

SOCI 5806 Feminist Political Economy

Wednesday, 11:35 - 2:25

Location: Room 374 Unicentre (to be confirmed)

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 or by appointment

Introduction:

This course investigates feminist political economy and the politics of everyday life. Political Economy is a holistic approach to understanding society and social relations from a materialist perspective that draws on the interplay of economic, political, and cultural moments of social life. A central question for political economy is how a society reproduces itself in ways that are constantly changing. Feminist scholarship has insisted that the relations of gender, race and class are central to this project. The development of feminist political economy has been an important part of feminist scholarship in Canada and is directly related to the larger political economy traditions in Canada and globally. This course takes up three themes to explore feminist political economy's theoretical and methodological developments and contributions: 1. the relationship between the different traditions of political economy and feminist political economy; 2. the relationship between feminist political economy and the activist women's movement in Canada and globally; 3. the contributions of feminist political economy to social, political and economic theory. In particular, the course focuses on one of feminist political economy's central concerns: the politics of everyday life. It examines the interrelationships among gender, race and class as they are shaped by households, communities, markets, and states, and by transnational women's activism. How do people make a living and organize to improve their circumstances within a global capitalist economy? How is neoliberalism changing the possibilities and constraints for different peoples? What alternatives does feminist political economy offer?

The course also focuses on ways to improve students' understanding of, and comfort with theory. One goal is to improve our ability to identify the theories informing the material we read, to increase our understanding of how theory shapes knowledge production, how the socio-political context shapes theory, and to be more explicit about the theories that shape our own work. The course also deals explicitly with issues related to critical thinking, political engagement and contemplative thought. It encourages students to develop their academic skills, particularly critical reading, research, writing, and presentations.

Students have an opportunity to:

1. become familiar with feminist political economy and understand its relation to other currents in both feminist theory and other social, political and economy theories;

2. to investigate how feminist political economy understands the relationships among gender, race and class;
3. become familiar with the ways in which making a living is shaped by households (families and other co-habiting arrangements), communities, markets (labour and consumer) and states (policies and practices) and their interactions;
4. learn about what theory is, and to become more comfortable doing theory;
5. improve their academic skills of critical reading, research, writing, and presentations.

The course director also explores with the class a range of topics relating to reading, writing, presentations and a range of other academic skills. Students are encouraged to identify particular skills they would like to take up in the course.

Note: Students in this class will have two opportunities to participate in conferences relating to Feminist Political Economy. All students are expected to attend and participate in the all-day conference on 20 March 2015: "More than Getting By: Putting Daily Life at the Heart of our Struggles". The annual Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences is holding its meetings this year at the University of Ottawa 1-5 June 2015. Students are urged to attend the conference and to consider presenting their work. Details will be available in class.

Weekly Schedule and Required Readings:

Note: The main required reading book has been ordered through Octopus Books: Enloe, Cynthia *Seriously Investigating Crashes and Crises as if Women Mattered* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013. Other readings are available from the library and on line.

Note: Students and faculty will take turns leading the class discussion by summarizing the main themes of the readings and providing discussion questions.

7 Jan. Introduction

Introductions: Who are we? What do we bring to the course? What do we want from the course? What does “feminist political economy” mean to each of us?

Course administrivia: review of the course outline; access to readings;

Academic skills: creating safe classrooms for learning: what makes a class safe or unsafe, effective or not for each of us?

Note: Start thinking about a possible final essay topic for this course and about which of the books you plan to review for assignment 2.

14 Jan. What is feminist political economy? Identifying the Issues

Library search: Find one reading that discusses “feminist political economy” and come to class prepared to tell the class how that reading defines or uses “feminist political economy”.

Note: The course director has a bibliography of material on feminist political economy that you are welcome to use.

Please listen to Antonella Picchio's on-line lecture (1hr 20 min):

<http://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/feministsatlaw/article/view/47/125>

Note: It is not assigned but her book would be excellent background reading for this course and is a key text in the field: Picchio, Antonella (1992) *Social Reproduction: The Political Economy of the Labour Market* Cambridge University Press (an ebook is available sometime in 2015).

Andrew, Caroline, Pat Armstrong, Hugh Armstrong, Wallace Clement and Leah F. Vosko (eds) (2003) *Studies in Political Economy Developments in Feminism* Toronto: Women's Press: "General Introduction" pp,1-2, the introductions to each of Parts 1 pp.3-9, 2 pp.117-123, and 3 pp.213-218, and any one chapter.

Carby, Hazel "White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood" *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in Britain* Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies London: Huteson 1982: 212-235

Note: Be prepared to select book for assignment 2 next week.

21 Jan. The Politics of Seriousness: Global Feminism Challenges Political Economy

Enloe, Cynthia *Seriously Investigating Crashes and Crises as if Women Mattered* Preface, Chapters 1-5 pp.xi-113

Connell, Raewyn. 2014. [Global tides: market and gender dynamics on a world scale](#). *Social Currents*, vol. 1 no. 1, 5-12; published online February 2014

Note: Select book for assignment 2 this week.

