

Please note that this syllabus is subject to change during the semester. Please find the most up to date version on our Moodle site.

ANG 6303/ GEO 6994
Comparative Feminisms: On Faith and Feminism

Instructor: Dr Caroline Faria (cvfaria@fiu.edu)
Class meets: SIPA 355, Wednesdays 2-450

“What does feminism have to do with faith? ...the challenge and contradiction is in how religion has been taken up by the powers that be and masculinised throughout history. The question and tension becomes how to reconcile organized religion and feminism and if this is even possible or something that feminists can or should strive for.”

Gokal (2006)

“Feminisms and Fundamentalisms are now competing global forces, both attempting to find means to control the mechanisms of cultural representation”

Moallem (1999)

“We may best understand religion not as a discrete category of social life but as a way of being in the world...a process through which we come to recognize our own subjectivity”

Secor (2007)

Faith and religiosity are often considered incompatible with feminism and feminist activism, particularly around issues such as sex and sexuality. However, many people in both the Global North and South who are organizing against patriarchy, gender inequality and other forms of social injustice draw upon the doctrines of particular organized religions in their work, or may at least hold, perhaps with unease, both feminist and faith-based beliefs. Faith can lead to division and conflict within feminist movements (and vice versa) yet faith also powerfully shapes and drives some feminist work. Moreover, faith can be strategically used to gain recognition, acceptance or support from communities, governments or development donors. In this course we will use ideals of beauty, honor and fashion, notions of womanhood, work, debates around cultural and individual ‘rights’, and instances of violence, oppression and resistance as powerful lenses through which to explore the socio-cultural, economic and political tensions between faith, feminism and feminist theory. To do so we will draw on and explore a range of strands of feminist theory including; liberal, socialist postcolonial, post structural, political economy, and transnational feminisms.

Key Course Questions:

Some of the questions we will consider include:

- *What might more complex understandings of faith bring to analyses of feminist activism?*
- *How and where are faith-based and feminist beliefs converging or in conflict?*
- *How does this reframe or redirect social justice work or the practice of one’s religion?*
- *When and where can one’s faith be used strategically to forward or threaten feminist agendas?*
- *How are faith and feminism connecting to produce new spaces and places?*
- *How does faith and gender intersect as a form of social and individual regulation, disciplining and control? What opportunities might faith and feminism have for liberation and resistance?*

Course Objectives:

Intellectual goals:

- To review the key strands of feminist theory
- To review a series of broader theoretical concepts that are central to feminist theory
- To explore, discuss and debate the intersections between feminist thought and questions of faith

Goals for developing written/oral skills:

- To write in a range of forms
- To practice acting as 'discussant' - summarizing and presenting your ideas and the ideas of others to facilitate intellectual development
- To engage in respectful and intellectually productive conversation
- To complete one piece of written work that will move you forward in your own MA/PhD process

Course readings:

You have two required texts that will focus explicitly on questions of faith and feminism and that have some wonderful pieces on faith and colonialism, the politics of veiling and faith-based feminist activism from a geographic perspective. These are available from the University bookstore.

1. Morin, K.M. and Guelke, J.K. (2007) *Women, Religion and Space: Global Perspectives on Gender and Faith* Syracuse University Press
2. Falah, G.W. and Nagel, C. (2005) *Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion and Space* The Guildford Press: New York and London

In addition we will read a series of academic articles, popular news clippings, and book chapters which will be posted on our class Moodle page. You can access this page from www.ecampus.fiu.edu. **Please bring a hard copy of the books/papers to class so that we can avoid using laptops in the classroom.**

Assignments:

Weekly blogs x 10* (20%)

Due by midnight on Tuesdays. Please post at our Moodle site.

Each week as a way to prepare for class I would like you to complete a short (500 word) blog or 'think piece'. This serves a number of purposes; it will encourage you to read the material closely and critically, it will give us lots of rich material to discuss in class, and it will help you focus on a few key ideas that you may choose to take up in your longer papers. It is also an engaging way to hear from your peers outside of the classroom. Use this blog to review the key themes in the readings and the connections between at least 2 of the pieces; to perhaps pick out one or two key concepts or ideas that you want to talk more about in class; to discuss how the pieces made you feel (intrigued, confused, angry, excited...); and most importantly perhaps to raise questions for your peers that we can then take up in our discussion sessions. Note that your blog can be informal but you should always seek to be respectful in our shared learning space.

