Course Description

This is a course that takes a feminist perspective on gender relations. I define feminism as an orientation to women’s empowerment, particularly by challenging and changing those relations that subordinate women to men. How many such policies there are, which ones do have this effect or not, and how they should change are always a subject of debate. We will focus particularly on the ways that discourse matters for gender politics, and look at the debates that frame the meaning of terms like gender, women, men, equality, feminism etc. I will also emphasize the intersectionality of gender with other forms of social inequality. We will consider theory (terms like the highlighted ones above) as a way of understanding concrete struggles over meaning (in applications to particular debates).

Politics is always contentious, but regardless of what disagreements you may have with other students or with me about general or specific interpretations of policies and practices, I expect our discussions always to be respectful of our differences while engaging critically and passionately with the evidence. We should all strive to neither give nor take personal offense in discussing even the most controversial issues, in challenging our own and others’ preconceptions about gender, and considering how our own discourses reflect economic inequalities, cultural values, and national history.

Course Organization and Requirements

Class format: This course is a discussion-based examination of the readings (in the style of a seminar), and class preparation and class participation is absolutely crucial.

Requirements:
1. Attendance, participation in class discussions, and engagement with the reading on an ongoing basis (25% of grade). Reading should be completed before the first class every week. You will have difficulty in this class if you are not regularly prepared.

   a) Each week (after the first two weeks), a set of (usually 3) students will be assigned responsibility for “raising the bar” on discussion: they will start off the seminar by summarizing what they see as the main contributions of that week’s set of articles and identifying the most difficult or controversial parts of the arguments. The criteria for grading this starter role are that you be clear, provocative and brief. THE PREPARATION GROUP should turn in at class the OUTLINE of their summary/questions. Grades are excellent (A), fine but not provocative (AB), somewhat disorganized/overlong (B), muddled (BC) and confusing and/or misleading (C). This will count for at least 10% of your grade, more if doing more than one presentation.

   b) ALL students are encouraged every week to post their own ideas and questions both before and
after class meetings as an extension of in-class discussion. Responses to readings, class discussions and other postings that substantively add insights into the issues raised count MOST. Personal anecdotes that don’t fit in the framework of class discussion but relate to the readings, ideas you thought would get discussed but weren’t, ideas you had walking to or from class or that we just didn’t get to in time – all of these types of on-line participation are also valuable. Grades reflect frequent and thoughtful comments and questions (A), relevant but less reflective contributions (AB), less frequent and less engaged but relevant postings (B), few or merely organizational questions (BC) and on-line disengagement (C). 15% of overall grade is based on this on-going on-line work.

2) For any 2 weeks (of your choice) you need to turn in short papers (about 1200 words each) about the week’s readings. These are not about ANY week’s readings, but about the particular issues for the specific week in which you turn them in. (each paper is worth 15%)

They are due on MONDAY at 5pm (the day before we begin discussing that week’s readings). These individual papers do not replace the group preparation for a discussion, but should position you to respond particularly thoughtfully to the student-led initial discussion. Each “response paper” should be placed in the appropriate “drop box” in Learn@UW. These are “real papers” in the sense that they should be organized, have an argument and conclusion, and use topic sentences and good grammar. They DO NOT require any library research but should show thought given to the ideas in the assigned readings, citing the author and presenting your own ARGUMENT about one or more specific ideas. Your paper should (a) compare and contrast one reading with another or (b) use a reading to discuss/analyze some personal experience you’ve had or (c) connect a reading with something you learned in some other course or context, (d) compare and contrast some aspect of the assigned week’s reading with issues previously raised in this class, or (e) apply a reading to analyze a film, photos, ads or a news article relevant to the course. AT LEAST one paper MUST be completed by October 12 and both must be completed before November 15. One re-do of ONE paper is permitted (a new week’s work however, not editing) before the Nov. 15 deadline. An A on a response paper represents not only good understanding of the author’s point, but a coherent argument about its strength or limitations for understanding something; AB reflects good basic understanding but less success in applying, critiquing or connecting it; B suggests some shortcoming in getting the author’s point(s), but an effort to construct an argument based on that understanding; BC is underdeveloped in both understanding and argument; C is significantly mistaken in claims made about the reading and/or offers opinion rather than reading-based argument; F is too vague, unfocused or purely anecdotal to tell if there was misunderstanding or not, or what the argument would be.

