

WGS 210 Gendered Perspectives
Professor M. Alison Kibler
Spring 2009
 TTR 9-10:20 Stager 105

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Office Hours: Tue and Thurs
 1:30-2:30 and Fri 11-12_
 and by appt

(It is easier to reach me through
 email than through the phone.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

"Gender makes the world go round."

-Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, 1989

This course explores women's status in a global, feminist context. The global orientation of the course emerges in three ways: (1) we explore women's roles as global producers and consumers, political actors in international relations and national symbols; (2) we analyze the ways that transnational systems--colonialism, militarization, and global capitalism--affect women; and (3) we explore the ways these transnational systems draw on particular conceptions of masculinity and femininity.

The global framework for this class does not assume a "common world of women"; instead, it examines differences among women based on race, class, sexuality, and nationality. The global framework of this class also questions the assumption that Western cultures, including Western feminists, offer the answers to women's problems in other cultures. The class examines whether modernization policies, including population control programs, improve women's lives and also explores debates between so-called First World and Third World feminists.

This class considers how a gendered perspective can change our everyday assumptions and scholarly inquiry, from scientific knowledge to the definitions of work and international relations. In turn, we will try to break down monolithic notions of feminism to discover varieties of feminist theory and practice, such as relational and individualistic feminism, and we will study some of the controversies surrounding multiculturalism and feminism.

COURSE GOALS

*to define, use and critique basic concepts in women's studies, such as sex, gender, social construction, essentialism, public/private spheres, and identity.

*to assess the similarities and differences in the experiences and social status of women in different social groups within the United States and in different nations

*to develop a global gendered framework that does not assume the superiority of a Western feminist perspective

*to understand how women are connected, and situated differently within several transnational structures: colonialism, militarization, and global capitalism

*to hone critical thinking skills in writing assignments and vigorous class discussion

COURSE POLICIES

Your contributions to class will be central to the success of the course. Please arrive on time and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings. The subjects that we'll be discussing this semester may generate strong arguments and opinions, but classroom debate should be respectful and free from personal attack.

Late papers will be penalized by one letter grade for each day that paper is late, unless students have a documented emergency that is verified by the Dean of Students or Health Services. Short response papers must be handed in at the beginning of the class in which they are due.

I monitor attendance carefully and consider it as part of your participation grade.

This course will follow the College's policies on academic honesty. Plagiarism is intentionally or unintentionally using other people's ideas and words without acknowledging these outside sources. The College Handbook's description of academic honesty is attached to this syllabus, and you will find additional information at the Writing Center. See "Using Outside Sources" in the Resources section of the Writing Center's website.

I will ask you to watch several videos outside of class time. At the beginning of the semester we will set a special video period in which I will show the film. If you can't make that time slot, you can watch the video at ATS in Stager Hall.

Please drop in during office hours or make an appointment to discuss assignments or any questions you have about the class.

ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

<u>Short Response Papers</u>	20%
[approximately 10 out of 11; 400-500 words each]	
<u>Midterm</u>	15%
<u>Take-Home Final Exam</u>	25% [2500-3000 words]
<u>Debates</u> [30%]	
Group Work	15%
Individual Exploration Paper	15%
<u>Participation</u>	10%

Grading Scale

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

A full description of assignments is at the end of the syllabus.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Available at the college bookstore. Articles and chapters will also be available in PDF in my public folder on edisk.

Briggs, Laura. *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science and U. S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Gimlin, Debra. *Body Work: Beauty and Self-Image in American Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Grewal, Inderpal and Caren Kaplan. *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2005.
Second Edition
[abbreviated in the syllabus as INTRO]

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Kahf, Mojha. *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. 2006

Schedule:

1/20 (T) Introduction
A Jury of her Peers

Social and Historical Constructions of Gender

(the science of sex and gender)

1/22 (Th) **Memo questions:** Is the female body a burden?
 OR
 Debate the following statement: Women's bodies are cultural, not biological creations.

