

**POLS/GWS 485**  
**GENDER AND POLITICS**  
**Prof. Norma Claire Moruzzi**  
**Spring 2016**  
**Thursday 3:30-5:45, BSB 1171**

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**Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 2-3 and by appointment**

### **Course Description**

Gender has existed as a significant aspect of human experience since the beginning of human society. But it is only in the modern period, since the “Age of Revolutions” (1763-1848) and the rise of democracy as a legitimate popular aspiration, that the “Woman Question” became a relevant political issue. Mary Wollstonecraft inaugurates modern feminist theory with her 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, itself a response to the exclusion of women as a category from radical democratic politics prompted by the French Revolution. Throughout the nineteenth century, as citizenship and political rights were grudgingly extended beyond an elite few male subjects, the question of women’s political participation (and its social basis) became increasingly relevant to political reform. In the twentieth century, and especially in the period after women seemed to have achieved political equality with the right to vote, the apparently straightforward issue of women’s rights evolved into the more complex problem of women’s (and men’s) gendered identity. Simone De Beauvoir’s famous 1949 statement, “One is not born but rather becomes, a woman,” established the beginning of Second Wave feminism and placed into question not only the biological categories of male and female but the social constructions of masculinity and femininity. Gender became an analytical prism, like class or race, through which implicit power relations in even the most ordinary daily practices could be examined.

This course examines the relationship between gender (defined as a social construct of identity and practice) and politics (defined as both formal and informal relations of power). The course also takes an international perspective; all of the texts we read have been enormously influential, and all of them focus beyond U.S. society. This broadened perspective is intended to help us reflect critically on our own normalization of familiar conventions and generalization of immediate experiences (gendered and otherwise). Our study will be necessarily selective but attempt to examine a variety of issues from both historical and contemporary perspectives, including gendered relations of work, family, sexuality, class; issues of self-conception; problems of spatial and subject location in reference to the city and/or the state.

We will be studying gender and politics, but through an interdisciplinary lens. Our readings include fiction, philosophy, social theory, history, political science, urban studies, and anthropology; we will focus closely on how authors construct their arguments as well as what those arguments are. We will begin with an examination of different kinds of feminist theory: radical politics published under conditions of state censorship (Chernyshevsky’s *What Is to Be Done?*) and the conceptual bridge between First and Second Wave feminism published during

the apparent feminist hiatus of postwar peace, rights, and prosperity (De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*). We will then consider how contemporary theoretical insights can change the way we view classical texts, including our assumptions about the supposedly clear historical distinctions between public politics and private relationships (the first two volumes of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and Plato's *The Symposium*). In the last section of the course we will examine some aspects of the intersection of gender and politics in the lives of ordinary Muslim women and men, including issues of dress, sexuality, leisure, and rebellion, and looking at specific analyses in such diverse societies as France, Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

### **Course Requirements**

Attendance is required; two unexplained absences will lower your grade, as they will interfere with your ability to contribute to the discussions that are an integral part of the seminar. Students are expected to do all assigned readings, and to have the reading done before class in order to participate in the discussion. Please have a copy of the reading available with you in class, as we will be looking closely at passages in the texts. You are encouraged to consider the course material critically and with imagination; all responsible contributions to discussion are welcome.

Grades will be based on classroom participation and writing assignments. Beginning with Week 2 (Chernyshevsky) all students are required to submit short weekly critical response papers (approximately 2 pages for undergrads; 3 pages for grads). Critical response papers must be submitted by 5pm on Wednesday in paper form in my BSB1122A office doorbox; electronic versions will only be accepted with the consent of the instructor. Critical response papers are your thoughtful response to and engagement with the reading; they can be enthusiastic or questioning, but they should be focused and specific. These papers are intended to help you be sure you are thinking about the text, as well as reading it! In addition, all students are required to write three longer analytical essays on the readings: approximately 5-7 pages for undergrads; 7-9 pages for grads. These papers will build on the shorter response papers, enabling you to review your initial writing as you prepare a more formal essay.

