**Course Title:** Feminist Political Thought  
**Course Code:** (GI) GEND 3003 LNEN  
**Programs Offering Course:** Semester Global Internship, London Open Campus Block  
**Open Campus Track:** Language, Literature, and Culture  
**Language of Instruction:** English  
**U.S. Semester Credits:** 3.00  
**Contact Hours:** 45.00  
**Term:** Spring Block I 2021

### 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 studies 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
- Explain 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. Lectures in this course are complemented by documentary films, music videos, and other forms of visual media that present unique genealogies of feminist thought in dynamic and challenging ways.

### Assessment and Final Grade

| 1. | Group presentation | 20% |
| 2. | Reading responses  | 20% |
| 3. | Video essay        | 20% |
| 4. | Final Essay        | 20% |
| 5. | 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 about 1000 to 1250 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, thesis, or key contributions. Students will post their responses on Canvas at least 24 hours before the class in which we take up the reading.

Video essay

Week 5 focuses on contemporary feminist political thought in the host country. Using multimedia resources, students will submit and defend a position paper on a current political challenge or crisis for the contemporary feminist in the city of study. Students will be asked to carry out independent ethnographic observation in a social context of their own choice, but one that connects to a general theme of the course. Students will be required to formulate a research question to guide their research, and use course literature to structure a response. Students will also be required to submit a short, 2-3 minute video essay in which they present and defend their position. Videos are expected to present edited images, graphs, and other media resources into the allocated time to demonstrate the argument.

Final Essay

The final paper for this course is 2500-3000 words long. This paper must be an in-depth analysis of one of the topics discussed in class, and include and discuss at least 5 scholarly sources. This essay is intended to get you thinking critically 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 it. 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.

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 on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all 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, 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 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 any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. 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.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</th>
<th>Minimum Penalty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 - 20%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements; 3% grade penalty &amp; written warning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion</td>
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N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Weekly Schedule

**Week 1**

Class: 1.0 Introduction to Course

Our first meeting 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.

**Week 2**

Class: 2.0 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 feminist 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.


Valenti, Jessica. “#MeToo is about more than stopping rape. We demand more.” The Guardian. 31 January 2018.
Instructor will select a variety of media representations of feminism in local and global contexts.

Class: 3.0 Feminist Waves

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


Class: 4.0 The Birth of Feminism in the Host Country

The subject of this class will be the emergence of feminism and a women’s movement in the country of study. Particular attention will be paid to the ideological moorings and to philosophies imported from the US and/or other countries. After discussing the assigned essay, we will visit a historical site relevant to history of women’s liberation.


Week 3

Class: 5.0 Liberal Feminism

In this class, students will be asked to interrogate liberal feminist thought, 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.


Class: 6.0 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 the history of socialist movements and Marxist critique to better understand how socialist feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s focused their political goals.


Class: 7.0 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 abolition of sexual distinctions at its core. In this class, we will analyze the primary claims, strengths, and limitations of radical and cultural feminism. We will pay particular attention to ways that feminists of this persuasion fought violence against women and organized around ending sexual objectification.


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

Week 4

Class: 8.0 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 take race, cross-cultural difference, and global inequalities into account. In this class, following the work of Audre Lorde, we dive into difference as a productive, generative concept.


Class: 9.0 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 also work through the differences between “global” feminist political thought and transnational forms of feminist thought.


Class: 10.0 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 particular true in relation to forms of radical and cultural feminism 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 review concepts of the body, identity, gender performance, and sexuality as subjects of inquiry rather than presumed ground for scholarship.


**Due date for the completion of both Reading Responses**

Week 5

Class: 11.0 The Development of State Feminism

Gender equality is often a national policy promoted by the Government. Using historical case studies, we will learn about the development of feminism in the host country.

Class: 12.0 Transnational Impact and the Localization of Feminism

The past two decades witnessed the rapid development of feminism in the context of globalization and transnational linkage. While emphasizing the significant impact of transnationalism in shaping contemporary nationalist feminist thoughts and movements, we will also discuss various tensions arising from this process.

Class: 13.0 Young Activists, New Movements

The rise of young grassroots activists has changed the landscape for feminist movements in recent years. This week will focus on the feminist movement of the host country and the domestic impact they had.

**Due date for the completion of your Digital Project**

Week 6

Class: 14.0 Cultural Relativism

Our discussion of difference in classes 4.1 and 4.2 begs 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
coalitions that connect feminist movements in different geographical and cultural spaces and ask: what does it mean to participate in coalitions, alliances, and acts of solidarity?


Class: 15.0 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 catch-all 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.


Class: 16.0 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 re-tellings, and pay particular attention to practices of citation in feminist movements.


Due date for Final Paper.

**Course Materials**

**Readings**