28 Jan. Feminism and the Mundane: Theories, Methods, Gaps and Genres

Enloe, Cynthia *Seriously Investigating Crashes and Crises as if Women Mattered* Chapters 6-9 pp.114-185

Peterson, Spike [How \(the meaning of\) gender matters in political economy](#) *New Political Economy* vol. 10, No. 4, December 2005 499-521
<https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/92067/original/gender%2Bmatters%2Bin%2BIPE.pdf>

Bedford, Kate and Shirin Rai. 2010. Feminists Theorize International Political Economy. *Signs* 36.1: 1-18.
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/stable/pdfplus/10.1086/652910.pdf?&acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true>

4 Feb. Political Economy, Historical Materialism and Sex/Gender Systems

Brown, Heather chapter 3 “Political Economy, Gender and the ‘Transformation’ of the Family” chapter 3 *Marx on Gender and the Family A Critical Study* Chicago: Haymarket Books 2012

Rubin, Gayle "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex" in Rayna Reiter (ed) *Toward an Anthropology of Women* New York: Monthly Review, 1975: 157-185

Kuhn, Annette and Ann Marie Wolpe “Feminism and Materialism” *Feminism and Materialism Women and Modes of Production* New York Routledge 1978: xxx

Bourgeault, Ron. 1989. “Race, Class and Gender: Colonial Domination of Indian Women.” In *Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers*, ed. Jesse Vorst. Toronto: Between the Lines and Society for Socialist Studies

Note: Come prepared to discuss your proposed research question or topic for the final paper.

11 Feb. Feminist Political Economy: Politics, Theory, Method and Critique

Studies in Political Economy Forum: Reclaiming Marxist Feminism Studies in Political Economy 94 Autumn 2014 pp. 135 – 184, including:

Luxton, Meg “Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism: Reclaiming Our History, Reanimating our Politics” pp. 135-160

Ferguson, Susan “A Response to Meg Luxton’s “Marxist Feminism and Anticapitalism”” pp 161-168

Schein, Rebecca “Hegemony Not Co-optation: For a Usable History of Feminism” pp 169-176

Carty, Linda “A Genealogy of Marxist Feminism in Canada” pp 177 – 184

Hill Collins, Patricia “Gender, Black Feminism, and Black Political Economy” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 568, *The Study of African American Problems: W. E. B. Du Bois's Agenda, Then and Now* (Mar., 2000), pp. 41- 53, Sage Publications, Inc. in association with the American Academy of Political and Social Science
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1049471>

Note: Professor Rebecca Schein will join the class for our discussion.

Note: abstract and annotated bibliography due in class 25 Feb.

18 Feb. Winter Break – No Classes

25 Feb. From Domestic Labour to Social Reproduction

Marx, Karl (1867) *Capital vol. 1* chapter 10: The Working Day

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch10.htm>

Luxton, Meg “Feminist Political Economy in Canada and the Politics of Social Reproduction” in Bezanson, Kate and Meg Luxton (eds) (2006) *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neo-liberalism* Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, pp.11-44

Arat-Koc, Sedef “Whose Social Reproduction? Transnational Motherhood and Challenges to Feminist Social Reproduction” in Bezanson, Kate and Meg Luxton (eds) (2006) *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neo-liberalism* Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, pp.75-116

Secombe, Wally “Labour-Power, Family Forms and the Mode-of-Production Concept” ch. 1 *A Millennium of Family Change* London: Verso, 1992: 9-36

Note: Submit a written abstract and annotated bibliography of at least 5 items for your research paper.

4 Mar. Feminist Political Economy Scholarship

Assignment 2: Class presentations of Book Reviews: (see below for details on assignment 2. Read ONE of the following books).

Luxton, Meg and June Corman *Getting by in Hard Times: Gendered Labour at Home and on the Job* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001

Porter, A. (2003). *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997* Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Kate Bezanson. (2006) *Gender, the State, and Social Reproduction: Household Insecurity in Neo-Liberal Times*. University of Toronto Press

Federici, Silvia (2004) *Caliban and the Witch Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation* Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia

Freeman, Carla (2000) *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy* Durham and London: Duke University Press

Note: March 8 is International Women’s Day. Try to attend some of the activities marking IWD in your community. What are the issues?

