WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

SPRING 1992 BERNADETTE KOWEY/LIANNE PRICE
EVENING Lec. Wed. 18:30-20:20

W.S. 310-3 Tut. Wed. 20:30-21:20

WOMEN AND INSTITUTIONS: Exclusion, Accommodation and Change

RATIONALE

In Canada, in the late 20th Century, institutions touch all women's lives. Too often it seems that institutions control and define our lives, define even our experience of lives. Women come into contact with formal institutions as clients, as workers, and as feminist/advocates. More fundamentally, many of us live in non-formal institutions – marriage and the family.

This course will examine the ways in which both formal and non-formal institutions participate in the on-going domination of women by men. Particular emphasis will be placed on three themes: the ways in which women and women's experience are excluded from the public world as represented in and reflected by institutions; efforts to accommodate women's concerns in institutions without fundamentally altering their structure or role in maintaining male hegemony; and the possibilities for change as seen in feminists' work in agitating institutional reform and in creating alternatives.

The approach is multi-disciplinary, i.e., we will examine a single cross-disciplinary subject – institutions – from a number of viewpoints: economic, social, political, technological, etc. The aim of the course is to encourage and assist students to develop tools of analysis applicable to any examination of existing social relations and the role of institutions in maintaining those.

DESCRIPTION

The course is divided into three sections. The first will provide students with an analytical grounding in the definition, purposes, structures, and relationships among institutions. We will examine how formal institutions of various kinds (state, quasi-state, and non-state) as well as non-formal associational institutions order and sanction social relations to reflect and reinforce patterns of dominance. A major theme of this section is exclusion: that the organization, culture (including language), planning approaches, and even technology and architecture of institutions exclude women and deny women's experience of the world.

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The section will examine the constellation of relationships women have to formal institutions. Using the justice system and the health-care system as paradigmatic cases, we will look at women's experiences as clients, workers and advocates/agitators. To the previous theme of exclusion will be added accommodation.

In the final section of the course we will explore some feminist visions and strategies for change. Examples will be grouped into two general approaches: reforming existing institutions and creating alternatives. We will consider the assumptions which underlie each approach, their respective merits and limitations, and the possibilities for a mutuality of these approaches.

REQUIRED READING

Ferguson, Kathy E. *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy.*
Franklin, Ursula. *The Real World of Technology.*
Price, Lisa A. *In Women's Interests: Feminist Activism and Institutional Change.*
Walker, Gillian A. *Family Violence and the Women's Movement.*

ASSIGNMENTS

10% Participation
20% Book report
45% Major research paper or project
25% Final take-home exam

Prerequisite: 60 credit hours or W.S. 100