Overview

This class provides a critical introduction to feminism and its implications for politics. Over the last few decades, feminists have systematically challenged the longstanding view that politics is gender-neutral by uncovering masculinist bias and drawing attention to the neglected experiences, values and arguments of women. Feminists have also reconstructed key political concepts and practices and expanded the range of issues and ideas understood to be political. Beyond this shared starting point, feminists are divided over the appropriate methods and goals of political analysis and strategy. Thus feminism is itself a site of political struggle. All this makes the relationship between feminism and politics a challenging and rewarding area of study.

The class is taught in ten seminars, plus a revision workshop on a date to be announced. Seminars are intended to maximise effective student participation. Each, aside from the first, will open with a 15 minute collaborative presentation by students, responding to one of the listed seminar questions and making use of OHPs (or handouts). This will be
followed by general discussion. Seminar topics follow three main headings, beginning with core feminist concepts then looking at feminist engagements with the kind of themes that are usually studied under the rubric of politics. We then evaluate the ways in which feminists have expanded politics beyond the usual boundaries of the discipline. The class is assessed through written coursework and an exam. A summary of the class follows:

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<tr>
<th>Wk 1</th>
<th>Introduction: What is feminism? Why study feminism?</th>
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<td><strong>Part 1: Core feminist claims</strong></td>
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<td>Wk 2</td>
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<td>Power, the public and the private</td>
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<td><strong>Part 2: Feminist engagements with politics</strong></td>
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<td>Wk 6</td>
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<td>Development</td>
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<td><strong>Part 3: Feminist extensions of politics</strong></td>
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<td>Wk 8</td>
<td>Reproduction and motherhood</td>
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<td>Wk 9</td>
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<td>Wk 10</td>
<td>No seminar <em>Essay due</em></td>
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**Aims**

This class aims to:

- provide an overview of contemporary feminist theory and practice and of the main areas of agreement and dispute amongst feminists;
- examine and assess feminist criticisms of the politics discipline;
- foster a critical understanding of feminist reconstructions of political concepts and practices;
- interrogate feminist debates that expand political argument to new issues;
- encourage evaluation of competing strands of feminist argument.
Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

By the end of this class, you should be able to:
• identify key developments and debates within contemporary feminism;
• understand feminist critiques of mainstream political theory and practice;
• assess the strengths and weakness of feminist reconstructions of mainstream political concepts and strategies;
• assess feminist debates on issues usually positioned as non-political;
• apply feminist arguments to wider political debates.

Skills (intellectual/transferable)

Seminar presentations and discussions will require you to:
• select, take notes from and review relevant written material;
• prepare, articulate and defend reasoned answers to set questions;
• work collaboratively with others;
• develop your presentation skills: communicate your ideas effectively and succinctly by using overheads and handouts and by keeping within prescribed time-limits.

The assessed written work of this class will require you to:
• read one key text in detail and convey its arguments in your own words;
• research answers to essay questions by drawing on a range of material;
• understand, analyse and evaluate the material you have read;
• work out and sustain well-structured and convincing lines of argument;
• express yourself clearly and succinctly.

General Class Regulations

Plagiarism

Essays which are even partly plagiarised will be subject to penalties and a zero mark may be awarded.

Any prima facie case of plagiarism in the Department will be considered by a Committee normally composed of the Lecturer responsible for the given class, the Undergraduate Director and the Head of Department or his nominee. The student involved will have a right to give evidence to the Committee. If the Committee decides that plagiarism has occurred a penalty will be imposed and a zero mark may be awarded at the discretion of the Committee. The student will be warned with regards to his/her future conduct. In accordance with University regulations, serious cases will be reported to the University Secretary and may be dealt with by the Senate.
Discipline Committee. The Regulations for the proceedings of the University Disciplinary Committee are in Ordinances 5.4 and 5.6.

**Attendance**
In each Honours class **attendance at seminars is compulsory**. Any absence from seminars must be covered by a medical certificate, or a satisfactory explanation, in person, to your tutor. Any student missing two seminars without satisfactory explanation will be required to attend a meeting with the Undergraduate Director: Honours and Head of Department.

**Honours Essays and Dissertations**
Students should not wholly or substantially reproduce material from their dissertations in their essays. If in any doubt consult your class tutor.

