CIEE Global Institute – London

Course Name: Feminist Political Thought
Course Number: (GI) GEND 3003 LNEN
Programs offering course: Open Campus
Open Campus Track: Language, Literature and Culture
Language of Instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3
Contact hours: 45
Term: Spring 2020

Course Description
This course examines traditions of feminist thought that gained prominence in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including liberal, radical, socialist, critical race, postcolonial, indigenous, queer, and trans feminist approaches, among others. Students will be asked to pay particular attention to the ways that these approaches to feminist politics both differ from one another and share common characteristics. Students will read about different theoretical approaches to feminist political goals alongside samples of writing from theorists dedicated to advancing these different approaches and will be expected to think critically about the goals of disparate feminist political movements. This course will assist in the development of critical reading and writing skills and will prepare students to take up more specialized and/or advanced study in feminist theory and broader political movements for social justice.

Learning Objectives
By completing this course, students will:
• Formulate and produce original analytical work on histories of feminist political thought
• Define, describe, and analyze different approaches to feminist political thought, including but not limited to those above
• Examine and critically reflect on how different approaches to feminist political thought impact how feminists understand and respond to patriarchy and violence against women
• Evaluate and situate the socio-cultural ethics, politics, and messaging in feminist political thought in the host country
Course Prerequisites

Students should have completed a level 2000 class in anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, critical theory or women’s studies prior to taking this course.

Methods of Instruction

This course will be taught using lectures, large and small group discussion. Classroom activities will involve group work in which students will be expected to work with their colleagues to analyze the assigned readings and interrogate how the readings do or do not relate to contemporary feminist politics in diverse academic and activist settings. Documentary films, music videos, and other forms of visual media that present unique genealogies of feminist thought in dynamic and challenging ways, compliment lectures in this course.

1. Group presentation 25%
2. Reading responses (2) 25%
3. Essay 20%
4. Final debate 10%
5. Class participation 20%
TOTAL: 100%

Course Requirements:

Group Presentation
In groups of three, students will conduct a 10-minute presentation introducing the class to an important feminist thinker of their choice. The presentation must include critical observations about this individual’s written or activist work, contextualize this individual’s work within broader feminist movements of the moment, and indicate what ways that individual’s work continues—or does not continue—to inform feminist thought in our current moment. All groups must receive approval from the course instructor for their choice of feminist thinker. (The instructor can also provide guidance and suggestions for groups struggling to choose an individual on whom to focus.)

Reading Responses
Each student will submit two short responses in which they respond to the main arguments in one of the course readings. These response papers should be 1000 words, should briefly
summarize the author’s main points, offer a way that the article in question relates to or departs from other readings in the course, and conclude with a discussion question that can contribute to class discussion by inviting further exploration or development of the texts’ themes, theses, or key contributions. Students will post their responses on Canvas at least 24 hours before the class in which we take up the reading.

**Essay**

This essay will be an in-depth analysis of one of the topics discussed in class, and include and discuss at least five scholarly sources. This 2000-word paper is intended to promote critical thinking about a significant problem or issue in feminist theory and to analyze how feminist approaches to the issue in question may differ based on differing feminist perspectives. Each of the different types of feminist thought we are studying in this course proposes a different pathway, or approach, to women’s liberation (or, more broadly, to understanding what the project of feminism ought to be). In your paper, you will critique the approach proposed by one type of feminist thought from the point of view of another type. For example, how might a radical feminist thinker critique the pathway or approach to women’s liberation proposed by liberal feminism? How might a socialist feminist critique the aims of radical feminism? Your paper should develop an interesting, original, and impactful thesis and use course materials and secondary academic sources to support this thesis. The paper will be graded according to the ability of the student to develop a coherent and critical argument addressing the essay question, whilst demonstrating comprehensive understanding of the readings from the course.

**Final debate**

Students will debate a current feminist political argument in the British context and compare this with that in their home country. They will work in pairs to present two different sides to the debate and present to the remainder of the group in a 5-minute oral discussion. Groups will access a selection of topics and any supporting media reporting on the topics via Canvas. The topics and supporting media regarding coverage of the topics will be constructed by the tutor close to time of the course to ensure contemporary and active societal debate. More details about the process will be provided during the course.

