

Transnational Feminisms (SLS2SC210)

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Credits: 4

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the theories, practices and research around transnational feminisms. How do feminists understand difference and build solidarity and alliance across differences of class, race, nationality, caste, gender, sexuality, religion and language? How do feminists critically write and dialogue about processes of colonialism, global capitalism, nationalism, human rights, and the politics of gender, sexuality, race, caste, and nation? In what ways does collaboration as a concept and practice define transnational feminisms? These are some key questions that we will engage with in this course with particular attention to organizing and coalition building across north-south divides. Along the way, we will also attempt to understand the intersections of transnational feminisms, the politics of knowledge production, and social justice concerns.

Course Objectives

- To develop a critical awareness about the question of difference and intersectionality.
- To develop awareness about how coalitions can be built across difference, in order to avoid community building through universalizing discourses.
- To understand and practice scholarship and research across academia and activism.

Assessments

In-class participation = 10%

Review essay = 40%

Term paper presentation = 30%

Term paper = 30%

Modules

Module 1: A brief about feminisms

This module will focus on selected texts to understand some key concerns in feminist scholarship and activism, especially in and around the context of India. Along the way, we will look at how feminism emerges as a response to the particularities of universalizing discourses embedded in imperial and post-colonial states and communities.

- Menon, Nivedita. 2009. "Sexuality, Caste, Governmentality: Contests over "Gender" in India." *Feminist Review* 91: 94-112.
- Chatterjee, Angana P. 2012. "Witnessing as Feminist Intervention in India-Administered Kashmir." Ania Loomba and Ritty A. Lukose eds. *South Asian Feminisms*. Zubaan: New Delhi: 181-201.
- Sen, Rukmini. 2014. "Mapping Women's Activism in India." *Resistances, reforms and (re)-creation.* Routledge Handbook of Gender in South Asia. Routledge: London and New York: 333-346.

Suggested readings:

- Menon, Nivedita. 2007. "Introduction." *Sexualities*. London and New York: Zed Books: (xiii-ix).
- Rege. Sharmila. 1998. "A Dalit Feminist Standpoint." *Seminar* 471: 47-52.

Module 2: 'Global sisterhood' and its critique

This module undertakes a brief overview of international/global feminisms and liberal feminisms and arrives at a critique of that through the writings of women of color academic-activists in the United States. Such critique emerges from within the institutional spaces of the academia and the collective spaces of grassroots movements to question the silences of the 'global sisterhood' discourse.

- Morgan, Robin. 1996. "Introduction: Planetary Feminism: The Politics of the 21st Century." Robin Morgan ed. *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology*. New York: The Feminist Press: 1-37.
- Audre Lorde. 1984. "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." *Sister Outsider*. Berkeley: Crossing Press: 114-123.
- Grewal, Inderpal & Caren Kaplan. 1994. "Introduction." Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan ed. *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*: 1-36.
- Alexander, M. Jacqui and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. 1997. "Introduction: Genalogies, Legacies, Movements." M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty eds. *Feminist Genalogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York: Routledge: xiii-xliii.

Suggested readings:

- Lorde, Audre. 2003. "The Master's Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." Reina Lewis and Sara Mills eds. *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. New York: Routledge: 25-28.
- Rich, Adrienne. 2003. "Notes Toward a Politics of Location." Reina Lewis and Sara Mills eds. *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. New York: Routledge: 29-42.

Module 3: When are feminisms transnational or when is a feminist response transnational?

The contested nature of 'transnational' is elaborated in this module. A range of writings is engaged with to understand how the transnational emerges through imperatives to understand the differential effects of scattered colonialisms, neoliberalisms and homonationalisms. Contexts across the United States and India (among others) are engaged with in an attempt to (dis)locate hegemonic narratives.

- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1985. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry*, 12(1): 243-261.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1991. "Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism" and "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1-47 and 51-80.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2(2): 499-535.
- Narayan, Uma. 1997. "Cross-Cultural Connections, Border-Crossings, and 'Death by Culture': Thinking about Dowry-Murders in India and Domestic-Violence Murders in the US." *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*. New York: Routledge: 81-118.
- Puar, Jasbir. 2007. "Preface" and "Introduction: Homonationalism and Biopolitics." *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press. ix-xxviii and 1-36.
- Banerjea, Niharika and Debanuj Dasgupta. 2013. "States of Desire: Homonationalism and LGBT Activism in India." *Sanhati*, June 6 2013 <http://sanhati.com/articles/7185/>
- Naples, Nancy. 2002. "Changing the Terms Community Activism, Globalization and the Dilemmas of Transnational Feminist Praxis". Nancy Naples and Manisha Desai ed. *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics*. New York and London: Routledge: 3-14.