**Late submission of essays**
Late submission of work will normally result in a penalty. There is a standard Department of Government penalty:

- For all or part of the first week after submission date: **10 PER CENT OFF ASSESSED MARKS**
- For part or all of the second week after submission date: **A FURTHER 10 PER CENT OFF ASSESSED MARK**
- After second week: **NO MARKS**

The Department will always consider sympathetically certified cases of illness or adverse personal circumstances and will not apply the rule in an uncaring manner. The rules are designed to help students plan their work sensibly and to ensure equity between students.

**Procedures in event of mitigating circumstances and illness**
The Board of Examiners will consider any evidence about circumstances, medical or otherwise, which may have affected the student's performance. As such, it is important for the student to provide any evidence of such circumstances in writing to the Board. Students should submit such evidence to the Examinations Officer in the Department, Wolfgang Rüdig, who will forward it to the Board. All evidence should be submitted as soon as possible and in any case at least a week before the Board meeting.

**Academic Policies, Procedures and Guidelines**
The University’s academic policies, procedures and guidelines, including the complaints procedure, are available at: http://www.mis.strath.ac.uk/Secretariat/Publications/general/procedures/index.html.
**Disability Equality Scheme**
The University is committed to promote and deliver disability equality across all policies and activities. Details of the University’s Disability Equality Scheme are available at:
http://www.strath.ac.uk/disabilityservice/disabilityequalityscheme/

**Disability Services**
The University’s Disability Adviser is Anne Simpson, and her office is in Room 4.41 Graham Hills Building, 50 George Street, tel. 0141 548 3402, email a.simpson@mis.strath.ac.uk. Students with disabilities should contact the Disability Services as early as possible in the academic year if they feel that they will require additional support or equipment as a result of a disability or health problem.

It is essential that students who think that they will require special exam arrangements make an appointment with the Disability Service to discuss these arrangements, and that they do so at least two months prior to their first diet of exams, so that there is ample time for students to supply written evidence of the need for these special arrangements.

The Departmental Disability advisor is Dr Robert Johns and his office is McCance 4.42, 16 Richmond Street, tel. 0141 548 2668, email robert.johns@strath.ac.uk.

**Writing Good Essays**
A guide to writing good essays and exam answers is available on the Department of Government’s Web Page:
http://www.strath.ac.uk/government/.

**Credit Value**
This class has a credit weighting of 20 and an associated ‘learning time’ of 200 hours. This means that the time spent in seminars is only a small part of the time you need to devote to your studies. The total time spent on reading, presentations, researching and writing assessment essays, and preparing for and sitting the formal examination should be no less than 200 hours.
Assessment and Examination

There will be a formal two hour examination at the end of the academic year on a date yet to be decided. This examination will constitute 60% of your final mark. There is a model exam paper included at the end of this handout (Appendix B).

In addition you will be required to submit two pieces of course work. The first is a book review of no more than 1000 words. This will constitute 10% of your final mark. The last date for submission is Tuesday 6 November 2007 at 4.45 pm (week 6). You can choose any book listed in this handout, except those recommended for purchase (in other words, you should be reading something other than the core books for the class!). Tips for writing a book review are included at the end of this handout (Appendix A).

The second piece of assessed course work is an essay of approximately 3000 words. This will constitute 30% of your final mark. The last date for submission is Tuesday 4 December 2007 at 4.45 pm (week 10). You are strongly advised to complete your essay in advance of this deadline. Choose a question from those listed overleaf.

Essays and book reviews should be posted in the Politics Essay Collection Box (by Room 4.36). The box will be emptied at 4.45pm each day and all essays and book reviews therein will be date stamped. An extension may be granted in exceptional circumstances; it must be arranged in advance of the day of submission and is at Catherine Eschle’s discretion. Otherwise, late submission penalties will apply.

The course work and exam are intended to assess your substantive knowledge of topics covered in the class. They should demonstrate your ability to:
- identify relevant developments and debates within contemporary feminism;
- understand feminist critiques of mainstream political theory and practice;
- assess feminist reconstructions of key political concepts and strategies and feminist efforts to expand the remit of politics;
- apply feminist arguments to wider political debates.

