GSWS 200-3: Feminism Without Borders

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Lecture: Wednesdays 14:30 – 17:20; AQ 4150

Course Description:
Taking the title Feminism Without Borders as a starting point, this course examines the differences between – and potential overlap of – various gendered subject positions in diverse historical and cultural locations. Where do feminist politics sit within the wider structure of global power? What is the relationship between feminist, anti-racist and decolonizing practices? How is gender shaped by, and how does it in turn shape, other components of social identity, such as race, class, nationality and sexual orientation? What are the conditions of possibility for a true ‘feminism without borders’? These are some of the pressing questions to be addressed in this course, as we trace feminist philosophy and politics using interdisciplinary approaches.

Drawing from anthropology, sociology and postcolonial, critical race and feminist studies, the course is designed to introduce students to a broad range of issues pertaining to transnational, postcolonial and anticolonial feminisms. Issues to be addressed in the course include globalization, sexuality, race, and national, transnational and postcolonial politics. Students will become familiar with key feminist theories and concepts, as well as how these can be applied to empirical studies. Moreover, our focus on regional (Vancouver), national (Canada) and international contexts will enable students to develop a deeper understanding of their own positionality, as well as the relation between the local and the global. The course is organized into three sections. The first introduces major theoretical frameworks to help students establish a strong foundation for our subsequent discussions. The second surveys various feminist traditions to provide students with a deeper understanding of the multiple ways in which their different positions and politics have been articulated. The final section examines key issues with which contemporary feminist politics have had to engage, including questions of power, transnationalism, multiculturalism and new imperialisms.

Educational Goals:
In this course, students will:
• Become familiar with theories of gender and feminist critiques from various intersectional perspectives, and learn how to apply these insights to their wider studies
• Apply critical intersectional approaches to analyze contemporary social issues pertaining to nation, globalization, multiculturalism and international political processes
• Learn about the historical trajectory of gender, feminist and queer studies and politics
• Strengthen critical thinking, research, writing and communication skills
• Acquire a firm theoretical grounding in and familiarity with key conceptual tools to further their academic studies

Course Texts and Courseware:
• Courseware package will be available at the bookstore

Prerequisite: Students who have completed WS 200 may not complete this course for further credit.
Course Evaluation and Assignments:
- Class Attendance and Participation: 15%
- Midterm Exam (12 October): 25%
- Paper Outline (2 November): 10%
- Student Presentation (23 November): 15%
- Practice and Analysis Paper (due 30 November): 35%

List of Topics (by Week):

Part One – Feminist Imperatives
1. Feminism Without Borders? (7 September)
2. The Politics of Intersectionality (14 September)

Part Two – Feminist Traditions
3. Indigenous Feminism (21 September)
4. Postcolonial Feminism (28 September)
5. Black Feminism (5 October)
6. Midterm Exam (12 October)

Part Three – Contemporary Issues for a Feminism Without Borders
7. Sex, Colonial Desire, Power (19 October)
8. Gender, Culture, Nation (26 October)
9. Multiculturalism (2 November)
10. Globalization and Transnational Labour (9 November)
11. Sexual Politics and New Imperialisms (16 November)
12. Student Presentations (23 November)
13. Review (30 November)

Selected Readings: