

**Women Studies 305**  
**Feminism in an International Context**  
<http://courses.washington.edu/women305/>

Professor Sasha Welland

Office: Padelford B-110P	Winter 2007
Office Phones: 221-4725	Time: T/Th 1:30-3:20
Office Hours: T 3:30-4:30 & by appt.	Classroom: EEB 45
Email: <a href="mailto:swelland@u.washington.edu">swelland@u.washington.edu</a>	Class email: <a href="mailto:women305a_wi07@u.washington.edu">women305a_wi07@u.washington.edu</a>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the heterogeneous processes involved in the cultural construction of gender, and therefore, in feminist praxis. “Gender” indicates the way societies organize people into female and male categories—within families, workplaces, communities, and nations—and the meanings produced around those categories. Our focus on how gender categories vary across cultures will form the basis for a critical examination of diverse feminist theories and practices as culturally and historically situated. Framed by critiques of “universal sisterhood” launched by women of color and Third World feminists, this course aims to dismantle the conventional Western story of feminism as something that began here and then spread elsewhere. As we analyze the workings of power and gender in different cultural contexts and within international feminist discourse, we will also focus on the creative cultural practices women use to negotiate their lives and consider various challenges and strategies of transnational feminist projects.

Addressing these issues requires an understanding of how gender intersects with race, class, and sexuality; and of how movements such as nationalism, colonialism, and transnational capitalism affect these identity constructs and related material differences. In analyzing these intersections through the course readings, we will consider the following questions:

- How are feminist movements culturally and historically situated?
- How do representations of women shape knowledge, as well as agency?
- When and how does gender change? How do feminist theory and practice relate and respond to such shifts?
- How does a serious appreciation of differences among women in the world impact our understanding of gendered and other forms of inequality? In other words, why does thinking about feminism in an international or transnational way matter?

Included within the course schedule are more specific versions of these questions designed to focus attention on particular issues for each class meeting. Please review these weekly queries, keep them in mind as you do the readings, and start thinking about them on the class EPost discussion board. Class lectures, discussions, and presentations will be structured around these guideposts. They are intended, in a cumulative fashion, to help you address the big questions of the course and to develop ideas for the class assignments.

The course is organized around four books, with additional complementary readings and films. We will start by addressing questions of gender and transnational connections that begin at home—our current position in the United States—before moving to book-length works based in Egypt, Zimbabwe, and China. This selection of readings is not meant, by any means, to be geographically exhaustive, but will enable us to gain basic knowledge about the historical and geographical contexts of these regions necessary for engaging with the theoretical concerns of the course. Finally, the course is designed to hone students' analytic, writing, and speaking skills.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) **Participation & Engagement:** Attendance and active participation in class discussions by all students will be crucial to the success of our class meetings. You are expected to complete the readings by the day they are listed in the syllabus and be prepared to discuss them in depth by raising relevant questions, concerns, insights, and responses. Students are encouraged to contribute postings to the on-line class EPost discussion board as another means of exchanging ideas and collectively reflecting upon issues raised in class. Your class participation grade is based on your preparation for and contributions to class discussion, and is judged not by the quantity of your comments but by their quality. This means that the more time you spend reading and thinking about the issues in the readings, the better your final grade will probably be. Occasionally you will be asked to write and turn in questions or reflections on our readings during class; these exercises will count toward your participation and engagement grade.
- 2) **Class Facilitation:** Students will sign up for one of four student presentation groups (each subdivided into three smaller groupings of 3-4 students). I will circulate a sign-up sheet on the second day of class, during which time you can choose the class you'd like to help facilitate. These groups will collectively lead a 15-minute class discussion or activity focused on one of the books covered in the course. Each group will be expected to generate reading responses and questions that they will post one day in advance on the course EPost online discussion board. In addition to planning this class, on the day of your presentation, each member of your group should submit a two-page reflection describing your group's objectives for your facilitation, your individual role in planning the activity, and your evaluation of your group's performance as a whole. Your class facilitation will be graded with a √+ (excellent), √ (good), or √- (does not fulfill assignment).
- 3) **Midterm Exam:** Students will take one in-class exam during the first 45 minutes of class on Tuesday, January 18. The exam will include definitions and short essay questions.
- 4) **Website Analysis Paper:** Students will write a five-page analysis of a website using feminist forms of cultural critique introduced in class. A handout with more details about the assignment will be distributed two weeks before the due date.
- 5) **EPost Commentary:** For the reading assigned for Thursday, February 1, students will post a two-paragraph response to reading questions that will be distributed in advance. Students will also post a 1-paragraph response to another student's posting. All posts must be made by midnight on 2/1 to receive credit.

- 6) **Final Exam Essay:** Your final examination will consist of essay questions that will be handed out on the last day of class. This exam will cover material from all units of our class. Your final exam essay is due by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 13 to the Women Studies main office (Padelford B110). No extensions can be granted.

