

Feminist Political Economy: Gender, Race and Class and the Politics of Everyday Life

A course proposal
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Brief Description:

Feminist political economy analyses the politics of everyday life, focusing on the interrelationships among gender, race and class as they are shaped by households, markets, and states, and the 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?

Detailed Description:

This course weaves together three themes. The first examines the politics of everyday life, focusing on the interrelationships among gender, race and class as they are shaped by households, markets, states, and transnational women's activism. It asks how people make a living and organize to improve their circumstances within a global capitalist economy as neoliberalism is changing the possibilities and constraints for different peoples.

The second theme explores feminist political economy, 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 central to feminist scholarship in Canada and is directly related to the larger political economy traditions in Canada and globally. This theme takes up three sub-themes to explore feminist political economy's theoretical and methodological developments and contributions : 1. the relationship between the different traditions of political economy in Canada 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.

The third theme 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 theory;
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), 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 involves a three hour class each week. Each class includes group discussion of the readings, small group activities, and a lecture or equivalent by the course director. Students have readings assigned for each week and are expected to discuss the material they have that week and to link it to previous material discussed in class. On a regular basis students talk about the research they are doing for their final paper. The course director discusses the assigned reading materials, lectures on that material to locate it in a larger context, and provides students with an overview of the main issues and debates in the field.

The course director also explores with the class a range of topics relating to reading, writing and presentations

Assignments:

1. *Journal of 8 Critical Reading Reviews*: Each of 8 weeks, students write a critical review of the assigned readings that addresses the following questions: what is the main thesis or argument? 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?
At the end of the course, students hand in their journal for grading. 30%
2. *Final Paper*: In consultation with the course director students identify a research question relating to feminist political economy. Total: 60% divided as follows:

- i. abstract: submit an abstract identifying the research question and the methodology proposed to conduct the research; 10%
- ii. annotated bibliography: submit an annotated bibliography of 10 items (not included in the required readings for the course); 10%
- iii. conference presentation: present the research to date in the end of term mock Congress 10%
- iv. final paper: submit a journal length paper. 30%

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%

Selected Bibliography

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