This course has a two-fold goal: it explores the links between feminist thought and diverse theoretical positions such as postcolonial theory and concepts of race/ethnicity and then gets students to apply these locally. An important goal of the class is to promote an understanding of the cultural, historical, political, and social structures surrounding gender and 'national' and intra/international identity. Hence, major issues covered in the texts and films will include the representation of the Other, discourse around Islam and the veil, American cultural imperialism, reproduction rights, sexuality, women and political activist groups. We will also examine the multiple ways capitalism affect women's roles in post-Mao China. While analyzing women and their roles and positions within and with national identity, overarching, we will keep asking how a specific issue in a specific national setting can affect other women across national boundaries. Where do First Nations women stand in regard to these issues? Evaluating how we might share similar concerns across these 'national' boundaries is one way for feminists to work together on a global and local scale. It also moderates, I think, the tendency for First World feminists to dominate the arena as it depends on the latter listening to and understanding the voices of non-hegemonic feminists.

Students will view films in class and read criticism representing a range of disciplinary and theoretical approaches. This course will help lay the groundwork for students to develop practical ideas surrounding feminist issues across national borders, globalization, and postcolonial in the works of women filmmakers.

Required Reading:

Film viewings: A Place of Rage (Pratibha Parmar); reassemblage (Trinh T. Minhha); My Heart is My Witness (Louise Carre, on North Africa and Middle East); Through Chinese Women’s Eyes (Mayfair Yang); Something like war (India); Gabriela (Philippines); Carmen Miranda; Bananas is My Business (Brazil/USA 1994); Chocolat (Cameroon/France); The Desired Number (Nigeria); Unmapping Desire (Vancouver); Kanehsatake (First Nations); Nice Coloured Girls (Australia); Boat People (Hong Kong). Additional coursepack of other readings available at the SFU Bookstore.

Work load: 9 weekly 2-paged comment papers (30%), beyond SFU project (35%), in-class final exam (25%), class presentation (10%).

10 – 15 minute oral presentations: You can present on the readings or even talk about your beyond SFU project, explaining what your focus is and how you’re going to use the theories introduced in class in your project. Try to avoid reading your presentation. Also, please submit a written copy of your presentation after class.

Comment papers: These show you grappling with the issues and trying to make connections between the various readings and films in a focused and concise manner.

Beyond SFU Project: The goal of this project is to get students out into the community to do a focused research based on feminist ideas, theories and methodologies from the course. Students can be creative and submit a video, tape, written reports of their research, artwork, photography, etc. The project can be collaborative: students within the group will be given the same grade for group projects.

NOTE: The department of Women’s Studies encourages clarity of thought and expression and good writing. Students will be evaluated on these skills in all courses given by the department.