#### EVALUATION

Each student's performance will be evaluated as follows:

Participation & Engagement	15%	60 points
Class Facilitation	15%	60 points
Midterm Exam	15%	60 points
Website Analysis Paper	20%	80 points
EPost Commentary	5%	20 points
Final Exam Essay	30%	120 points

#### REQUIRED TEXTS

Course Reader: Available at Rams Copy Center, 4144 University Way  
(Articles in the reader are indicated with an **R** in the syllabus.)

Books: Available at The University Bookstore (and on reserve at Odegaard)

Lila Abu-Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds*

Tsitsi Dangaremba, *Nervous Conditions*

Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*

Lisa Rofel, *Other Modernities*

#### CLASS FILMS:

Trinh T. Minh-Ha. 1982. *Reassemblage*. (40 min.)

Ingrid Sinclair. 1996. *Flame*. (90 min.)

Marije Meerman. 2001. *Chain of Love*. (50 min.)

All course texts and films will be placed on reserve at Odegaard Undergraduate Library.

#### CLASS POLICIES

Please bring your books to class. Students are expected to complete the readings by the day they are listed in the syllabus and to discuss them in depth. In so doing, you are expected to offer personal insights, to listen to others' viewpoints about class material, and to demonstrate, at all times, academic integrity and respect for others. Practice respect and consideration for your peers. Throughout the quarter, you may be presented with material unfamiliar to you. During lecture and discussion, you may hear very diverse opinions from the instructor and other students. You are not expected to agree, but before commenting on a practice or belief foreign to you, please reflect on how to present your opinion in a respectful and open manner.

No papers will be accepted by e-mail without permission. Please inform me in advance if you must miss a session. Extensions are granted only in cases of emergency with prior permission from the instructor. Assignments submitted late will be marked down ten percent for every day they are late unless prior arrangements have been made. Plagiarism will be treated as a serious offense. For further information, please see the university policy on academic honesty <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm>. The purpose of this course is to help students become critical and independent thinkers. Original thoughts and ideas will be highly valued, and students are expected to treat the work of others similarly.

If you have a disability or need special accommodations for note taking or any other aspect of your coursework, please let me know and/or contact the Disability Resources for Students Office (DRS), 448 Schmitz, Box 355839, (206) 543-8924, (TTY) 543-8925, [uwdss@u.washington.edu](mailto:uwdss@u.washington.edu).

Please feel free to speak with me for further clarification of assignments, if you have questions about the materials, or if you have personal concerns that will affect your academic performance. Students are welcome to use email to contact me and ask brief questions. I make every effort to respond to email within 72 hours. Students who have lengthy or complex questions should meet with me during office hours.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Th Jan 4 Introduction: Reassemblage**

*Q: How do representations of women, especially “other” women, influence our understanding of them? What does this film take apart and reassemble?*

FILM: Trinh T. Minh-Ha. 1982. *Reassemblage*. (40 min.)

### **PART I: Whose Feminism: Cartographies of Conflict & Collaboration**

### **T Jan 9 Imagining Feminism Differently**

*Q: What is feminism? For whom? Where? When?*

Audre Lorde. “An Open Letter to Mary Daly” & “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *This Bridge Called My Back*. **R**

Rebecca Hurdis. “Heartbroken: Women of Color Feminism and the Third Wave,” in *Colonize This!* **R**

Susan Muaddi Darraj. “It’s Not an Oxymoron: The Search for an Arab Feminism,” in *Colonize This!* **R**

### **Th Jan 11 International Politics & Feminisms**

*Q: What does a feminist analytic reveal about international political discourse? What are the struggles between feminist movements grounded in different histories and experiences?*

Cynthia Enloe. “Gender Makes the World Go Round” & “On The Beach: Sexism and Tourism,” in *Banana, Beaches, and Bases*.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty. “Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,” in *Feminism without Borders*. **R**

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION I (Group 1)

### **T Jan 16 Cross-Cultural Connections & Border-Crossings**

*Q: How are feminist movements culturally and historically situated? What problems can cross-cultural representations raise?*

Uma Narayan. “Cross-Cultural Connections, Border-Crossings, and ‘Death by Culture’: Thinking about Dowry-Murders in India and Domestic-Violence Murders in the United States,” in *Dislocating Cultures*. **R**

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION I (Groups 2 & 3)

## **PART II: Culture, Agency, and Representation**

### **Th Jan 18 Beyond West and the Rest**

*Q: What is “writing against culture”? Why and how does Abu-Lughod attempt this writing praxis?*

Lila Abu-Lughod. *Writing Women’s Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Preface (xi-xviii); Introduction (1-42).