11 Mar. States, Markets and Households and the Crisis of Social Reproduction

Cameron, Barbara (2006) “Social Reproduction and Canadian Federalism” in Bezanson, Kate and Meg Luxton (eds) (2006) *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neo-liberalism* Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, pp.45-74

Braedley, Susan and Meg Luxton (2010) "Competing Philosophies: Neoliberalism and the Challenges of Everyday Life" in Braedley, Susan and Meg Luxton (eds) (2010) *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life* Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, pp.3-21

Rowbotham, Sheila and Stephanie Linkogle "Introduction" in Rowbotham, Sheila and Stephanie Linkogle (eds) *Women Resist Globalization Mobilizing for Livelihood and Rights* London, New York: Zed Books, 2001: 1-12

Rowbotham, Sheila "Facets of Emancipation: Women in Movement from the Eighteenth Century to the Present" in Rowbotham, Sheila and Stephanie Linkogle (eds) *Women Resist Globalization Mobilizing for Livelihood and Rights* London, New York: Zed Books, 2001:13-27

Kempadoo, Kamala "The War on Human Trafficking in the Caribbean" *Race and Class* Vol. 49. no 2 (2007):79-84

18 Mar.

Note: Students are expected to attend and participate in the all-day Conference on 20 March 2015: "More than Getting By: Putting Daily Life at the Heart of our Struggles". The instructor will hold office hours instead of a class and will arrange to meet with students to discuss their final papers and their conference presentations.

25 Mar. and 1 Apr. Current Issues in Feminist Political Economy: Mock Congress

Note: The last class or last two classes will be a Mock Congress at which students present their final papers. The format and date will be determined in class depending on the number of people in the class on either Mar 25 or Apr 1 or both

Grades and Assignments:

1. *Critical Reading Reviews*: Each of 4 weeks, students write a critical review of all the assigned readings that addresses the following questions: what are the main theses or arguments? how do the different readings relate to each other? what are the central concepts and what supporting evidence and/or arguments are developed? how do these readings relate to previous course readings and discussions?

Due: in class on the date the readings are assigned; worth: 20%

2. *Book Review and Group Presentation*: due 4 March 2015

Book Review: worth 15 %; Group Presentation: worth 5%

Pick ONE of the following books and write a critical review of it. All those students reading the same book will prepare a group presentation to introduce the book to the rest of the class. Each group will have about 15 minutes for their presentation and about 10 minutes for discussion. The group presentation should give the rest of the class a clear understanding of what the book is

about and what it contributes to an understanding of feminist political economy. Members of the class will be asked to evaluate the group presentations.

Porter, A. (2003). *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997* Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Kate Bezanson. (2006) *Gender, the State, and Social Reproduction: Household Insecurity in Neo-Liberal Times*. University of Toronto Press

Federici, Silvia (2004) *Caliban and the Witch Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation* Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia

Freeman, Carla (2000) *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy* Durham and London: Duke University Press

3. *Participation*: A substantial portion of the grade is allocated to participation because a lot of learning occurs in class time; in fact, a class develops continuity, a sense of community and a collective consciousness through the experience of meeting together. The participation grade is not based on the number of times a student speaks, but reflects an assessment of their overall preparation, informed contribution to class discussions (i.e. evidence of having done the readings and of having thought about them before class), and responsiveness to the presentations and comments of other students. This grade recognises work that is not specifically graded, and offers a way to appreciate those students who make a special contribution to building the class as a community. 10%

4. *Final Paper*: In consultation with the course director students identify a research question relating to a political economy of class and produce a final paper.

Worth: 50% divided as follows:

i. abstract: submit an abstract identifying the research question and the methodology proposed to conduct the research; and an annotated bibliography of 5 items (not included in the required readings for the course): due: 25 Feb 2015; worth: 10%

ii. conference presentation: present the research to date in the end of term mock Congress 10%

iii. final paper: submit a journal length paper. due: 8 April 2015; worth: 30%

Expectations and Responsibilities

At the start of the course and throughout the term we will discuss how our class can best facilitate our learning. As a starting point, there are certain professional and collegial practices that are essential for a safe and effective learning environment. The course involves a two hour and fifty minute class each week. Students must attend classes, be in class on time and stay for the duration of the class. Students will come to class with copies of and notes on the week's

readings and be prepared to contribute to class discussions. This course is conducted as a seminar so students and faculty will take turns leading the class discussion by summarizing the main themes of the readings and providing discussion questions. Each class includes some or all of: group discussion of the readings, small group activities, student presentations, a lecture or equivalent by the course director. On a regular basis students talk about the research they are doing for their final paper. Use of computer technologies (laptops, netbooks, smart phones) in the classroom is encouraged if it augments academic learning related to this course. Students are expected to ensure they do not receive or send personal messages during class time.

Note: The production of recordings of classroom interactions is expressly prohibited unless authorized and approved by the instructor and by all class participants. The use of such recordings is subject to guidelines for ethical professional use. Unauthorized web posting of such recordings constitutes a serious violation of members' privacy and confidentiality rights. Unless given permission by the Department or the instructors, students are not authorized to speak on behalf of the department. Moreover, students should not give the impression that they can speak on behalf of the department. Students must not share information that is explicitly confidential about the department or confidential information about their professors or other students.

Useful Academic Dates

16 January Last day for registration for winter term courses

31 January Last day for withdrawal from winter term courses with full fee adjustment.

16 February Statutory holiday. University closed.

16-20 February Winter Break, no classes.

1 March Last day for receipt of applications from potential spring (June) graduands.

3 April Statutory holiday. University closed.

8 April Winter term ends. Classes follow a Friday schedule.

Last day for academic withdrawal winter term courses.