3. The (one and only) take-home essay exam will give you considerable choice. You will get the questions on November 23 and the answer-essays are due in the appropriate dropbox December 6. The questions will be broad and integrative, not tests of memorization (hence it is an open-book exam). This exam counts 20% (10% for each essay). The response papers are good practice for this (another reason to do them early and have feedback on your performance) since the exam is graded the same way as they are.

4. Final project – a short RESEARCH paper applying some of the readings to a discussion of gender politics anywhere in the world. You need to pick a political issue or struggle that is relevant for studying gender relations and focus on analyzing how the concepts of the course apply to your
chosen case. It may be American, European, non-Western, or comparative in focus. It could be tied to a social movement (like pacifism in the US, or feminism in Chile), a policy (like affirmative action in Germany, welfare reform in the US), an organization (like the European Women’s Lobby or DAWN), a campaign (for a policy change like legalizing prostitution, stopping sex trafficking, or increasing the number of women on corporate boards). The paper has to be done in stages, each of which carries points toward the final grade, and it has to make real, appropriate use of at least THREE of the books or articles of the assigned reading list as well as whatever outside research sources you need (a MINIMUM of three additional books or articles). This paper counts for 25% of your final grade.

Stage 1. Pick a topic and find one book or article that deals directly with it. Write a short (300 word or so) review that summarizes what you now know about the topic and ends with a question that you want to do some more research/reading to answer. Stage 1 DUE in class November 16 (12 points)

Stage 2. Do a search in the library and on the web for additional information on your topic and put together a one-page bibliography that includes at least 5 possible scholarly sources (to use in addition to class readings). Stage 2 DUE in class November 23. (12 points)

Stage 3. Do the reading and write a new 500 word thematic statement describing your current take on your topic, what has changed in your thinking about it as you have been reading, and what you want the thesis/argument of your paper to be. Include the revised bibliography you have put together and are using, and make sure your project has some argument to make about the case. Stage 3 DUE in class December 14 (12 points)

Stage 4. The final paper, approximately 10-15 double-spaced pages or 2500-3500 words. The final paper will be judged on thoughtful use of concepts from the course (showing that you understand and can apply them) as well as on the quality of outside research done on the particular case you have chosen to look at in more detail. You are expected to quote appropriately from both the assigned readings and the additional research you did. FINAL PAPERS DUE December 20. (64 points in the dropbox (which will close at 5pm that day).

The whole final project (all 100 points) is worth 25% of your grade but the first three stages together contribute more than a third of the value of that grade. Any early stage work that is turned in late loses a point for each day that it is late. Any of the stages can be turned in early. Late final papers will only be accepted by prior arrangement and with a grade penalty. An A means that your knowledge of course materials is used constructively with your library research to say something thoughtful about the particular instance of feminist politics you chose. AB is well researched and shows good understanding of the course but does not integrate the two well. B means you fell somewhat short on the research OR understanding elements, BC represents some weakness in both or serious weakness in one element; C means serious weaknesses in both aspects but some positive work in one or the other respect; F is inadequate work in both regards.

There is NO Final Exam for this course: your appropriate use of the assigned readings in developing and carrying out your final project is how I will test your knowledge of the material.

Additional issues:

All students are encouraged to use the resources of the Writing Lab (located in Helen C. White), especially if you have not previously done this sort of writing. They offer both group classes and individual tutoring. In addition, they have a collection of books on how to write good papers, including
A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers, by the Sociology Writing Group (St. Martin's, 1994 [third edition]) and A Writer's Reference, by Diana Hacker (St. Martin's, 1995 [third edition]). I personally recommend Writing for Social Scientists by Howard Becker (Univ. of Chicago). Start exploring topics for your project early and take time to get feedback from the Writing Center and to talk with me about your plans. I do NOT read advance drafts.

I have set aside a class for working together on using the library effectively for researching gender politics; in my experience even graduate students can learn a few more good tricks; in addition there is a class in which you will be presenting your project ideas and can develop research teams on related topics (although the final paper must be written individually).

All students are also reminded of the university’s rules on academic honesty and plagiarism. Knowledge of these rules is your responsibility, and lack of familiarity with the rules does not excuse misconduct. A clear definition of plagiarism as well as information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct may be found at the Dean of Students web site: http://www.wisc.edu/students/UWS14.htm. In addition, note that I reserve the right to enter any work submitted for this class into the anti-plagiarism database maintained by the department where it can be checked against a huge multi-source inventory of past papers and will be kept on record so that it cannot be plagiarized from in future semesters. I deeply regret that the actions of a few require such safeguards to protect the rights of the many.