The course work and exam are also intended to assess your study skills. They should demonstrate your ability to:
- convey the argument of a key text in your own words;
- research answers to essay questions by drawing on a range of material;
- understand, analyse and evaluate the material you have read;
- work out and sustain convincing lines of argument;
- express yourself clearly and succinctly.
Essay Questions

1. ‘Feminism is politics’ (Anne Phillips). Discuss.

2. Explore the implications of Judith Butler’s claim that ‘non-normative sexual practices call into question the stability of gender as a category of analysis’.

3. Compare and contrast TWO feminist theories of patriarchy.

4. To what extent, and in what ways, is affirmative action justified in the pursuit of women's equality with men?

5. Explore Ruth Lister’s claim that feminists have ‘developed a theory and praxis of citizenship which challenges the idea that citizenship is “just something for the boys”.

6. Should feminists support or oppose nationalist struggles?

7. Why has Vandana Shiva’s approach to development been so widely criticised – and to what extent do you think the criticisms are deserved?

8. The feminist focus on abortion has in recent years broadened into a ‘reproductive rights’ agenda. Why has this change taken place and what are its implications?

9. To what extent, and in what ways, has politics been defined as a masculine activity?

Format of Teaching

The class is taught in ten seminars, plus a revision workshop. Seminars are intended to maximize effective student participation. Each seminar will open with a 15 minute collaborative presentation by students, responding to one of the listed seminar questions and making use of OHPs and handouts. Presentations will be followed by discussions and group work. Note that ALL students are expected to read TWO of the four listed seminar readings in advance of every seminar so that you can contribute to discussion.
Reading

Books Recommended for Purchase

There is no one set text for this class because there is no one book that covers all or most of the topics. However, the following cover several of the seminar topics and one or two would be useful to have. The seminar readings are mostly drawn from these books. Although the Phillips and Squires are a little old, the former contains several classic essays and the latter offers a sustained, coherent account of the relation between feminism and politics. The Blakeley and Bryson is much newer, and focuses on primarily on issues of state and democracy as well as having an interesting essay on development. The Ricciutelli et al. contains more geographically diverse contributions that don’t follow the themes of the class so closely but would take your analysis in interesting directions:


You could also consider purchasing one of the following surveys of feminist thought. They are not sources of weekly reading but rather give good overviews of the different strands of feminist theorizing and will thus be a useful background resource.


How to Use the Reading List

Reading is listed under weekly topics. You are all expected to read TWO of the listed seminar readings in advance of every session so that you are able to contribute to the discussion. When you are presenting, and when you are preparing for the essay and exam, you will also need to draw on the further reading. If you have difficulty getting hold of the specified reading, you are expected to use your initiative and look for other appropriate material. You are encouraged to make use of the internet, newspapers and feminist journals stored by the library, such as *Signs, Women’s Studies International Forum* and *Women and Politics* (all at 301.4 Serial).
Introduction: What is Feminism? Why Study Feminism?

This introductory session will provide an orientation to the structure and demands of the class. Seminar presentations will be allocated. In addition, you will be introduced to feminist theory and practice. We will be taking an overview of feminism as a movement, the origins and character of its ‘second wave’ in the west and the diverse expressions it can take. We will also take an initial look at the relevance of feminism to the study of politics.

Seminar questions

- What is feminism?
- What different kinds of feminism are there? Is feminism now so fragmented that it is more appropriate to talk of ‘feminisms’?
- Why should students of politics study feminism?

Seminar reading


Further reading


10
Week 2  
Sex and Gender  

The aim of this seminar is to evaluate the feminist sex/gender distinction and particularly the political implications of the argument that gender, as distinct from sex, is socially constructed. We will consider more recent feminist critiques of this distinction, such as Judith Butler’s influential argument that sex as well as gender is socially constructed and its links to claims that the construction of sexuality and gender are inextricably interlinked.

Seminar questions  
• What is sex? What is gender? And why have feminists insisted on the difference?  
• How has gender development been explained by feminists?  
• How is the sex/gender distinction being rethought or challenged by feminists?