Readings:

"Introductory Essay" INTRO 1-6
 "Sex and the Body," "Byzantine Medical Lore...,"
 "Androgynous Males and Deficient..." INTRO 6-9, 15-28
 "Social Construction Theory" INTRO 29-32
 "Egg and Sperm" INTRO 10-14
 Natalie Angier, "Unscrambling the Egg," *Woman: An Intimate Geography* [edisk]

"The Rise of Western Science" INTRO 33-52

(making of race, sex and empire)

1/27 (Tu) **Memo question:** Is race or gender more important in the development of empire? OR Have women been empowered by empire?

Readings:

"The Social Construction of Race" INTRO 52-56
 "Imperialism and Motherhood" INTRO 60-65
 Briggs, " [Project Muse]

Video #1: *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman*

1/29 (Th) **Memo:** Is there a global sisterhood of women, with similar experiences and empathy for each other?

Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, chapters 1 & 2
 Rupp, "The International First Wave" INTRO 240-44
 Paddle, "The Limits of Sympathy" [available on Project Muse, library database]

2/3 (Tu) **Memo:** Do western beauty ideals lead to women's "powerlessness" (Coward 346)?

Gimlin, *Body Work*, to p. 72
 "The Body Beautiful" INTRO 345-347

2/5 (Th) Debate #1: Plastic Surgery

2/10 (Tu) **Memo:** Gimlin says that the women of NAAFA are the "heroes of my work" (114). Is this true? If not, who are the heroes of her book?

finish *Body Work*

(medicine in a historical perspective)

2/12 (Th) **Memo:** Do Arnold and Ehrenreich/English describe similar "male takeovers"? OR Are women better off in the care of other women?

"And So I Grew Up" INTRO 75-77
 "Exorcising the Midwives" INTRO 77-79
 "Women and Medicine" INTRO 80-84
 "Sexual Surgery" INTRO 85-90
 "Unmasking Tradition" INTRO 91-97

2/17 (Tu) Debate #2: FGM and Human Rights

2/19 (Th) **Memo:**
 Debate the following: Birth control technology has given women reproductive freedom. OR Consider nationalists and overpopulationists in Briggs's account. Which group cared more about women's health and status?

"Contested Terrain" INTRO 99-102
 "Reproductive Rights" INTRO 103-106
 "Family Matters" INTRO 107-111
 Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, chapters 3 & 4, 74-141

2/24 (Tu) **Memo:** TBA

Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*, chapters 4 & 5, 109-161
 Video: *The Pill*

2/26 (Th) Debate #3: China's One-Child Policy

Gendered Citizens/Gendered Nations

3/3 (Tu) **Memo:** Does women's association with domesticity always weaken them politically?

"Introductory Essay" INTRO 149-154
 "Citizenship and Equality" INTRO 155-172
 Friedan, "The Problem that Has No Name" [edisk]
 Estelle Freedman, *No Turning Back*, chapter 3 [edisk]

3/5 (Th) **Memo:** Is maternalism more radical than liberal feminism?

Blum and Vendewater, "Mother to Mother" [edisk]
 Bejarano, "Las Super Madres de Latino America"
Frontiers (2002) [full text available through Project
 Muse via library website]

- 3/10 (Tu) **Memo:** What's wrong with Amy? OR What is wrong with liberal feminism?
- Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, chapter 2
[edisk]
"Feminism and the Question of Class" INTRO 198-99
Mink, "Why Should Welfare Mothers Have to Work?"
[edisk]
- 3/12 (Th) Oral Midterms/Class Cancelled
- SPRING BREAK
- 3/24 (Tu) **Memo:** Are women victims of nationalism?
- "Gender and Nation" INTRO 217-221
"Nationalism and Masculinity" INTRO 222-228
"Feminism Inverted" INTRO 229-233
"The First Ku Klux Klan" INTRO 234-238
- 3/26 (Th) Debate #4: Comfort Women
- 3/31 (Tu) **Memo:** Is Abu-Lughod a cultural relativist?
- Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" [edisk]
Khan, "Afghan Refugee Women's Experience..." INTRO 421-425
Laura Bush speech [handed out in class]
"Women: The Canary in the Mind" [handed out in class]