Honors and Graduate Students:
Honors students are invited to register for 3 credits with honors or to add a fourth credit. For 3 credits with honors, you are expected to do extra session of discussion-leading on the readings. For four credits you are expected to do an extra session of discussion-leading and either an extra short paper OR make your final paper reflect some original research (a content analysis of texts, interviews, observational data collection, etc). If the latter, you must clear the topic for your research with me before November 2 (ideally sooner) in a meeting in my office. Graduate students are expected to do the same additional work as a four-credit honors undergraduate.

Reading assignments.

Articles are available in a print-on-demand course pack from the Social Science Copy Center (6th floor of Sewell) and on electronic reserve via MadCat and as links on Learn@UW. In addition, there are links, visual materials and thought-questions that are ONLY available on Learn@UW. I will also post timely news (announcements of talks on campus, news stories about groups or events, etc). I invite you also to send links to articles to be shared.

Outline of topics and readings by week

WEEK 1: Sept 2 (Thursday) Organizational meeting and overview of the course. 
Focus: Introductions, discussion of requirements and syllabus, conceptual overview of “feminism” as a principle and gender as a political relationship.
Guiding questions: What is your own definition of feminism? How are women’s rights secured
politically and how might this need improvement (i.e. where and how do you see women’s subordination still evidenced?) How does the US look in a global perspective, and how do you explain why it does well/poorly for women in the ways you note?

WEEK 2: Sept 7-9 - Thinking about gender, women, inequalities
Focus: Developing a theoretical vocabulary with which to talk about gender politics as something both changing and contested. Intersectionality, gender, neoliberal, institution and regime as concepts.

Assigned:
Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “The social construction and institutionalization of gender and race” Pp. 3-43 in Ferree, Lorber and Hess, Revisioning Gender

Guiding questions: THEORY: What is the difference between “women” and “gender” as the object of politics? How does “woman” and “feminine” have a symbolic value apart from actual “women”? How is this contested and changing? How does the intersection of gender with other social inequalities (especially race and class) shape the potential meaning of “women” in more or less inclusive ways? APPLICATION: How do Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, Nancy Pelosi, George W. Bush and Barack Obama function as political symbols in the US understanding of gender? Can they provoke change and/or reflect change, or does discourse about them only provoke/reflect stereotyping?

WEEK 3: Sept 14-16 – The political discourses of motherhood and citizenship
Focus: Nation, citizenship, reproduction, femininity and discourse as concepts. The most common political discourse around women focuses on women-as-mothers, and this discourse often has to do with the meaning of the nation, membership in the national community (and exclusions from this) and the state’s interest in encouraging (or discouraging) women to reproduce (or not). But each national context offers its own types of discourse – here we look at three non-US cases that may illuminate the politics of the US too.

Assigned:

Guiding Questions: THEORY: what do these authors mean by a discourse and how do they identify particular discourses to study empirically? How are their arguments about the uses of motherhood as nation-constructing similar and how are they different? How does each discourse exclude women as well as target women? APPLICATION: How would you describe the national discourse around motherhood in the US? How does it contribute to our national identity as “American” and whom does it include and exclude?
WEEK 4: Sept 21-23 – The political discourse of war and peace
Focus: The concepts of honor, masculinities, authority and power/empowerment. Associating men and masculinity with war and being warriors is as pervasive a discourse as that which frames women through motherhood. Speaking about men and machismo can serve to justify wars or to criticize them. The conflicting ideas about national honor and male violence that are used in these debates can shape reactions to specific actions or policies but also to nations imagined in terms of gender relations as weak or strong, feminine or masculine.

Assigned:
Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, Intro &Ch 1 (pp. 1-42)
Bush as Cowboy, Women Warrior Images (L@UW)

Guiding Questions:
THEORY: What is the specific use of masculinity as a discourse in each article? Is it one unified discourse or many (with what differences if any among them) and who uses it/them? In the authors’ views, is it the direct or indirect use of masculinity discourse that primarily shapes perceptions of a nation, a conflict, a policy or a strategy? APPLICATION: What would be politically powerful or weak ways to talk about US foreign policy today? Can you think of ways to talk about war and peace that do NOT use images of masculinity in either positive or negative ways? Is Barack Obama’s masculinity being called into question in current war debates?

