SYLLABUS

This course deals with women’s movements and feminisms from about 1400 to 2000 and in a number of regions and countries around the world. The main aim of the course is to explore the role of women’s movements, including international women’s organizations, in shaping the contemporary world. The literature that we will read and discuss highlights a number of important points. First, in contrast to widely held views, “feminism” did not start in the 1960s, nor is it just a “Western” phenomenon. Women’s movements and feminisms historically have taken many forms, they have been concerned with a wide range of social, economic, cultural and political issues—much more than suffrage—and they have developed in all parts of the world: Europe, North-America, Asia, Africa, Latin-America and Australia.

A second and related point is that women’s movements were more varied than the mainstream, liberal or “bourgeois” women’s movements with which “the women’s movement” or “feminism” are often conflated, but also included and include socialist, working-class and/or post-colonial feminisms. Lastly, since the early twentieth century major international women’s organizations have tried to advance women’s rights through a focus on international organizations such as the League of Nations (before 1940) and the United Nations (since 1945). In the last part of the course we will discuss the impact of these international women’s organizations in advancing “gender equality” globally.

The readings will thus emphasize left-feminist and transnational activism, as well as Western feminisms’ efforts to become more inclusive and deal with post-colonial criticism. In addition to exploring these issues, students will become acquainted with a new and impressive database/online archive called “Women and Social Movements International” (WASI), to which the CEU Library has a subscription. In the first sessions we will take a look at this
database and develop some research questions together. These can subsequently be used as examples for your term paper.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will gain experience reading and using theory in their own writing, and will sharpen their facilities for critical writing and oral analysis
- They will have a basic grasp of the diversity that has defined the history of women’s movements and feminisms
- Their understanding of women’s movements and feminisms will be informed by a critical, global and intersectional perspective
- They will learn to work with a new, large online database/archive, WASI

Course Requirements:

* An important requirement is your active and informed participation in class. This depends on a good preparation by seriously reading the literature and thinking about it.

* In order to help you further develop your writing skills, you must write one reaction paper (of about 2 pages, double-spaced, about which more during the first class). This reaction paper is to be submitted in week 4.

* One presentation, on the basis of the additional reading, in dialogue with the required reading for that week, with preparation of class discussion.

* A term paper of about 10-15 double-spaced pages. You must hand in the title of your paper and a short abstract (100-200 words) in week seven. The abstract describes the topic, the central question of the paper and the main sources (scholarly literature, websites) that will be used. Preferably you make use of the WASI database/online archive. Your paper is due April 6, 2013.

Course Grading:

1) active participation in class, and reaction paper 30 %
2) one presentation with preparation of class discussion 20 %
3) term paper 50 %
Terminology:

Required reading: must be read by everyone
Additional reading: serves as basis for the oral presentation

Course Schedule

WEEK 1: Introduction

There are two assignments for this session:

1) You read the short Introduction to F. de Haan et al (eds.), Women’s Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present (Routledge: London and New York, 2013), 1-12.

2) You come to class with printed answers to these three questions:

a) What, historically, has been the greatest achievement of the women’s movement in your country?
b) What, in your view, is the greatest problem for women in your country now – and why?
c) Give your reaction to Audre Lorde’s poem (see the reader).

WEEK 2: Feminism in Europe before 1800

Required reading:

Fragment from Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies, from the year 1404-05.


Additional reading:
Shirin Akhtar, “East Bengal Women’s Education, Literature and Journalism: From the Late Nineteenth Century Through the 1960s,” in F. de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis and Krassimira Daskalova, eds. Women’s Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 106-120.
WEEK 3: Socialist Feminism in Europe
Required reading:

Additional reading:

WEEK 4: The Major International Women’s Organizations since 1888
Required reading:

Additional reading:

WEEK 5: Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World
Required reading:

Additional reading:

WEEK 6: Feminism in Egypt and the On-going Debate on Islamic Feminism
Required Reading:

Additional Reading:
WEEK 7: African Women’s Activism

Required reading:

Additional Reading:

WEEK 8: “The World Split Open”: The “Second Feminist Wave” in the USA

Required reading:

Additional reading:


Required reading:
Francisca de Haan, “Eugénie Cotton, Pak-Den-ai and Claudia Jones: Rethinking Transnational Feminism and International Politics,” to appear in *Journal of Women’s History* 25 no. 4 (2013) [text will be distributed]

Additional reading:


WEEK 10: Women’s Movements and NGOs in Post-1989 CESEE

Required reading:
Additional reading:

WEEK 11: Feminisms and Anti-Racism
Required reading:

Additional reading:

WEEK 12: Contemporary Complexities: Globalization and Feminist Activism
Required reading:

Additional reading:

PLUS:
Summing Up and Evaluation: What is “feminism”? And what has been the role of women’s movements, and especially of international women’s organizations, in shaping the contemporary world?