WMST W 3915y: Gender and Power in Transnational Perspective

How do gender and sexuality circulate across national, political, and technological borders in the contemporary era of neoliberal globalization? How has feminism itself become part of these increasingly complex cultural circulations, to women’s benefit as well as detriment? In addition to linking together what Chandra Mohanty has described as the “One Third” and “Two Thirds” worlds, this discussion-based seminar seeks to reconnect the disparately gendered intimate and global spheres, situating the “private” domains of love, sex, and caring within fields of action such as geopolitics and political economy. How do formations of gender shift when intimate and economic relations are transnationalized? Does the globalization of intimacy exacerbate inequalities of gender, race, class, and nation, or might it also and simultaneously create unexpected opportunities to alleviate these? Under what circumstances does feminism itself get intertwined in circuits of gendered power? Drawing upon empirical case studies, we will also bring a critical feminist lens to the 2008 financial crisis as well as its precedents and aftermath, including the reallocation of various forms of capital, state agendas of incarceration and social reform, the politics of immigration and housing, and emergent forms of sexual regulation.

Course Requirements

The main requirements for this class are as follows:

1. Completion of all required readings, regular attendance, and class participation. Active, thoughtful participation is essential to ensuring a collaborative learning environment in a discussion-based seminar. Because participation, punctuality, and attendance all go hand in hand, consistent attendance is required. (25%)

2. Each student will be required to submit three questions or points for discussion with reference to the readings on courseworks by 5 PM on the day before each seminar. All students contribute to class discussion by formulating some of their viewpoints and line of inquiry before coming to class. These will be incorporated into the seminar. Please note that the quality and timeliness of your submissions to the discussion board will be assessed in calculating your final grade. (25%)

3. View two of the four recommended films on the syllabus, and write a brief (1-2 paragraphs) response paper to each, indicating how it sheds light upon or complicates the accompanying readings (5%).
4. **Students will be paired together and jointly responsible for leading one seminar discussion.** Leading a seminar means formulating provocative questions and opening up a space for dialogue. The point is to stimulate and invite your seminar participants to jointly interrogate particular issues that interest you. Please DO NOT present a summary of the readings and leave it at that. You are encouraged to review the questions and points raised by your seminar members on Courseworks, and to be creative in your presentations. You are welcome but not required to discuss with me how you intend to proceed with the seminar beforehand. (15%)

5. **A 12-15 pp. final paper on a research topic devised in consultation with the instructor** (due date TBA) as well as an *in-class oral presentation* on this research to be presented on the last day of class. (20% paper + 10% presentation)

**Assigned Texts**
The following are available at Book Culture (536 West 112th Street) for purchase and at the Barnard Library on two-hour reserve. All other materials are available electronically on Courseworks.


**Student Learning Objectives**

1. To denaturalize taken for granted constructions of gender and sexuality, situating them in terms of broader political-economic and historical contexts.
2. To trace gender’s mediation through global circuits of power, technology, capital and culture.
3. To interrogate prevailing social and economic relations through the application of a critical feminist lens, revealing the constructions of gender, sexuality, race, class and nation that underpin them.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1 (Sept. 4th) Introduction to and overview of the course**

**Weeks 2-3 (Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>-18th) What do we mean by “neoliberalism” and what does it have to do with gender? Key debates, terms, and concepts**

*Read, for Sept. 11th:*

*Read, for Sept. 18th:*

**Week 4 (Sept. 25th) Gendering microfinance**
*Read:*

**Week 5 (Oct 2) Genders in production**
*Read:*
Leslie Salzinger, *Genders in Production*: selections.

**Week 6 (Oct 9) Intimate economies**
*Read:*

**Week 7 (Oct 16th) Gendered care chains**
*Read:*
Eileen Boris and Rachael Parreñas, Introduction to *Intimate labors* (1-13).
[Recommended film: *Paper Dolls*]
Week 8 (Oct 23): Money, sex, and power I
Read:
Elizabeth Bernstein, “Bounded Authenticity and the Commerce of Sex” in *Intimate Labors* (148-166).
[Recommended film: *Cowboys in Paradise*]

Week 9 (Oct 30) Money, sex, and power II
Read:
[Recommended film: *Ticket to Paradise*]

Q and A and film screening with Sine Plambech

Week 10 (Nov. 6) Gender, justice, and rights-based interventions
Read:

Week 11 (Nov. 13): Feminism and the global
Read:
Sonia Alvarez, “Advocating Feminism: The Latin American NGO ‘Boom,’” *International*

**Week 12: Gendering the crisis (November 20)**
*Read:*

**1 page proposal for final paper due.**

**Week 13 (Nov. 27th): Activism and Intersectionality**
*Read:*
Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes Revisited” in *Feminism Without Borders* (221-251).

**Week 14 (December 4th) In-class presentations of final papers.**