** note that you should blog for every class with readings assigned. There are 11 but you will be graded only for 10. This means you can have one 'pass' for busy, stressful weeks or weeks when you are going to be absent to class.*

Facilitation of the blog/reading material x 3 (15%)

Sign up on day 1 of class for 3 presentation dates

In most of our class sessions we will have 2 student facilitators or discussants. Each student will facilitate 3 times during the quarter. Your job as a facilitator/discussant is two-fold and you will be expected to draw both on the reading material and your peers' blogs in your role. You will start the class by briefly reviewing the articles and blogs and presenting what you see as some of the key arguments/ themes, the connections between the pieces and perhaps between the pieces and those from past weeks. Your role then is to facilitate discussion amongst the other students in the room. You should do this by highlighting some common, interesting, challenging and/or provocative questions raised in the blogs from which we can build a discussion. As a rule we will spend the first part of the class discussing what is useful, productive, engaging about the pieces before we move into criticism. When we do so, as facilitator/discussant, your role will be to highlight critiques you have identified or that were raised in the blogs. You should aim to facilitate during the sessions when you are not writing a more lengthy reflection paper and coordinate with your co-facilitator.

Reflection papers x 3 (30%)

Sign up on day 1 of class for reflection paper dates

Due in hard copy form in-class 3 times during the semester

During the semester you will write 3 reflection papers of approximately 4-5 pages (1.5 space). These papers provide you with space to develop your thoughts and will form the theoretical foundations for your final paper. Use these papers firstly to outline the key argument of one or more of the pieces and tell me how the author makes this argument (ie what evidence do they use, what theoretical approach, what methods?) Then take up a particular theme/concept/idea that it engages with and that you find interesting, problematic, useful etc. How do you understand what that theme/concept/idea means? How is it useful (or not) in pushing feminist thought and feminist engagements with faith forward? How might it be useful in your own work? What criticisms do you have and why? Use these papers to connect key course themes with your own intellectual trajectory and to move it forward in new ways.

Final paper (35%)

Draft due: Week 13, Wednesday 6th April (in-class)

Final due: Week 15, Wednesday 20th April (in-class)

I have left your culminating paper for the class deliberately loose and open. Very broadly speaking your final paper must demonstrate an engagement between your own work, at least 1 of the strands of feminist theory we have discussed in class and with at least 1 of the key concepts. Beyond this I am open to accepting a range of written work. You may choose to develop one or more of your reflective papers into a sustained theoretical engagement with some of the ideas and approaches we have covered in class that will in the future be useful for an empirical chapter of your dissertation, making sense of your fieldwork notes etc. If you are developing the foundations of your project this may be particularly helpful for you. If you are at the writing stage you may use this paper to write your literature review portion of the MA or PhD dissertation, a research or grant proposal, or one of the empirical chapters. Or if you are finishing up or well into the writing process you may choose to develop a chapter you have already written so that it engages with feminist theory with a view towards journal publication. We will discuss in class and in office hours what would work best for you wherever you are in the MA or PhD process.

Course outline:

Week 1, January 12th

Thinking about faith through a feminist lens: introductions

Introductions to the class, review of the course syllabus, and sign up for facilitation and reflection paper dates.

Assigned readings (due after the class meeting)

- Morin, K. and J. Guelke (2007) 'Preface' & 'Introduction' in [1]
- Nagel, C. (2005) 'Introduction' in [2]

Week 2, January 19th

Liberal feminisms: cultural versus individual rights and the struggles with multiculturalism

- Okin, S.M. (2000) 'Feminism, Women's Human Rights and Cultural Difference' in Narayan, U. and Harding, S. (eds) *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World* Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis
- Benhabib, S. (2002) 'Multiculturalism and Gendered Citizenship' [extracts on Multiculturalism, Laicite and the scarf affair in France] in *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* Princeton University Press p. 82-104
- Yuval-Davis, N. (1997) 'Cultural Reproduction and Gender Relations' [excerpt on 'Fundamentalism and Modernity' in particular] in *Gender and Nation* Sage Publications pp 39-66

And one of the following:

