Women Citizenship and conflict

1. War and femininity

War have always been conceptualised as male affairs conducted by men and for men and women, when considered at all have been seen as victims rather than perpetrator. This seminar will look at the impact of such notions on the lives of women that are active combatants and those who are not so defined.

1. Why does feminism have an important contribution to make to the analysis of wars and conflicts?
2. Is war only about men and battles? If not why not?
3. What are the contributions that women can and do make at war times?

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Front and Back

Traditional wars had been conceived of happening at the ‘war front’ with women staying ‘back at home’ to protect the hart. This seminar considers the relevance of such ideas in the context of contemporary wars.

1. Where are the battlefields and where are the women in them? Discuss giving specific examples.

2. What are the arguments denying the existence of fronts and backs to wars?

3. Are front and backs useful terminologies for understanding the situation of women and children in times of conflict?

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3. Women as revolutionaries, combatants and terrorists

The change of the role from housewife to combatant is seen as ‘unnatural’ and require different forms of justifications in different contexts; it also leads to very different outcomes. This seminar considers some of the relevant examples.

1. Are women failing in their duties when they become active participants in conflicts?

2. Is terrorism the exclusive domain of men? Can women remain feminine and be effective combatants?

3. Wars are fought by male warriors. Women, if they become warriors, will have to be so as inferior bearers of arms. Discuss


4. Martyrdom, Marriage, Motherhood, Honour and the Media

Wars divide men and women into martyrs and mothers. Men are martyrs and women are producers of worriers. This seminar considers the implication of these ideas on women’s lives.

1. Consider critically the arguments that suggest that wars are fought to protect the home and hearth and “women and children”.

2. If women are the guardians of the cradle and the graves, then they have to have a high profile as willing victims. Discuss the different positions that states and their people might have about this question.

3. Martyrdom as a motive of sacrifice devalues what women have to contribute to war efforts. Discuss.

4. Is honour a masculine concept? Discuss giving specific examples.

5. What is the part played by the media in perpetuating the myths of motherhood and martyrdom?
5. Identity and citizenship

Women have for too long been identified in terms of their decedents from and dependence on men, this may explain their marginalisation. This seminar considers the construction of national identity and citizenships for women both where they are the majority and where they are in minority situations.

1. Discuss critically the view that women’s attenuated identity as citizen has been important in making them seem as a minority even in countries where they are the majority.

2. If motherhood and domesticity become important identifiers of women, then the battle to gain equal citizenship rights become almost impossible.

3. Discuss the view that given the double burden of paid work and domestic work, women’s struggles to be recognised as equal citizen add an third and unacceptable burden for them to carry.


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DeCosta-Willis Miriam Daughters of the Diaspora: Afra-Hispanic Writers Einhorn, Barbara 1993 Cinderella goes to market; Citizenship, Gender and Women’s Movements in Eastern Europe New York Verso


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Nash, Kate (2001) Feminism and Contemporary Liberal Citizenship: The Undecidability of 'Women' Citizenship Studies Volume 5, Number 3 / November 1 pp255 – 268


Peece, Julia 2002 Feminist Perspectives on the Learning of Citizenship and Governance Compare, Vol. 32, No. 1


KT Thompson, Elizabeth Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon

6. Citizenship and nationalism

Citizenship has generally been seen as a male attribute. This seminar considers some feminist perspectives on post war definition of citizenship.

1. What are the major contentions of feminist about the definitions of citizenship?

2. Do cultures and ideologies of nationalism necessarily marginalise women?

3. Do post war nations facilitate or hamper the development of a feminist approach to citizenship? Discuss giving specific examples

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Sawer, Marian Tremblay ManonTrimbl Linda (eds) *Representing Women in Parliament, A Comparative Study,
7. Post war and reconstruction

If wars are assumed to have been waged by men and for men so post war and reconstruction would also be so imagined. This seminar considers some of the problems for women emerging from this framework.

1. Women are seen as quintessentially peaceful yet they are not there during peace making. Why not?

2. Are there major differences between male and female perspectives on war and reconstruction? Discuss giving specific examples

3. What would women bring to the process of reconstruction that has not normally been included?


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8. Peace and feminisms

If peace is to be long lasting then it is necessary to re-examine the concept of peace to include women at its centre rather than the periphery

1. What does a feminist peace process ask of the parties in the conflict?

2. Is the process of reconciliation necessarily feminine?

3. What are the costs and benefits of pursuing a feminist peace politics?


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