discourses on Women and Islam


February 12
Global and Local Discourses on Feminism in the Middle East: North Africa and the Arab Spring
Coleman, Paradise Beneath her Feet, Chapters 1, 2

February 14
Global and Local Discourses on Feminism in the Middle East: Iran
Coleman, Paradise Beneath her Feet, Chapter 3

Basu, Women’s Movements in the Global Era, Chapter 12

February 19
Global and Local Discourses on Feminism in the Middle East: Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Palestine
Coleman, Paradise Beneath her Feet, Chapters 6, 7, 8

Basu, Women’s Movements in the Global Era, Chapter 11

February 21
Global and Local Discourses on Feminism in South Asia: Pakistan, India, Afghanistan
Coleman, Paradise Beneath her Feet, Chapters 4, 5

Basu, Women’s Movements in the Global Era, Chapter 4


February 26
Global Gender Politics: How Local and Global Discourses Influence One Another
Hodgson, Dorothy. 2011. “‘These are not our priorities’ Maasai Women, Human Rights, and the Problem of Culture.” In Hodgson, Dorothy, ed. Gender and Culture at the Limit of Rights. (Studies in Human Rights Series, University of Pennsylvania Press)


February 28, March 5
Perspectives on Female Genital Cutting


March 7
Midterm exam
March 12, 14
Debating Sex Trafficking and Prostitution


Agustin, Laura, “What’s Wrong with ‘Trafficking’ Crusade? Well-meaning interference?” and “Contributing to ‘Development’: Money Made Selling Sex” (see also link to her blog on wiki)

Sunita Krishnan (See link to TED talk on wiki)

March 19
Global Perspectives on Framing Inequality


March 21
Class assignment
Watch Pray the Devil Back to Hell

March 24-30 Spring Break

April 2, 4, 9
Framing Women in Foreign and Multilateral Assistance


April 11
Class assignment

April 16, 18
Women and Conflict


April 23, 25
Basu, Local Feminisms, Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7

April 25
Class assignment

April 30, May 2
Basu, Local Feminisms, Chapters 8, 9, 10, 13

May 7, 9
New Directions in Global Feminism

See link on wiki for Beijing +15 Conference documents

May 18 Final Exam