W.O. 200-3: WOMEN IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Very often cross-cultural studies in the social sciences seldom go beyond opening little windows onto different cultural communities and examining the "wealth" of cultural diversity that can be observed. To what extent are these multitudes of diversities interlinked, have been historically impacted upon by each other in the context of international structures of power, with possibly some effectively standing in the way of those who seek to "liberate" themselves? These significant questions are, unfortunately, only marginally being addressed by many who endeavour to study societies. Women's Studies being much more than a discipline for 'interpreting' and 'examining', faces the task of not merely looking at women of various cultural communities to ascertain how different they are, but of learning from these women:

(i) In what situations and how did they consciously empower themselves?
(ii) What traditional strategies did they invoke and what new ones did they devise in order to empower themselves?
(iii) Under what circumstances and onslaught were their strategies and source of strength undermined?

This course roots itself in the historical struggles of women for social change in various societies and focuses on the impediments and control exercised by the State and Patriarchy in various spheres of women's lives. It constantly compares and contrasts the impact of: (1) state sponsored initiatives to effect control or change in women's lives through war or reform, (2) peoples' movements for structural change like national struggles and revolutions, and their commitment to the women's concerns, and (3) women centered autonomous struggles of women. The course proceeds thematically and adds a fourth and most fundamental issue to the three enunciated above: Global sisterhood: Can there be a global perspective of struggle for women which would cut across barriers of culture and class and unite women?

Required Reading

Truong, Thanh-Dam, Sex Money and Morality, Zed Books, 1990

Additional readings will be available on reserve.

Recommended Reading

Women's Feature Service. The Power to Change: Women in the Third World
Redefine Their Environment, Kali for Women, 1992

cont'd. over
Course Assignments

Oral presentation on readings: 15%
Simulation exercise (3-4 pages) 20%
Case Profile (5-7 pages) 30%
Final analytical paper (8-10 pages) 35%

Prerequisite: W.S. 100 (may be taken concurrently)

THIS COURSE MAY BE APPLIED TO THE CERTIFICATE IN LIBERAL ARTS, FAMILY STUDIES OR NATIVE STUDIES.

TUTORIALS WILL BE HELD DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASSES.