WS 102-3: INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN FEMINISMS

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This course will examine past and present examples of feminist consciousness and action in Western societies. For our purposes, “Western” societies will refer to Western European societies as well as societies in other parts of the world (such as North America) where the dominant culture of today was instituted by people of Western European ancestry.

We will begin our exploration with some basic groundwork such as definitions of “feminisms”, ideas about “patriarchy”, and how gender-based oppression often intersects with oppressions based on race, ethnicity, sexual preference, social and economic class, religion, and ability/disability. After a brief look at some historical examples of feminist action and expression before the term “feminism” came into use, we will turn our focus to the “Women’s Movement” of the past century and a half. Sometimes characterized as “First, Second, and Third Wave Feminism”, it is a movement that is constantly evolving and diversifying. This means it encompasses a very broad spectrum of approaches, themes, and viewpoints, which we will survey before exploring some specific examples. Our consideration of topics will include issues related to sexuality and gender identity, religion, psychology, politics, economics, and education. Particular attention will be paid to critiques of “Western Feminism” by women of colour, “post-colonial” women and others living within and outside of “Western” societies. To conclude the course we will examine and discuss the generational gaps among feminists, especially during the past decade or so.

Allocation of Marks

Attendance and participation 15%
In-class quizzes (multiple choice): (2 X10) 20%
Journal (free-style, based on readings, 1-2 pages X 10 instalments) 20%
Book Review (about 5 pages) 15%
Internet research project 10%
Final take-home exam (short essay questions, approx. 6 pages) 20%

Required Reading
- Courseware
- Choice of one of the following books for book review:
  - D. Hernandez, B. Rehman (ed), *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today’s Feminism*
  - B. Findlen (ed.), *Listen Up: voices from the Next Feminist Generation*
  - bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*

Prerequisites
None