Course Description:
The United Nations Organization (UN), established in 1945, is a truly global international organization, which has played a crucial role in advancing women’s status and rights. This course explores how the improvement of “women’s status” became part of the agenda of the United Nations and how “women’s rights” gained recognition as “human rights;” it also critically addresses the meaning of those terms and what has been achieved and what not. We will start with a very general introduction into the history and structure of the UN. In order to develop a broader and long-term perspective, we will then read more about the historical context and the establishment of the League of Nations, the UN’s predecessor, as well as the history of the main international women’s organizations and their role in the League of Nations. Subsequently we will focus on the establishment of the United Nations and look at the role of women and international women’s organizations in advancing gender equality within this organization. This includes the UN Charter, the Commission on the Status of Women, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1952 and 1955 Conventions; the ways in which the concepts of emancipation and rights have evolved and become more encompassing; and the history and impact of International Women’s Year (1975), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), and the four UN World Conferences on Women (1975, 1980, 1985, 1995). In addition to the general focus on the development of “women’s rights” in the context of the UN, we will also address a number of more specific issues. The International Labor Organization (ILO) served as a specialized agency for both the League of Nations and the United Nations. We will read about women’s labor rights as developed within the ILO. Other topics include women’s attempts to use the UN to challenge colonialism, the UN-Commission on the Status of Women’s position regarding female genital mutilation, the UN and refugees, including women refugees, “violence against women,” and women and peacekeeping. Throughout the course, we will discuss and explore these topics and histories in the context of contemporary global politics, including the Cold War and decolonization. The materials we will read and discuss include histories of the UN and some of its main agencies, biographies and autobiographies of major actors, UN documents and various internet resources.

Learning Outcomes:
Students will acquire knowledge of the key literature on women and/in the UN; basic knowledge about the role of individual women and international women’s organizations in intergovernmental bodies; understand the long-term and complex process of getting gender issues acknowledged and addressed at the international level; and understand the impact of global economic and political changes on women’s rights in the international domain.

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 preparing questions and comments about it.
* One short reaction paper (of about 1.5 to 2 pages, about which more during the first class). The reaction paper must provide a coherent summary (2/3 of the paper) of and reflection (1/3 of the
paper) on one of the readings included in the syllabus; length 1.5 to 2 pages (spaced 1.5). Deadline: **January 30, noon**.

* Preparation of one class discussion, including presentation (will also be explained further).
* A term paper of around 3.500 words. You must hand in the title of your paper and a short preliminary description of the topic **January 31, noon**, and a full term paper proposal on **February 8**. Your paper is due **Monday March 11, 2019**.

Please note: The term paper must use some literature from the course. Your two papers have to pass in order for you to pass the course.

Make sure you **avoid plagiarism** or even the vague possibility of plagiarism. Note that copying from the internet or even taking ideas from internet sources without proper citation is also a form of plagiarism, not only copying from paper based texts. Paraphrase the arguments whenever possible and add proper citations from the original text. Quote if absolutely necessary. Students who plagiarize will get a warning first, and if we encounter another incident of plagiarism they will fail the course.

**Assessment:**
Your grade will comprise of the following elements:
1) Active participation in class, and one reaction paper 25 %
2) One presentation, with preparation of class discussion 25 %
3) Term paper 50 %

**Terminology:**
Required reading: must be read by everyone.
Additional reading: serves as basis for the oral presentation.
Further reading: for papers or your own interest.

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**Class Schedule**

**Week 1**
Mandatory Reading(s):

**Week 2**
Mandatory Reading(s):

**Week 3: Women Shaping the ILO**
Mandatory Reading(s):
- Introduction to: Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehkter, and Susan Zimmermann, *Women’s ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present*,

• Dorothy Sue Cobble, “The Other ILO Founders: 1919 and Its Legacies,” Ch. 1 in Ibid, 27–49.

Additional Reading(s):
• Marieke Louis, “Women’s Representation at the ILO: A Hundred Years of Marginalization,” Ch. 8 in Ibid, 202–224 (or another chapter of your choice from this book).

Week 4 - Women at the Founding of the United Nations, 1945
Mandatory Reading(s):

Additional Reading(s):

Week 5 – The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
Mandatory Reading(s):

Additional Reading(s):

Week 6 - Challenges
Mandatory Reading(s):
• Katharine McGregor, “Opposing Colonialism: the Women’s International Democratic Federation and Decolonisation Struggles in Vietnam and Algeria 1945–1965,” Women’s History Review 25, No. 6 (2016): 925–944. [with a lot of attention to the WIDF’s efforts to work through the UN]

Additional Reading(s):
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Week 7: (Towards) DEDAW and CEDAW
Mandatory Reading(s):


Additional Reading(s):


Week 8: “Inscribing Development into Rights;” Egypt and Turkey
Mandatory Reading(s):


Additional Reading(s): the case of Turkey [but other options are available]


Week 9: IWY and the UN Decade for Women
Mandatory Reading(s):


Additional Reading(s):

Week 10: The UN and Violence Against Women, FGM
Mandatory Reading(s):

Additional Reading(s):

Week 11: Women, Gender, and UN Peacekeeping
Mandatory Reading(s):

Additional Reading(s):

Week 12: Gender Mainstreaming and Women Refugees – Class taught by Sercan Cinar
Mandatory Reading(s):

Additional Reading(s):
Some Further Reading


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