WEEK 5 – September 28-30 – Aliens among us? The gendered political discourse of immigration
Focus: Concepts of community(ies), borders, belonging, othering. Political questions often carry a gendered text or subtext in which the visibility or invisibility of women and men as the causes of or solutions to problems will vary. Here we explore migration and immigrants from a gendered perspective of who speaks and who is spoken about.

Assigned:

Guiding Questions:
THEORY: Why and when is gender made visible in debates about “otherness”? How do actors with different political interests frame immigrant women: as victims in need of protection? As reproductive threats? As national heroes? As essential providers of labor and services in the global economy? APPLICATION: What are some of the ways that migrant women are discussed in the US in heated debates about immigration? When do they become more visible or invisible? Do they get to speak?

WEEK 6 - October 5-7 – Gender in the world polity – how women’s rights are made to matter

Focus: Concepts of human rights, world polity, normative conflict, advocacy networks. World polity theory claims that there are links among nation states that enable and constrain the flow of discourse reframe the significance of “women” and “rights” over time. Here we consider the big shifts in women’s position on the world stage, and whether the transformation of women’s human rights is related to other broad shifts in discourse and/or to women’s concrete struggles to make their voices heard.

Assigned:

Guiding Questions: THEORY: Think about changes over time without making “time” the social actor responsible for these shifts: what are the forces that lead to change? How does change spread over space and time? How do earlier changes relate to later ones? APPLICATION: Do you know of any struggles to extend more political recognition to women? How do newspaper editorials today talk about women, human rights and gender equality? That is, what aspects are still controversial and what is consensus?

October 12 – deadline to have at least one reaction paper finished

WEEK 7 – October 12-14 Gender and globalization: preserving or remaking masculinity(ies)?

Focus: Concepts of discrimination, equality, justice, globalization. While most scholars and people at large are in agreement that “women’s roles” have been changing, the question of whether men are changing is more hotly debated. If there is change, who or what is changing masculinity, why and how?

Assigned:

Related news and views: Lisa Belkin, "the evolution of dad" NYTimes June 2010.

Kathleen Gerson Lecture Wednesday/Thursday

**Guiding Questions:** THEORY: What is the patriarchal bargain? which men are privileged and how? What differences do you see among the discourses about men as workers and as fathers in these articles? How does gender become discursively equated only with women? what are the effects of this (in)visibility on policy and politics? APPLICATIONS: How has the globalized economy of production affected men you know? (does it vary by generation? by class? by race? by politics?). Have you noticed Americans talking about boys-in-school as "falling behind" women these days? What conclusions are drawn from this "emerging inequality"?

**WEEK 8 - October 19-21 - race and gender in making and remaking the US welfare system**

**Focus:** Key concepts are carework, welfare state, dependency, genealogy, racialization. While "poverty" is supposed to be the target of welfare policy, in many ways women, especially Black women in the US are the practical targets. Here we look at a discourse about race, gender, mothers/fathers and families that usually hides its specificity in the universalizing language of "dependency."

**Assigned:**


Other useful references:


**Guiding Questions:** THEORY: How are the discourses of dependency gendered even if not explicitly so? How does "dependency" frame what "reform" should accomplish? What makes "dependency" so negative in American framing? How does dependency relate to thinking of all women and men as rights-bearing citizens (or not)? What is the relationship between motherhood and dependency in this discourse? APPLICATIONS: Does it matter to non-recipient women and families how Americans talk about welfare and “welfare mothers”? How might it affect your personal rights, obligations and freedoms?

**Week 9 October 26 – 28  Islam and racialized gender politics**

**Focus:** Key concepts are modernity, tradition(alism), identity, subject position. In Europe, the veil symbolizes a complex of supposedly traditional practices of patriarchy (arranged marriages, honor killings, purdah, etc) and is part of a discourse constructing Europe as modern and thus gender
egalitarian. Here we look at the construction of Muslims as a threat and the struggle over control of women’s bodies as a response.

**Assigned:**

*Other useful references:*

**Guiding Questions:**
**THEORY:** How do the different authors characterize the types of discourses being used to frame veiling as a threat? What consequences do discourses like modern/traditional, forced/free, secular/religious, us them have for Muslim communities and for the non-Muslim communities around them? How do boundaries and contrasts work discursively? Who gets to speak about the implications of veiling or arranged marriage? **APPLICATIONS:** How is “our” emancipation exaggerated by focusing on “their” gender oppression (whatever form it may take – genital cutting, honor killing, etc)? In your experience, how are Americans similar to/different from Europeans in politicizing women’s bodies?