Video #3: *Beyond the Veil*

- 4/2 (Th) Debate #5: Women in Combat
- Begin reading *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*

Gendered Globalization and Displacement

- 4/7 (Tu) **Memo:** Is Kahf's novel anti-American?
- Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* to p. 250
- 4/9 (Th) **Memo:** tba
- Finish *Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*
- 4/14 (Tu) **Memo:** Compare women's status in tourist industry and missionary work. Which field is more advantageous to women?
- "On the Beach: Sexism and Tourism" 388-395
"Give a Thought to Africa" INTRO 400-405
"Female Employment..." INTRO 406-410

Video #4: *Seniorita Extravida, Missing Young Woman*

- 4/16 (Th) **Memo:** Are maids and sex workers fundamentally similar workers?
- "Women and Labor Migration" INTRO 444-449
 "A Maid by Any Other Name" INTRO 449-452
 "A Maid in the Capital" INTRO 453-458
 "From Thailand to Japan" INTRO 458-461
- 4/21 (Tu) **Memo: Are** wealthy white women primarily to blame for the problems of domestic workers?
- Domestica*, chapters 1, 2 & 5
- 4/23 (Th) Debate #6: Is globalization good for women workers?
- 4/28 (Tu) **Memo:** Do close, personal relationships between employer and employee benefit domestic workers?
- Domestica*, chapters 6 and 7
- 4/30 (Th) *Domestica*, chapter 8
 Enloe, "Beyond the Global Victim" INTRO 496-497
- Debate Exploration Paper Due

Comprehensive Take-home Final Exam Due during Exam Week

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Short Response Papers/Memos

There are memo topics assigned for every class. You choose to write a short paper, 400-500 words) either on Tuesday or Thursday (in other words, once a week). These papers are more informal than the longer paper due in this semester and they will be graded accordingly, on a 10 point scale. In these responses you do not need an introduction or conclusion (get straight to your point!). Excellent response paper will demonstrate a solid understanding of the assigned readings, make interesting connections (comparisons or contrasts) between readings and provide original insights into the material. They do not require any additional research.

You may choose to drop ONE of these papers, or drop your lowest grade. Short response papers must be handed in at the beginning of the class period in which they are due. No late short response papers will be accepted, unless you have a documented medical excuse, such as a short-term health leave.

During the semester students will revise two memos following class discussion. You can choose the two occasions for revision: Did a particular discussion push you to change your mind about your answer? Did a class discussion clarify terms and issues so that you can improve your paper? Hand in the original with the revision during the class period following the memo's original due date.

These short papers will help you process the course materials, raise the level of class discussion, and improve your writing skills.

Debates

The class will be divided into 6 writing/debating groups. On six occasions our class session will be devoted to a debate between two debating teams. These debates have a performance and a written component. Each person will bring a preparation sheet to class and each group will turn in statement for or against the resolution. This statement should be written collaboratively in class. Four students from class will then be chosen randomly for a "fishbowl" debate (or discussion). Following this discussion, everyone in class will write an addendum or response to the "fishbowl".

Final debate grade: 6 group papers and 1 fishbowl performance = 15% of the final grade.

Debate Exploration Paper (750-1000) [15% of final grade]

This is your opportunity to revisit and expand on one of the group debate papers you helped draft (or performances you delivered) in class. You will do some additional research and then decide if you have changed your mind since you first took your side in the class debate.

You will consult a variety of sources: a recent *New York Times* article, a reliable website, a reference book, and 2 scholarly articles or book chapters (I will list possibilities in this final category for each debate). A more detailed guide to sources and the format of the paper will be forthcoming.