- Secor, A. (2005) 'Islamism, Democracy and the Political Production of the Headscarf Issue in Turkey' in [2]
- Goekariksel, B. (2007) 'A Feminist Geography of Veiling; Gender, Class and Religion in the making of modern subjects and public spaces in Istanbul' in [1]

Week 3, January 26th

Post-structural critiques 1: performativity, governmentality and the politics of the body

- Pratt, G. (2004) 'Spatializing the subject of feminism' in *Working Feminism* Temple University Press. pp 12-37
- Arthur, L.B. (1999) "Dress and social control of the body" in Linda B. Arthur (ed) *Religion, Dress and the Body* Oxford: Berg pp 1-8
- Secor, A. 'Afterword' in [1]

And one of the following:

- Fenster, T. (2007) *Gender, Religion and Urban Management: Women's Bodies and Everyday Lives in Jerusalem* in [1]
- Martin, A. (2000) 'Death of a Nation: Transnationalism, bodies and Abortion in Late Twentieth-Century Ireland' in Mayer, T. (eds) *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* Routledge: London and New York

Week 4, February 2nd

Political economies of gender: Feminist engagements with class, work and labor

Select three of the following:

- Mohammad, R. (2005) 'Negotiating spaces of the home, the education system, and the labor market: The case of young, working-class, British Pakistani Muslim women' in [2]
- Abisaab, M. (2005) 'Contesting Space: Gendered Discourse and labor amongst Lebanese Women' in [2]
- Silvey, R. (2005) 'Transnational Islam: Indonesian Migrant Domestic workers in Saudi Arabia' in [2]
- Davis, D.K (2005) 'A space of her own: Women, work and desire in an Afghan Nomad community' in [2]

Week 5, February 9th

A woman's place is....?: religious and/or conservative feminisms

- Mojab, S. (2001) 'Theorizing the Politics of 'Islamic Feminism' *Feminist Review*, No. 69, The Realm of the Possible: Middle Eastern Women in Political and Social Spaces (Winter) pp. 124-146
- Gallagher, S. (2004) 'Where Are the Antifeminist Evangelicals? Evangelical Identity, Subcultural Location, and Attitudes toward Feminism' *Gender and Society*, Vol. 18(4) (Aug) pp. 451-472
- Address by Laura Bush on Women's Rights in Afghanistan (radio clipping and text format) at <http://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011117.html>
- Flanders, L. (2001) 'Beyond the Burqa' *Z-Space: The spirit of resistance lives* Dec. 14
- Abu-Lughod, L. (2002) 'Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropological reflections on cultural relativism and its others' *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 783-790

Supplemental

- Ho, C. (2007) 'Muslim women's new defenders: Women's rights, nationalism and Islamophobia in contemporary Australia' *Women's Studies International Forum* 30(4): 290-298
- Lorber, J. (2002) 'Presidential address: Heroes, warriors, and burqas: A feminist sociologist's reflections on September 11' *Sociological Forum* 17(3): 377-396

Week 6, February 16th

Engaging the State 1: colonial and anti-colonialist feminisms

- Guelke, J. and Morin, K. (2007) 'Missionary Work in Early America: Prospects for a Feminist Geography' in [1]

- Kopf, J. (2007) Repression of Muslim Women's Movements in Colonial East Africa in [1]
- Guelke, L. (2007) Conversion of Native and Slave Women in Dutch Colonial South Africa: From Assimilation to Apartheid in [1]

Week 7, February 23th

Engaging the state 2: nationalism and feminism

- Yuval-Davis, N. (1997) 'Theorizing Gender and Nation' in *Gender and Nation* Sage publications pp.1-25
- Fluri, J. (2008) 'Feminist-nation building in Afghanistan: an examination of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)' in *Feminist Review* 89, 34–54
- Hale, S. (1997) 'Islamism and the Women Activists of the National Islamic Front' and 'Culture and Transformation: Concluding Remarks' in *Gender Politics in Sudan: Islamism, Socialism and the State* Westview Press pp. 185-254
- Mayer, T. (2000) 'From Zero to Hero: masculinity in Jewish Nationalism' in Mayer, T. (eds) *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* Routledge: London and New York