**Week 10 – Nov 2-4 Struggling over non-normative sexualities**

**Focus:** Concepts are autonomy, choice, freedom, embodiment, regulation. Like race and class, sexuality and age intersect with gender to define some women and men as more entitled to autonomy, sexual freedoms and citizenship rights. Homosexuality and non-marital sex are particularly controversial in the US and can lead to denial of rights. We consider this domain “intimate citizenship” as it relates to the embodied individual and their rights to relationships.

**Assigned:**
Murray, Melissa 2008 “Equal Rites and Equal Rights.” *California Law Review*

**Guiding Questions:** **THEORY:** Citizenship as a relationship to the state may be in tension with other relationships because the state has the authority to decide what relationships count and for what. How do states do this? Do these authors think it is succeeding in making its decisions count?
Why or why not? APPLICATION: Is marriage a good thing (not just for same-sex couples but for anyone) or would we all be better off with civil unions or no ceremony at all? How about changing your name at marriage – is that a patriarchal imposition or what?

Week 11 – November 9-11 – struggling for family equity in a context of class competition
Focus: Concepts are ideology, agency, commodification, de-institutionalization. While the notion of the two-earner family is increasingly normalized, how feminist is it in its effects? Here we look at the pressures to make children successful and the institutional obstacles to taking time off and continuing a career trajectory as cultural constraints on gender equality.

Assigned:

Related news and views: NY Times articles on L@UW including Leonhardt, David 2010 “A labor market punishing to mothers” and Bennhold, Katrin 2010 “the stigma of being a housewife”
Some other good resources on L@UW:
Goldin, Claudia 2004 The long road to the fast track; career & family The ANNALS, 596: 20-37
Ramey & Ramey, 2009 The Rug-Rat-Race, NBER working paper.

Guiding Questions:
THEORY: How do the debates about women and work, gender and families, work-family balance get shaped by histories of state provision? By changing transnational norms? By continuing assumptions about the different roles of men and women in families? By the intensification of competition in the global labor market? APPLICATION: What are the realistic constraints on and idealistic norms for gender balanced relationships (same or opposite sex) that are being considered in your generation? How would you envision them changing by the time your children are your age?

November 15 – deadline for both reaction papers (including rewrite, if any)
November 16 – stage 1 (topic) of final paper due

Week 12 & 13 - Nov 16-18 - 23 – What is still radical about gender equality?
Focus: concepts include social movement, mobilization strategies, radicalism, pragmatism. The relation between current discourses of gender equality as an aspect of modern society and the ongoing struggles for women’s empowerment and intersectional social justice.

Nov 16 – web of science and research strategies for final paper
November 18 – Discussion of radical changes and movement struggles; Raewyn Connell guest lecture

November 23 – Discussion of exam questions, paper topics and process in final paper

November 23 – Stage 2 (first bibliography) of final paper due

THANKSGIVING

WEEK 14 – Nov 30-Dec 2 – Gendered citizenship: creating subjects and drawing boundaries


Nov 30 – guest lecture – Hae Yeon Choo, gendered incorporation in S. Korea
Dec 2 – guest lecture – Nicole Kaufman, prisoner reentry and US women’s citizenship

WEEK 15 – Dec 7-9 – Social movements, radical discourse and political transformations

Focus: Concepts are coalition, solidarity, transnationalism, agenda-formation. We consider where an intersectional feminism may go in the future, including the obstacles to and strategies for coalitions for social justice across differences.

Assigned:


Guiding Questions: THEORY: what makes coalitions difficult and how and when are such difficulties being overcome? Where are struggles to create a more inclusive feminism more successful and how do the movement actors deal with the challenges they face? APPLICATIONS: How do you see US feminists coping with these challenges? How does global discourse impact the local feminist discourses you hear? How might feminist activists in the US learn from history or from struggles in other places and what would they learn?

December 14 – stage 3 (thematic statement and revised bibliography) of final paper due

WEEK 16 – December 14 – discussion of final papers in process (theoretical contributions of in-class readings taken as a whole and how the assigned readings contribute to your argument)

December 20. FINAL PAPER DUE (in dropbox of L@UW).