Grades will be calculated on the following basis: class participation (20%); weekly critical response papers (20%); three longer essays (20% each).

You are expected to behave with academic integrity: you can check the university policy on this at: <http://www.uic.edu/ucatalog/GR.shtml#qa>

Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access and participation in this course must be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Please contact ODS at 312-413-2103 (voice) or 312-413-0123 (TTY).

Students must notify the instructor within the first ten days of the semester of the specific dates on which they are requesting an absence for religious observance.

## Required Readings

(\*readings are books available from the UIC bookstore; •readings are book chapters available on Blackboard; °readings are journal articles available through the UIC library)

- \*Nikolai Chernyshevsky, trans. Michael Katz, *What Is to Be Done?* (Cornell University Press, 1989)
- \*Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Knopf/Doubleday, 2011); (other editions are available)
- \*Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction* (Vintage, 1990); (trans. 1978; French edition 1976)
- \*Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. II: The Use of Pleasure* (Vintage, 1990); (trans. 1985; French edition 1984)
- \*Plato. *The Symposium*
- \*Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (Yale University Press, 1992)
- Stephanie Cronin, “Coercion or empowerment? Anti-veiling campaigns: a comparative perspective” in Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, modernism, and the politics of dress* (Routledge, 2014)
- °Norma Claire Moruzzi, “A Problem with Headscarves: Contemporary Complexities of Political and Social Identity” in *Political Theory* Vol. 22, No. 4 (November, 1994), 653-672
- °Arlene Macleod, “Hegemonic Relations and Gender Resistance: The New Veiling as Accommodating Protest in Cairo” in *Signs* Vol. 17, No. 3 (Spring, 1992), 533-557
- °Norma Claire Moruzzi, “Trying to Look Different: *Hijab* as the Self-Presentation of Social Distinctions” in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, African and the Middle East* Vol. 28, No. 2, (2008), 225-234
- °Fatemeh Sadeghi, “Negotiating with Modernity: Young Women and Sexuality in Iran” in in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, African and the Middle East* Vol. 28, No. 2, (2008), 250-259
- °Afsaneh Najmabadi, “Transing and Transpassing across Sex-Gender Walls in Iran” in *Women’s Studies Quarterly* Vol. 36, No. 3/4 (Fall 2008), 23-42
- \*Pascal Menoret, *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt* (Cambridge University Press, 2014)

## Syllabus

Jan. 14      **Introduction:** The Politics of Gender

### **Part I: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gender & Politics: An Early Intervention**

Jan. 21      Chernyshevsky, *What Is to Be Done?*

Jan. 28      Chernyshevsky, *What Is to Be Done?*

Feb. 4      **No Class**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Longer Essay Due**

## **Part II: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Feminism: Equality and Difference**

Feb. 11 De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Feb. 18 De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

## **Part III: Questions of Power & Identity: Sexuality as an Institution**

Feb. 25 Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*

Mar. 3 Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. II: The Use of Pleasure*  
(pay particular attention to Part 4, "Erotics")

Mar. 10 Plato, *Symposium*

## **Part IV: The Personal is Political: Gender & Politics in Muslim Societies**

Mar. 17 Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Longer Essay Due**

Mar 24 **SPRING BREAK**

Mar. 31 **State Anti-Veiling Campaigns:**

Cronin, "Coercion or empowerment?"

Moruzzi, "A Problem with Headscarves" (France)

Apr. 7 **Multiple Meanings of Veiling as Choice:**

Macleod, "Hegemonic Relations and Gender Resistance" (Egypt)

Moruzzi, "Trying to Look Different" (Iran)

Apr. 14 **Problems of Sexuality and Power:**

Sadeghi, "Negotiating with Modernity" (Iran)

Najmabadi, "Transing and Transpassing" (Iran)

DOCUMENTARY: *Be Like Others*, dir. Tanaz Eshaghian, 2008

Apr. 21 **Men and Cars:**

Menoret, *Joyriding in Riyadh* (Saudi Arabia)

Apr. 28 **Course Conclusion**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Longer Essay Due During Finals Week**