Suggested readings:

- Kim-Puri. 2005. "Conceptualizing Gender-Sexuality-State-Nation." *Gender and Society* 19(2):137-159.
- Menon, Nivedita. 2015. "Is Feminism about 'Women'? A Critical View on Intersectionality from India." *Economic and Political Weekly*. L(17): 37-44.

Module 4: Transnational feminist organizing, navigations, and movements

This module discusses examples of feminist organizing to understand how collectives respond to the effects of colonialisms, neoliberalisms and homonationalisms across contexts, and engage with differential locations in the process.

- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2006. "Sisterhood, Coalition, and the Politics of Experience" and "Women Workers and the Politics of Solidarity." *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. New Delhi: Zubaan: 106-23 and 139-168.
- Carty, Linda E. and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. 2015. "Mapping Transnational Feminist Engagements: Neoliberalism and the Politics of Solidarity." Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 99-132.
- Desai, Manisha. 2015. "Critical Cartography, Theories and Praxis of Transnational Feminisms." Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 116-130.
- Moghadam, Valentine. 2015. "Transnational Feminist Activism and Movement Building." Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 53-81.
- Grewal, Inderpal. 2005. "'Women's Rights as Human Rights': The Transnational Production of Global Feminist Subjects." *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*. Durham: Duke University Press. 121-157.
- Deo, Nandini. 2012. "Indian Women Activists and Transnational Feminism over the Twentieth Century." *Journal of Women's History*. 24(4): 149-174.
- Bhattacharjee, Anannya. 2012. "Feminism, Migration, and Labor: Movement Building in a Globalized World." Ania Loomba and Ritty A. Lukose eds. *South Asian Feminisms*. Zubaan: New Delhi: 115-135.
- Shah, Svati P. 2012. "Sex workers' rights and women's movements in India: A Very Brief Genealogy." Srila Roy ed. *New South Asian Feminisms*. London, New York: Zed Books: 27-43
- Mahanta, Upasana. 2012. "Transnational Activism and Dalit Women's Movement in India." Hedi Moksnes and Mia Melin eds. *Global Civil Society: Shifting Powers in a Shifting World*. Uppsala: Uppsala University Press: 140-148.

Suggested readings:

- Halim Chowdhury, Elora. 2011. "Introduction", "Feminist Negotiations: Contesting Narratives of the Campaign against Acid Violence in Bangladesh" and "From Dhaka to Cincinnati: Charting Transnational Narratives of Trauma, Victimization, and Survival." *Transnationalism Reversed: Women Organizing against Gendered Violence in Bangladesh*. Albany: SUNY Press: 1-60 and 85-128.

Module 5: Transnational feminist collaboration and praxis

Collaborations across academic and activist spaces, including their methodological premises are discussed in this module. The selected texts help understand how one can 'do' transnational research that is more than reflexive research.

- Sangtin Writers and Richa Nagar. 2006. "Introduction", "The Beginnings of a Collective Journey", "Challenges of NGOization and Dreams of Sangtin" and "Postscript: NGOs, Global

Feminisms, and Collaborative Border Crossings". *Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: XXI-XXLVII, 3-14, 110-155.

- Bacchetta, Paola and Marcelle Maese-Cohen. 2010. "Decolonial Praxis: Enabling Intranational and Queer Coalition Building." *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*. 18(2): 147-192.

Suggested readings:

- Nagar, Richa and Amanda Lock Swarr. 2010. "Theorizing Transnational Feminist Praxis." *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1-22.
- Alexander, M. Jacqui and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. 2010. "Cartographies of Knowledge and Power: Transnational Feminism as Radical Praxis." *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 23-45.
- Nagar, Richa. 2014. "Introducing Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring Feminisms across Scholarship and Activism", "Reflexivity, Positionality, and Languages of Collaboration in Feminist Fieldwork", "Representation, Accountability, and Collaborative Border Crossings: Moving Beyond Positionality", "Traveling and Crossing, Dreaming and Becoming: Journeys after Sangtin Yatra", and "Four Truths of Storytelling and Coauthorship in Feminist Alliance Work". *Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring Feminisms Across Scholarship and Activism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1-22, 81-104, 105-123, 124-157 and 158-182.