Seminar reading  
Feminism and Politics, Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
and Gender, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 597-619. You may borrow this from me.  
American Historical Review, vol. 91, no. 5, pp. 1053-1075.  
Squires, Judith (1999) ‘Framing Gender’, chapter 2 of Gender in Political  

Further reading  
Andersen, Margaret (2006) Thinking About Women: Sociological  
Perspectives on Sex and Gender, 7th edition, Boston: Pearson/Allyn  
and Bacon.  
Archer, John and Barbara Lloyd (2002) Sex and Gender, 2nd edition,  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Can Have [Gender]?’, Feminist Review, no. 56, also available in  
Cecelia Jackson and Ruth Pearson (eds) Feminist Visions of  
Bartky, Sandra (1990) Femininity and Domination: Studies in the  
New York: Routledge.  
‘Preface’ online at http://www.yale.edu/wff/pdf/Gender_Trouble.pdf.  
De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, several dates and publishers.
Week 3
Power, the Public and the Private

This seminar will explore what feminists have to say about the nature and extent of power, starting with radical and socialist feminist theories of patriarchy before examining alternatives that have emerged within feminism. We will also explore the implications of the claim that power extends deep into our personal lives and, indeed, shapes the very distinction between public and private realms that is fundamental to Western political traditions.

Seminar questions
- What is patriarchy and what are the main feminist approaches to it?
- What other ways of understanding the relation between gender and power have developed within feminism?
- Why do feminists claim the personal is political? What are the implications of this claim?

Seminar Reading

Further reading


Week 4
Equality and Difference

The aim of this seminar is to explore feminist efforts to reconstruct the theory and practice of equality. We will be asking why feminists have argued for equality for women and considering what that might mean and how it might be achieved. We will also be examining the tension in feminist theory and practice between the pursuit of equality and the recognition of women’s difference.

Seminar questions
• What is equality and why have some feminists argued strongly in its favour?
• How can equality between men and women be achieved? Should women be treated the same as men? Or differently?
• Should feminists abandon the pursuit of equality?

Seminar reading

Further reading


Week 5
Democracy and Citizenship

The aim of this seminar is to examine and evaluate feminist reconstructions of liberal democracy. We will be considering feminist strategies for the more adequate representation and participation of women within liberal democratic institutions, as well as arguments about the need to develop a more women-friendly citizenship.

Seminar questions
- Why does it matter that there are fewer women than men in liberal democratic institutions?
- How could a higher proportion of women in liberal democratic institutions be achieved?
- What is citizenship? Do women have distinctive values and roles that could constitute the basis for a more inclusive citizenship?

Seminar reading

Further reading


Week 6
State and Nation

The aim of this seminar is to examine and assess feminist approaches to the state and nation/nationalism. We will look at critiques of the state and nationalist mobilisation as major sources of the oppression of women. Conversely, we will look at feminist efforts to piggyback their concerns on to nationalist movements and/or to gain influence over the state as a potential vehicle for progressive change for women.

Seminar questions
- How and why have feminists argued that the state is a source of the oppression of women?
- How and why have feminists argued that the state could be an important vehicle for change for women?
- In what ways are national identity and nationalism gendered?

Seminar reading
Enloe, Cynthia (2004) *The Curious Feminist*, Berkeley: University of California Press, chapter 7: “All the Men are in the Militias, All the Women are Victims”: The Politics of Masculinity and Femininity in Nationalist Wars'.


Further reading


The aim of this seminar is to examine and evaluate feminist reconstructions of development. If feminism and politics are considered in a global frame then development becomes a central concern, one which has generated an enormous literature. We will be exploring feminist critiques of the mainstream concept of development before surveying competing proposals for change. We will also be assessing the most radical ecofeminist reconceptualisations of development.

**Seminar questions**
- Why and to what extent have mainstream theories and practices of development functioned to marginalise women?
- What are the main feminist strategies for the reconstruction of development?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of Vandana Shiva’s ecofeminist argument about the relationship between women, ecology and development?

**Seminar reading**

**Further reading**


Week 8
Reproduction and Motherhood

This seminar will explore feminist efforts to extend political debate to women's reproductive capacity and mothering or caring role. We will look at feminist criticisms of the technological changes and power relations surrounding birth, mothering and caring, and their differing strategies to help women gain more control over these processes. We will also discuss the implications of feminist attempts, introduced in previous seminars, to reclaim and celebrate birth and motherhood as a source of women’s ‘difference’ and political transformation.

Seminar questions
- Is the capacity to give birth a primary source of women’s oppression?
- Should women have the right to choose an abortion?
- Can and should mothering and caring work be changed so that men play a more central caring role? Or is mothering and caring work a source of women's power over which they should retain control?

