

PSC 335: WOMEN & POLITICS
12:30-1:45 TR, Spring 2009
Graham 207

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Course Description: In this course we will take a close look at the social construction of gender (the division into masculine and feminine) and its implications for questions of power, or politics. We will examine gender as a system of unequal power and how it intersects especially with ethnicity/race, class and sexual orientation. A now extensive body of scholarship documents the "neglect" of gender (i.e., denying the significance of the sex/gender system in creating social reality and reproducing diverse relations of domination), the costs of that "neglect" for accurate understanding in the social sciences, and the need for re-thinking the very foundations of how we "see," think about and explain social life. Drawing upon that literature, we will take a "gendered" look at politics, understood as unequal access to varieties of power. Questions of the power of gender and the position of women will be examined from a variety of perspectives. We will examine gender in the politics of personal identities, everyday activities, social structures and economic relations.

Course Objectives: The objective of this course is to sensitize students to social constructions of gender and their political implications; in other words, to explore the implications of "taking gender seriously" in our examination of "politics." The course encourages a reconceptualization of the nature of "politics" and our understanding of what constitutes political activity: a broadening of what we deem "political"--i.e., a matter of power relations--once we take seriously how gender shapes who we are, how we think and act, and what "realities" we create.

By examining power relations--politics--as gendered, the course illuminates 1) how the personal is political; 2) how we participate individually and collectively in the production, reproduction, and legitimation of power relations (social hierarchies); 3) how social hierarchies (of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) are interrelated; 4) how reflective, critical analyses are essential for achieving nonhierarchical social relations; 5) and how social transformation occurs, is impeded, and promoted. Because gender identities are so fundamental, course topics have particular relevance and implications for our everyday lives.

Course Requirements/Evaluation: Students are expected to attend all class sessions, to participate actively, to complete reading assignments prior to class, and to bring to the class points or questions related to the readings and scheduled course topics. In addition, all writing assignments must demonstrate attention to spelling, grammar, and composition; essays must be thoughtfully organized and well-argued. I encourage you to keep all returned work; grade discrepancies will not be resolved in your favor unless you can present the evidence! If you have questions or concerns, see me sooner rather than later.

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Participation	15 points
Quizzes	20 points
Response Pieces	15 points
Midterm	20 points
Final	30 points

Response pieces are your response to the readings. Though you must include a brief summary of the readings, beyond that you are free to respond as you wish. Response pieces should be intelligent and reflect that you have carefully read the material. Response pieces are one page MAXIMUM; anything longer will be rejected. Response pieces will be due on Tuesday on the readings for that week. You can not turn them in by email or on Thursdays. You do not have to turn one in every week but you have to turn in ten overall.

Classroom Policies: Some of the issues addressed in class will be controversial, which raises two points. First, it is important to sustain an atmosphere of shared respect for the experience and contributions of all participants. No 'personal attacks' will be permitted. Second, sharing personal experiences and feelings is relevant and welcome in classroom discussions. However, personal opinions cannot substitute for thoughtful contributions and evidence of your understanding of the ideas and arguments presented in the course materials (lectures, reading assignments, films). Understanding the material does not mean you have to agree with it but does mean that you read the material attentively, be aware of its points and argumentation, and be able to discuss it knowledgeably.

Reading Assignments: The following books are required. They are available at the University bookstore.

Johnson, Allan, (2004) *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*.

Peterson, V. Spike, and Anne Sisson Runyan (1999) *Global Gender Issues*.

Additional Readings on e-reserve, which is accessible through the course blackboard site, which will be up and running any minute now. These readings are required and are marked with a double asterisk (**) in the schedule of readings below.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Jan 20-22: Johnson, Chapter 1

Jan 27-29: Johnson, Chapter 2, Peterson & Runyan, Chapter 1

Feb 3-5: Johnson, Chapters 3-4,

Feb 10-12: Johnson, Chapters 5-6, **Marilyn Frye, "Oppression."

Feb 17-19: Johnson, Chapter 7, **William Ryan, "Blaming the Victim"

Feb 24-26: Johnson, Chapter 8

Mar 3-5: Review; Exam

Mar 10-12: Spring Break

Mar 17-19: Peterson & Runyan, Chapter 2.

Mar 24-26: Peterson & Runyan, Chapter 3.

