WMGS 161b

Transnational Feminisms: Perspectives from South Asia and Beyond

Spring 2018, Tuesday-Friday 11:00-12:20 (Block H)

Instructor: Shilpa Phadke (http://www.tiss.edu/view/9/employee/shilpa-phadke/)

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Contact details and office hours TBA

Course Description

What does it mean to collaborate across borders as feminists? Are some borders more porous than others? Why is global sisterhood unfeasible? What does privilege mean? How does representation work? What does representation have to do with agency? What are the hierarchical contexts in which knowledge is produced?

This course will take on these and other complex questions engaging with layered narratives and hegemonies. It will reflect on the histories of global and international feminisms which were marked by a desire for cross border collaborations around feminist scholarship and activism. The course will examine critiques of neo-liberalism, cultural imperialism, and Western hegemony reflecting on both political economy and the philosophical underpinnings of these. It seeks to examine how inequalities of class, caste, race, community, religion, ethnicity, and sexuality intersect with gender to produce particular politics of visibility and invisibility.

This course will examine feminist scholarship that speaks to these concerns contextualising them within and around debates on colonialism, postcolonialism, and globalization. The course will engage contemporary debates around sexuality, nationalism, racism, casteism, and morality to name only some, examining them in relation to questions of agency, claim, and co-optation. While including many rich materials from India and wider South Asia, the course will navigate multiple geographical locations: national, international, and digital spaces reflecting on the ways in which politics and ideas travel and multiple hegemonies are played out. In addition to feminist scholarship, the literature will make the occasional forays into fiction and poetry.

Course Objectives:

• Learn about feminisms in South Asia and abroad, including the ways feminist projects intersect with debates on colonialism, postcolonialism, and globalization.
• Enable students to think critically about the politics of visibility and invisibility even in progressive movements.
• Enable students to reflect on questions of location and privilege especially in relation to scholarship and activism.
• Engage students in a complex nuanced way with contemporary contentious debates and political contestations along lines of gender and its intersecting identities.

Course Evaluation

• Assignment 1 – 25 %
Three or four page reflection paper that focuses on the politics of location in relation to contemporary transnational feminist challenges/questions/debates.

Reflect on your own location within a transnational feminist frame. What are the centres and margins you inhabit? What are the implications of your location for the way you choose to “feminist politics” or indeed that you might even be able to “choose” to do feminist politics. What are the texts or authors who might speak to your own location? How do you read these authors? How do you read other authors? What are the politics of co-optation that you might be invited to be part of? These are only some of the questions you might ask.

Or

Examine the trans-national implications of a campaign, a movement, or simply a moment reflecting on the ways in which it played/is playing out in different parts of the world. This might include a movement like Slutwalks or a moment like the #MeToo one. It may even mean examining race concerns in the US against say caste concerns in India.

- **Mid Term Take Home Test – 25%**
For this you will be required to respond to two questions in 2-3 pages each. You will get 48 hours to do this. These will be based on the course readings but will require you to think beyond the readings as well as to bring in new texts in your responses. We will discuss this in detail when we meet.

- **Assignment 2 – 40 %**
**Syllabus Creation:** Create a syllabus focusing on transnational feminism from any one geographical location (this could be a city, a country or a continent, or a sub-continent). This syllabus should have ten sessions/classes with at least two texts (written or visual) for each session/class. The syllabus is to be followed by a three-to-four page note explaining the rationale behind the syllabus, why you made the choices you made and what you hope to accomplish with these texts. It may also include a discussion of some of the texts you included.
If we like the results we could upload the syllabi onto a blog and make it publically accessible.

- **Class Participation – 10%**
This includes attendance, completion of course readings, and thoughtful contributions to class discussions. As part of the effort to make classes fun, students are invited to bring relevant poems to class that can be read/performed as well as relevant art that might be shown. We will keep ten minutes aside in each class for this.

All written work must be submitted *both* on LATTE *and* in person as hard copies.
Course Expectations
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Disabilities
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity
You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

Outline of Classes

Week One

Introductory Class
12 January
Warsan Shire, Home (http://headspacepress.com/home-by-warsan-shire/)
Discussion on the course: syllabus and assignments.

Thinking about Transnational Feminism
16 January

Week Two

Transnational Representation 1: The Politics of Co-optation?
19 January
**Transnational Representation 2: Our Lives, Their Cultures**


**Week Three**

**Transnational Representation 3: Culture and Rights**


**Representation, Voice and Reflections on Agency**


**Week Four**

**Early Debates in Transnational Feminism**


**Transnationalism, Gender, and Development Agendas**


Week Five

**Human Rights, Universalism and Feminist Politics**

09 February


**Feminism, Migration and Labour**

13 February


Week Six

**Transnational Politics, Migration, Trafficking and Contestations around Sex Work**

16 February


**Transnationalism and Queer Politics**

27 February


Week Seven

**Feminism, Religion and Fundamentalisms in India**

02 March


Indian Hierarchies: Brahmanical Patriarchy, Feminism and Caste 06 March


Week Eight

The Politics of Feminism in Pakistan 09 March


The Bangladesh Feminist Experience 13 March


Week Nine

Conflict, Militarisation and the Sri Lankan Feminist Experience 16 March


Diaspora/ic Narrations 20 March


Week Ten

No Class 23 March
**Reflections on Homonationalism**

27 March


**Week Eleven**

**Wither Digital Feminisms**

10 April


**Feminist Scholarship 1: Native Informants?**

13 April


**Week Twelve**

**Feminist Scholarship 2: Decolonizing Higher Education**

17 April


**Feminist Scholarship 3: Reflections, Strategies**

20 April


Week Thirteen

Possibilities and Collaborations  
24 April


Final Class  
25 April

Concluding discussion (at least for the course) on the politics of location
Discussions in preparation for the final exam
Feedback on the course