**Participation**

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness to co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
**Attendance Policy**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the interim add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students, who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent and unexcused. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</th>
<th>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</th>
<th>Minimum Penalty</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>1 content classes, or up to 2 language classes</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 20%</td>
<td>2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements; <strong>written warning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>3 content classes, or 5 language classes</td>
<td>Automatic <strong>course failure</strong>, and possible expulsion</td>
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**Weekly Schedule**

**Class 1:1**  
Introduction and Orientation to Course
Our first session will serve as an introduction to the concepts, politics, and movements that we will take up in this course. The instructor will introduce students to key terms and present an outline of the prominent debates in feminist political thought since the mid-twentieth century.

Reading:

**Week 2**

**Reading Feminist Political Thought**

**Class 2:1  Feminist Political Thought—Fact & Fiction**

In this class, students will be asked to think critically about how feminism is represented in contemporary culture. We will ask: how is feminism represented in local contexts? What about broader, global contexts? Students will analyze a collection of media representations of feminism from both local and global contexts that present feminism political thought in a variety of ways: as beneficial, as negative, as reductive, as complex, as existing in certain spaces, as a broader movement, as an exclusive club, and as a broad, collective, and coalitional political movement.

Readings:

Instructor may also select a variety of media representations of feminism in local and global contexts.

**Class 2:2  Feminist Waves**

Students will be introduced to the concept of Feminist political “waves” in this class, first exploring the traditional three wave model that is popular in Western
feminist histories. We will begin to interrogate the popular wave model.

Readings:

Class 2:3  Hopeful Feminist Politics
As we have seen in class 2.1, feminist politics are regularly presented as negative. In this class, we will begin to think through the ways that feminism has functioned as a hopeful, potentially utopian, political project. We will discuss feminist utopian projects and interrogate how feminism as a hopeful form of politic thought might function in contemporary culture.
We will explore the promotion of feminist politics throughout The United Kingdom and amplify hopeful voices and potentially transformative movements in local and global feminist thought.

Reading:

Groups will sign up to do their presentations at the beginning of each class in Week 3.

Week 3: Modernist Feminist Political Thought
Class 3:1  Liberal Feminism
In this class, students will be asked to interrogate liberal feminist thought ideals, paying particular attention to the ways that liberal feminisms idealize equality in legal and political rights. Our primary focus, in this class, will be “The Problem That Has No Name,” a chapter from Betty Friedan’s book The Feminine Mystique—a text widely credited with (re-) popularizing liberal feminist thought in the mid-twentieth century.

Reading:
Class 3:2  Socialist Feminism
Socialist feminists argue that patriarchy and capitalism are inseparable and that any efforts toward women’s liberation must incorporate critiques of the economic system under which women live. In this class, we will trace socialist feminist thought to earlier histories of socialist movements and Marxist critique to better understand how socialist feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s focused their political goals.

Reading:

Class 3:3  Radical & Cultural Feminisms
Radical and cultural feminist political thought calls for a complete overhaul of the logics that frame society. For many theorists, this requires the destruction of sex distinction at its core. In this class, we analyze the primary claims, strengths, and limitations made by radical and cultural feminist thinkers. We will pay particular attention to ways that these feminists fought violence against women and organized around ending sexual objectification.

Reading:

Week 4  Postmodernist Feminist Political Thought
Class 4:1  Critical Race Feminism
A primary critique of modernist forms of feminist political thought in the
Western world—including liberal, socialist, radical, and cultural—is that they idealize whiteness and ‘Westernness’ and ignore other forms of difference. Critical race feminist political thought, which developed out of feminist and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, has two primary goals: critiquing the Eurocentric underpinnings of most historical and contemporary feminist theory and in developing new forms of political thought that takes race, cross-cultural difference, and global inequalities into account. In this class, following the work of Audra Lorde, we dive into difference as a productive, generative concept.