Mar 31-Apr 2: Peterson & Runyan, Chapter 4.

Apr 7-9: Peterson & Runyan, Chapter 5.

Apr 14-16: **Greg Knehans, "Historical Background on East Timor;" **Fatima Gusmao, "We Must Keep Telling."

Apr 21-23: **Jack Belden, "Goldflower's Story;" **Revolutionary Worker, "Women in China;" **Li Onesto, "Dispatches: Reports from the People's War in Nepal."

Apr 28-30: Johnson, Chapter 10; Peterson & Runyan, Chapter 6.

May 5: **"From the Shelters;" **"Three Vignettes"

Reading guide/questions

Johnson, 1-3/Peterson & Runyan, 1-48.

Are there fundamental problems in US society with regards to gender and relations between men and women? Has there been fundamental change, or, as Johnson says, is this change illusory? Johnson says patriarchy is male-identified, male-dominated, and male-centered. Discuss thoroughly what each of these mean. Bring up examples of each. Is the US a patriarchy? Does the existence of some powerful/important women in a society mean that it is not patriarchal? What is the role that control, particularly male control, has in creating and maintaining patriarchy? How is fear related to control in constructing patriarchy? Why does Johnson say patriarchy is primarily a question of relations between men? What are some ways women are involved in patriarchy? Why/how is gender a social construction? What does it mean to use a gender-sensitive lens to understand politics?

Vocabulary: Patriarchy, (male-identified, male-dominated, and male-centered), gender, essentialism, misogyny, politics.

Johnson, 4-5.

What does Johnson say is problematic about the focus on gender? Why does Johnson reject both a simple focus on the individual and a simple focus on the system as a way of explaining and understanding patriarchy? What is the relationship between the individual and the patriarchal system? Why is there more to patriarchy than the question of socialization or gender roles? What are the ways in which men and women, regardless of personal intention, participate in patriarchy and other systems of privilege?

Vocabulary: masculinism, feminism, androcentric, gender hierarchy, stereotypes, dichotomies, naturalize/depoliticize, ideology, privilege, power, heterosexism, sexism (most in Peterson glossary)

Johnson, 6-8.

Liberal feminism is the dominant form of feminism in the US. Why is this the case? What are the limitations of liberal feminism? What are the main premises of the different forms of feminism that Johnson discusses? What are some examples of false parallels? What makes them false? How do questions of power and systemic arrangements fit into the question of false parallels? How are war, work and sex produced and conditioned by patriarchy, and how do they in turn reproduce patriarchy?

Vocabulary: false parallels, liberal/radical/marxian/socialist feminism.

Peterson & Runyan, Pp. 48-112.

What is structural violence? How is it gendered, both nationally and internationally? What are some of the ways patriarchy, sexism, gender hierarchy, and androcentrism exist both in international relations as it exists and the way it is studied? How and why are women rendered invisible in international relations? Why are there so few women in positions of power in international relations? What are some of the ways power at the global level affects women? Think in terms of colonization, development and globalization.

Peterson & Runyan, 113-162.

How does war and militarism affect women? How are they gendered? What is the relationship between masculinity and militarism? How does gender figure into economic development? What is the relationship between the feminization of poverty and the feminization of labor? Why are most workers in sweatshops women?

Peterson & Runyan, 163-207.

What are the different types of feminist approaches? What are their important characteristics and how do they differ from one another? Which do you think is the best approach? What's the difference between practical and strategic gender interests? What are some of the ways women resist patriarchy globally?

Johnson, 10/Peterson & Runyan, 6.

What is to be done? That is, taking into account everything we have learned this semester about gender, patriarchy, oppression, etc., how do we change things? What do we need to take into account? What are the principles upon which action should take place? What specifically needs to change? Why do we need to understand gender in order to understand politics and power?

Belden/"Women in China"/Onesto

What are the important lessons one can get from Goldflower's story regarding women's liberation? How would assess Belden's claim that the Chinese Revolution succeeded because it worked towards women's liberation? To what degree were women liberated? What do the articles from Revolutionary Worker say about the status of women today in China? To what do they attribute this change? How would a liberal or radical feminist explain it? What can we learn from Nepal about women's liberation? What killed Mathew Shepard? Why does the author use the word "what" instead of "who"? What is problematic about "family values"? How does the author, and others we have read, link up patriarchy and homophobia with capitalism?