EXAM: IN-CLASS MIDTERM (FIRST 45 MINUTES OF CLASS)

### **T Jan 23 Culture and Agency**

*Q: What is agency? How do women (and men) in these stories exert it? Does how women are represented affect their agency?*

*Writing Women’s Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Chapters 1-2.

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION II (Group 1)

### **Th Jan 25 Culture and Agency (cont.)**

*Q: When and how does gender change?*

*Writing Women’s Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Chapters 3-4.

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION II (Group 2)

## **PART III: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Feminism**

### **T Jan 30 Critiquing “Save the Women” Discourse**

*Q: What do neat cultural icons used to represent “other” women repress? What are the implications of such icons for transnational feminist praxis?*

*Writing Women’s Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Chapter 5.

Lila Abu-Lughod. “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others.” *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 783-790. **R**

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION II (Group 3)

HANDOUTS: READING QUESTIONS FOR EPOST ASSIGNMENT  
WEBSITE ANALYSIS GUIDE

**Th Feb 1 Colonialism and Gender \*\*Website Research Workshop (Details TBA)\*\***

Tsitsi Dangaremba, *Nervous Conditions*. Chapters 1-3.

DUE: EPOST ASSIGNMENT BY MIDNIGHT

**T Feb 6 Colonialism and Gender**

*Q: What are the “nervous conditions” of colonialism? How does colonialism affect gender relations?*

Tsitsi Dangaremba, *Nervous Conditions*. Chapters 4-6.

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION III (Group 1)

**Th Feb 8 Colonialism and Gender (cont.)**

*Q: What is liberation? Liberation from what? Liberation for men and women?*

Tsitsi Dangaremba, *Nervous Conditions*. Chapters 7-10.

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION III (Groups 2 & 3)

**T Feb 13 Women and National Liberation**

*Q: What are the tensions between gender and national liberation?*

Cynthia Enloe. “Nationalism and Masculinity,” in *Banana, Beaches, and Bases*.

FILM: Ingrid Sinclair. 1996. *Flame*. (90 min.)

#### **PART IV: Gendered Subjects**

**Th Feb 15 Producing Gender: Modernity & Labor Politics**

*Q: What is modernity? What are “other modernities”? How are gender categories (and gendered yearnings) produced through various narratives of modernity? Through various labor relations?*

Lisa Rofel. *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism*. Preface & Introduction.

DUE: WEBSITE ANALYSIS PAPER

**T Feb 20 Producing Gender: Liberation Cohort**

*Q: What does labor represent for the women of this cohort? What is the importance to their identity as women of speaking or narrating the past?*

*Other Modernities.* Part I: Chapter 1-3.

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION IV (Group 1)

**Th Feb 22 Producing Gender: Cultural Revolution Cohort**

*Q: How do different cohorts (or generations) of women interpret their form of marginalization or oppression? With what types of politics do their interpretations intersect?*

*Other Modernities.* Part II: Interlude & Chapters 4-6.

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION IV (Group 2)

**T Feb 27 Producing Gender: Postsocialist Cohort**

*Q: What are allegories of postsocialism? Of modernity? How do they shape gendered expressions of femininity and masculinity?*

*Other Modernities.* Part III: Chapters 7-8 & Coda.

DUE: CLASS FACILITATION IV (Group 3)

**PART V: Feminist Connections & Possibilities**

**Th Mar 1 Reproducing Gender: Body & Labor Politics**

*Q: How are gendered (classed & raced) bodies constructed, performed, disciplined?*

Cynthia Enloe. "Carmen Miranda on my Mind: International Politics of the Banana" & "Blue Jeans and Bankers," in *Banana, Beaches, and Bases*.

**T Mar 6 The Labor of Love and Family**

*Q: How do transnational political economics shape aspects of our lives as intimate as family and love? How do we make feminist sense of these intimate economies?*

Cynthia Enloe, "'Just Like One of the Family': Domestic Servants in World Politics," in *Banana, Beaches, and Bases*.

Rhacel Salazar Parreñas. "Transgressing the Nation-State: The Partial Citizenship and 'Imagined (Global) Community' of Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers." **R**

FILM: Marije Meerman. 2001. *Chain of Love*. (50 min.)



**Th Mar 8**

**Conclusion: Feminist Bridgings**

*Q: What are dilemmas, possibilities, and strategies of feminism in an international arena, or of feminism as a transnational practice?*

Cynthia Enloe, “Conclusion: The Personal Is International,” in *Banana, Beaches, and Bases*.

Inderpal Grewal. “On the New Global Feminism and the Family of Nations: Dilemmas of Transnational Feminist Practice,” in *Talking Visions*. **R**

Chandra Talpade Mohanty. “Sisterhood, Coalition, and the Politics of Experience,” in *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. **R**

HANDOUT: FINAL EXAM QUESTIONS

**T Mar 13 Finals Week**

DUE: FINAL EXAM by 4:30 p.m. to the Women Studies main office (Padelford B110)