GSWS 200-3:- FEMINISM WITHOUT BORDERS

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Lecture: Mondays 14:30 – 17:20; AQ 4130

Course Description:
What is feminism and how do we define its practice? Should gender and sexuality be its only and primary concern? What is its project in the age of globalization and world-scale mass movements? This course takes as its premise postcolonial feminist theorists’ critique of Western liberal feminism and the ideology of ‘equality’ to explore different understandings of feminism across geographical, historical, and cultural borders—but also the possibility of feminist alliance across identities of class, race, gender, and sexuality. In the words of postcolonial critic Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “feminism without borders” should have three primary objectives: decolonizing feminism; demystifying capitalism; and reorienting feminism—a project all the more essential in our current age.

Readings comprise articles focusing on transnational feminism, music and pop culture, religion and gender, Indigenous resistance to internal colonialism, gender and nationalism, young women’s activism, gender and violence, and deconstruction of the law. We will also read the work of anthropologist Ruth Behar recounting the story of Esperanza, a Latin American Indian peddler fighting against barriers of class, gender, and race and raising questions about ‘storytelling’ and ‘the representation of the other.’

Assignments comprise two papers (one analysis of an article and one final research paper) as well as a project: Students will either engage in ethnographic research in their own social context employing the research tools acquired in class; or they will address a cultural object addressing the themes discussed in class in a creative way.

Educational Goals:
1. Develop an understanding of the intersections and tensions among different traditions of feminist thought and practice.
2. Develop an understanding of the challenges faced by contemporary feminist movements around the world, specifically in relation to globalization, political uprisings, and mass-scale diasporas.
3. Acquire the critical tools to deconstruct the colonial and capitalist assumptions of ‘mainstream feminism’ and envision new possibilities for our present.
4. Develop an understanding of the possibilities opened by intersectionality in the theorization and practice of feminism.
5. Recontextualize Canadian (and North American) feminism as ‘world feminism’ or ‘feminism without borders.’

Prerequisite: Students who have completed WS 200 may not complete this course for further credit.
Course Texts and Courseware:
- Courseware package

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
- Attendance and active participation: 10%
- Paper 1: article analysis (4 pages): 15%
- Paper 2: research essay (7 pages): 25%
- Creative-Ethnographic project or cultural studies project: 20%
- Final exam: 30%