WS 303-4 Women and the Law

Angela Cameron

The course is designed to cover a diverse collection of feminist ideas and texts, and is designed to meet a number of objectives. These include: increasing knowledge and use of feminist methods, developing an awareness of legal changes brought about by feminists, and developing an awareness of the diversity of women’s perspectives on the law. We will examine the history of women’s engagement with the law, placing contemporary developments in that context. We will examine how women have engaged with, and changed the legal system, and how these processes are linked to social change. In some cases materials are designed to parallel core legal subjects (such as criminal and tort law) in order to offer a feminist perspective on these subjects. In other cases, the materials are designed around a theme of feminist critical theory, or feminist identities.

The materials and class discussion will include various feminist perspectives from a broad range of theoretical traditions, as well as perspectives from disabled women, lesbians, women of colour, refugee and immigrant women, Aboriginal women, and low-income women.

The class will be provided with an extensive list of on-line feminist legal materials and feminist materials. These websites will be relevant in class discussion and may form a part of students’ research for the debate/moot or the paper. Correct on-line citation will be taught and required.

Required readings:
A custom courseware reading package will be available at the SFU bookstore.

Course requirements and Grading Structure:
10% - Class participation. As there is a significant element of peer teaching, debate, etc. required, students will be expected to participate in small group and class discussions.
10% - Discussion questions. Students will be expected to choose a week from the materials and provide discussion questions based on those materials. Students will email them to me by 2 school days before the class. I will use the questions to plan group and peer-teaching activities, and to facilitate discussion.
40% - Moot Court/Structured debate. On the last day of classes students will participate in a moot court or structured debate. The format will be decided democratically within the class and will depend on class size. Students will receive a problem and a fact scenario in advance to debate/moot, and will be assigned a ‘perspective’. Students will be expected to conduct research into the topic and into feminist perspectives on that topic.
40% - Essay. In the second week of class students will choose an essay topic, loosely based on the categories provided by the readings. The paper will be 15 to 20 pages in length and will be research-based.

Prerequisites:
Six credits in Women’s Studies including WS 101 and/or WS 102

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.