Week 8, March 2nd

Theorizing difference and identity in feminist theory: Intersectionality

- Hill Collins, P. (2000) 'It's all in the family: intersections of Gender, Race and Nation' in U. Narayan & S. Harding (eds) *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a multicultural, postcolonial and feminist world* Indiana University Press. pp156-176
- Crenshaw, K.W. (1994) 'Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics and violence against women of color' in M.A Fineman, R. Mykitiuk (eds) *The Public Nature of Private Violence*. New York: Routledge.
- Nash, C. (2008) 'Rethinking intersectionality' *Feminist Review* 89: 1-15

Week 9, March 9th

Post-structural critiques 2: Neoliberalism, self-improvement and the work of empowerment

- Cruickshank, B. (1999) 'The liberal arts of governance' in *The Will to Empower: Democratic citizens and other subjects* Ithaca: Cornell University Press pp. 43-62
- Sharma, A. (2008) 'Introduction (up to page xxv) in *Logics of Empowerment: development, Gender and Governance in Neoliberal India* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Erickson, L and Faria, C. (2011) 'We want empowerment for our women': Transnational Feminism, Neoliberal Citizenship, and the Gendering of Women's Political Subjectivity in Post conflict South Sudan *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2011, vol. 36, no. 3
- Chen, C. (2005) A Self of One's Own: Taiwanese Immigrant Women and Religious Conversion *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19(3) pp. 336-357

Week 10, March 16th

Spring break. No class. Use this time to rest (!) and work on the drafts of your final papers.

Week 11, March 23rd

Nature/Nurture: Ecofeminisms and Feminist Political Ecology

- Rocheleu, D., Thomas-Slayter, B. and Wangari, E. (1996) 'Gender and environment: A feminist political ecology perspective' in *Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences* London and New York: Routledge pp. 3-26
- Eaton, H. (2005) 'Ecological feminism: Overview and development' in *Ecofeminism Theologies*
- Daly, L. Ecofeminism, reverence for life and feminist theological ethics available at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2317>

Week 12, March 30th

Transnational feminisms 1: bridging the politics of place

- Grewal, I. and C. Kaplan (1994) 'Introduction: Transnational feminist practices and questions of postmodernity' in I. Grewal and C. Kaplan (eds) *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press pp. 1-33
- Kaplan, C. (1994) 'The politics of location in transnational feminist critical practice' in I. Grewal and C. Kaplan (eds) *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press pp. 137-152
- Moallem, M. (1999) 'Transnationalism, Feminism and Fundamentalism' in Kaplan, C., Alarcon, N. and Moallem, M. (eds) *Between woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms and the State* Duke University Press: Durham and London

Week 13, April 6th

Transnational feminisms 2: broadening the subjects and scale of 'politics'

- Mani, B. (2006). Beauty queens: Gender, ethnicity, and transnational modernities at the Miss India USA pageant. *Positions*, 14(3), 718-745
- Jamal, A. (2005) Feminist 'Selves' and Feminism's 'Others': Feminist Representations of Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan *Feminist Review*, No. 81, Bodily Interventions pp. 52-73
- Price, P. (1999) 'Bodies, Faith, and Inner landscapes: Rethinking Change from the Very Local' *Latin American Perspectives* 106 vol. 26(3): 37-59
- Vuola, E. (2002) 'Remaking Universals: Transnational Feminism(s) Challenging Fundamentalist Ecumenism' *Theory, Culture and Society* vol 19(1-2): 175-195

Week 14, April 13th

Association of American Geographers (AAG) conference, Seattle. No class.
Use this time to develop and complete your research papers.

Week 15, April 20th
Queering faith and feminism

In addition to a discussion of the readings we will use this session to hear about each of your research papers, future directions for your work and our reflections on the ideas we have learned about, discussed and debated during the semester.

- Swarr, A. and Nagar, R. (2003) 'Dismantling assumptions: interrogating "lesbian" struggles for identity and survival in Indian and South Africa' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2003, vol. 29, no. 2]
- Cobb, M.L. (2006) 'Introduction' and 'The language of national security: A Queer theory of religious language' in *God hates fags: The rhetoric of religious violence* New York: New York University Press. pp. 1-52
- Althaus-Reid, M. (2003) 'Introduction: theology in Other contexts: on gay bars and a Queer God' and 'Kneeling: deviant theologians' in *The Queer God* London: Routledge pp. 1-22