Seminar reading
Firestone, Shulamith (1979) The Dialectic of Sex, London: Women’s Press, Chapters 1 and 10; Chapter 10 available as a photocopy in Short Loan ('The ultimate revolution').

Further reading


Rowbotham, Sheila (1989) 'To Be or Not to Be: The Dilemmas of Mothering', *Feminist Review*, no. 31, pp.82-93.


Week 9
Knowledge and the Study of Politics

The aim of this final seminar is to examine feminist efforts to politicise knowledge – to expose the gendered power structures underpinning claims to knowledge and truth and to produce counter-hegemonic knowledge claims as a form of resistance. In particular, we will be focusing on feminist critiques of the partial and exclusionary nature of the academic discipline of politics and their efforts to reconstruct the discipline in more inclusive and subversive ways. We will be assessing whether there is a distinctively feminist political theory or political science and in what ways feminist arguments about politics can claim to be ‘true’.

Seminar questions

• Why has the study of politics focused on men rather than women?
• How convincing are feminist criticisms of the norms of objectivity, rationality and truth?
• Are there distinctive methods that feminist political enquiry should adopt?

Seminar reading


Further reading


Nash, Kate (1994) ‘The Feminist Production of Knowledge: is Deconstruction a Practice for Women?’ *Feminist Review*, no. 47, access through the library website.


APPENDIX A: WRITING A BOOK REVIEW

‘The overall purpose of a book review is to interest and inform potential readers and to give them your considered opinion of a book. It should evaluate a book from your perspective rather than simply summarising or describing the book’s content.

Depending on your specific purpose in writing it, your review should contain some or all of the following points:

- full details of title, author and publication
- a brief résumé of the book, or what the subject of the book is, its theme/thesis/argument and how the content is organised
- comments on the author’s style, or how the book is written
- information about the author’s purpose in writing the book, or why the book was written
- comments on the theoretical perspective taken
- comments on the book in relation to other material in the field including when the book was originally written (and revised), the author’s qualification and experience, whether the book introduces any new concepts or data, and whether the author is reviewing material
- comments on how the book relates to your knowledge, your experience, your beliefs…
- information on the standard of the details such as an index, a bibliography or graphic material …
- an evaluation of the overall strengths and the weaknesses of the book.

Support any statements you make, including your opinions, with reasons and examples. A few well-chosen quotations can convey the flavour of the author’s style as well as illustrating a point. (Give the page reference for a quote immediately afterwards.)

Your own honest and well thought-out opinion of a book is of more value to your learning and to your readers than your version of someone else’s opinion. A book review can be technically excellent but dull to read unless you convey to your reader the impact the book has on you.’


Note that most journals have a book review section: check out relevant feminist journals for some recent examples.
APPENDIX B:

Department of Government
Degree of B.A.

35 475 Feminism and Politics

Thursday, 17th May 2007 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm (2 hours)

Answer TWO questions

1. To what extent have scholars working within the discipline of politics historically focused on men rather than women, and why might this be the case?

2. Judith Butler has highlighted ‘the political problem that feminism encounters’ now that ‘women, even in the plural, has become a troublesome term, a site of contest, a cause for anxiety’. How should feminists respond?

3. Why do women continue to be under-represented in the vast majority of parliamentary institutions around the world - and why should we care?

4. Evaluate Black and/or anti-racist feminist contributions to our understanding of power.

PLEASE TURN OVER
5. To what extent is motherhood a key site of women’s oppression?

6. Catharine MacKinnon identifies ‘two alternate paths to equality’ for women: ‘The leading one is: be the same as men … an alternate one [is]: be different from men’. Why does she consider both to be problematic?

7. Explore the ways in which national identity and nationalism are gendered, illustrating your answer with examples.

8. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the first, sustained set of feminist interventions in development debates, known collectively as ‘Women in Development’ or WID.

9. ‘There’s a curious reluctance amongst feminists to say what feminism is. Usually this reluctance shows itself as an absence … But sometimes it’s a deliberate strategy. Feminists don’t want to define feminism, and they say so’ (Denise Thompson). To what extent is Thompson correct about this ‘reluctance’ and its theoretical and political implications?

10. Compare and contrast TWO feminist approaches to gender. Which do you find the most convincing?