Postcolonialism and gender

Instructor: Rajeswari Sunder Rajan
Course number: G41.2900
Office: 503, 13 University Place
Office hours: Wednesday 10.30-12.30, and by appointment
Class time: T 6.20-8.20 pm

Course description:
This seminar will identify and explore the centrality of gender to the problematics of colonialism, postcolonialism, nationalism and globalization, and the ways in which feminism has been shaped in these different contexts. It will be structured around the following interrelated topics: colonialism, culture and gender; gender, sexuality and nation; women and decolonization; and feminism and the women’s movement. To elaborate:

1. colonialism, culture and gender: Gender was a key site of intervention for European rule in the colonies, particularly in its guise as ‘civilizing mission’. We will explore this and other ways in which colonial relations were mediated by gender. The connections between gender, culture and colonialism—indeed, their mutual constitution-- will be traced under the headings of colonialism and reform; ‘native’ women and sexual politics; colonial masculinities; and imperial women.

2. gender, sexuality and nation: Postcolonial feminist theory is interested in exploring why and how women have served as symbols in the nationalist imaginary, as well as in the actual historical role they played in many anti-colonial struggles. A closely related subject of interest is the situation of women caught in a conflict that all colonial/postcolonial societies experience acutely, that between a putative ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. We will conclude with a study of the implications queer sexualities have had for national, imperial and ‘international’ politics.

3. women and decolonization: A central preoccupation in decolonized space is the politics of gendered citizenship, especially as it relates to the following issues: the state’s investment in gender regimes; the law’s regulation of sexuality; the politics of female labor; and the centrality of gender to development. The international division of labor is at the same time a gendered one, an aspect of globalization that has generated an empirically and theoretically rich feminist scholarship. The critique of ethnicity and religious fundamentalism, and the opposition to war, state violence, and militarization are other important contributions of postcolonial feminism.

4. We will conclude with a look at feminisms, both local and global, and the women’s movement in different contexts.

Course requirements and grading:
Weekly response papers (300 words) (10 best)+ attendance + participation in class discussion: 50%
Final essay (4000 words), due last week of term: 50%
Weekly schedule

**Week 1, September 7:** Introduction and overview: theoretical perspectives.
Texts:

**Week 2, Sept 14:** colonialism and reform

Texts:

**Week 3, Sept 21:** ‘native’ women and sexual politics;

Texts:
Week 4, Sept 28: colonial masculinities; imperial women

Colonial masculinities

Texts:
- Orwell, George. ‘Shooting an elephant’, 1936. (available online)

Imperial women

Texts:

Week 5, Oct 5: women as symbols in the nationalist imaginary;

Texts:
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Routledge, 1995. ch. 10
Film: Mother India.

Week 6, Oct 12: women between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’
Texts:

Week 7, Oct 19: Women and nationalism; women in anti-colonial struggles
Texts:
Shohat, Ella. ‘Post-Third-Worldist culture: Gender, nation, and the cinema,' in Alexander and Mohanty, eds. Feminist Genealogies etc.
Film: Silence of the Palace.

Week 8, Oct 26: queerness: nation, empire and the ‘international’
Texts:


Films: *Strawberry and Chocolate*; *Fire*.

**Week 9, Nov 2:** the state and gender; law and sexuality.

**Texts:**


**Week 10, Nov 9:** women and labor; gender and development

**Texts:**


**Week 11, Nov 16:** ethnicity and religion
Week 12, Nov 23: women and militarization

Texts:

Week 13, Nov 30: feminism and the women’s movement; transnational feminisms.

Texts:

**Week 14, Dec 7:** Revisit week 1 readings

**Texts:** Most of the readings listed above will be available in a course-pack, and the rest will be posted on Blackboard.

**Journals.**

*Signs; Gender & History; Feminist Studies; Meridians; differences; positions; Feminist Review; Hypatia; Interventions; History Workshop Journal; GLQ; Social Text*

**Fiction and cinema (for additional reading/viewing only):**

*Silence of the Palace* dir. Moufida Tlatli (1994) (Tunisia)
*Mother India* dir. Mehboob Khan (1957) (India)

Hannemann, 1981.
Forster, E.M. *A Passage to India* (1924). Penguin Classics, 2005
Salih, Tayeb. *Season of Migration to the North.* (1966) Translated from Arabic by Denys
Tagore, Rabindranath. *Home and the World.* (1916) Translated from Bengali by