Reading:

Class 4:2 Transnational Feminism
Our study of transnational feminist political thought builds on our discussion of difference in class 4.1. Transnational feminism, sometimes called “Third World Feminism” seeks to critique dominant Western feminist thought and to build alternative feminist political projects that are more attuned to global power imbalances and how such imbalances manifest in feminist movements. In particular, we will analyze how Western thinking about non-Western feminists has developed since September 11, 2001. In class, we will work through the differences between “Global” feminist political thought and Transnational forms of feminist thought.

Reading:

Class 4:3 Queer/Trans Feminism
In this class, we analyze feminist political thought that is animated by queer and trans politics. Both of these projects trouble the category of “women” upon which many feminist movements are built. This is particularly true in relation to forms of radical and cultural feminist political thought we took up in class 3.3—
much of which relies on essentialized ideas of women and women’s experience. In this class, we will hinge to thinking about bodies, identity, gender performance, and sexuality as subjects of inquiry rather than presumed ground for scholarship.

Reading:

Due Date for Submission of Reading Response # 1

Week 5
Class 5:1 Feminist Political Thought in Local Contexts
Feminist Media
Media can have an effect on how we associate with the world around us, behave towards others and identify with ourselves. As women's representation in modern media is often inadequate, both in staffing and influence, along with representation and depiction in advertising and programming, it is important to explore these issues. By investigating feminist media, including local publications and associated documentaries, we will explore the aims and effects of these offerings. If possible, actual or virtual site visits/interviews will be arranged.

Readings:

Class 5:2 Gender, Race, and Queerness in The United Kingdom
In this class, we will explore how the bodies of black women have been represented in the UK. We will ask: how do race, gender, sexuality, and location inform representations of bodies in the UK?

Readings:
Class 5:3 Diversity and inclusion
For this class, we will undertake a site visit to the offices of an organization that promotes social inclusion, including the promotion, defense and advancement of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people (or consider a remote/virtual/interview option). Before the visit, students are expected to familiarize themselves with the organization and its policies and initiatives, through investigation of their website, and complete the reading, which is also from the organization.

Reading:
Barker, Meg; Richards, Christina; Jones, Rebecca; Bowes-Catton, Helen; Plowman, Tracey; Yockney, Jen and Morgan, Marcus (2012). The Bisexuality Report: Bisexual inclusion in LGBT equality and diversity. Centre for Citizenship, Identity and Governance. The Open University


Due date for Submission of Reading Response # 2

Week 6 Contemporary Feminist Political Thought
Class 6:1 Cultural Relativism
Our discussion of difference in classes 4.1 and 4.2 debated the question: how do we recognize and respect difference in practice? In this class, we interrogate theories of cultural relativism and ask: is there a limit to respecting difference? We will also think through the possibility of feminist coalition that connects feminist movements in different geographical and cultural spaces and ask: what does it mean to participate in coalitions, alliances, and acts of solidarity?

Readings:

**Due Date for Submission of the Essay Assessment**

**Class 6:2 Third-Wave & Post-Feminism**

“Third wave” and “Post-feminism” are two ways that contemporary feminist thinkers describe our current moment. In this class, we will analyze third-wave feminism—a catchall term used for feminist thought and activism since the 1990s—as a continuation of the waves metaphor we critiqued in class 2.2 and a direct response to the problems of second-wave feminism. We will compare and contrast third-wave feminism with the concept of post-feminism—a school of thought that suggests that equality for women has been achieved and feminism is no longer useful or necessary.

Readings:

**Class 6:3 Telling Feminist Stories**

Our concluding class serves as a review of the many histories and stories we have taken up in this course. Following Clare Hemmings’ arguments in Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory, we will analyze how the stories that inform this class have been told and re-told, explore the methods in which evidence is offered in such retellings, and pay particular attention to practices of citation in feminist movements.

Reading:

**Due Date for Submission of the Online Open Book Exam**
Readings


Barker, Meg; Richards, Christina; Jones, Rebecca; Bowes-Catton, Helen; Plowman, Tracey; Yockney, Jen and Morgan, Marcus (2012). The Bisexuality Report: Bisexual inclusion in LGBT equality and diversity. Centre for Citizenship, Identity and Governance. The Open University


