

FEMINIST HISTORIES – FEMINIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

Semester 1, 20 credits.

Please note that this outline is indicative as of Summer 2023 and is subject to change.

Convenor

TBC

Staff teaching on this module

This module is taught by Dr. Rachel Alsop (rachel.alsop@york.ac.uk), Dr Asha Abeyasekera (asha.abeyasekera@york.ac.uk), Dr. Boriana Alexandrova (boriana.alexandrova@york.ac.uk).

Who should take this module?

This is a core module for the first-year GEMMA programme. Students taking other MA Women's Studies programmes may choose to take this module as one of their options, and should discuss this with their supervisor early in their introductory week. Any research student wishing to take this module should discuss this with their supervisor before week one. This module is not open to second-year GEMMA students.

Description and Aims

This module explores the history of feminist ideas and activism. It starts by critically engaging with mainstream western feminist historiography, problematizing the concept of 'feminism', including its application in diverse cultural and historical contexts, as well as the ideas of 'waves' and 'generations' of feminism. With that critique in mind, it then proceeds chronologically, homing in on a diverse range of historical moments and texts in the long twentieth century, focusing in on for example: debates around feminism and class in the early twentieth century; Simone de Beauvoir's pioneering *The Second Sex* (1949); radical ideas and feminist militancy during the so-called 'second wave'; Judith Butler, queer theory and activism; intersectionality and issues of diversity; and the ways in which feminist activism has been shaped by intersections of gender and nationalism. Throughout the module, we pay particular attention to the politics of what does and does not get picked up at particular cultural and historical moments. We also seek to 'trouble' established histories of feminism and feminist ideas.

Learning outcomes

After successfully completing this module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a critical and nuanced understanding of key feminist ideas and the historical and cultural contexts in which they emerged;
- Critically analyze the complex issues around how feminist ideas and activism have been periodized and historicized;
- Interrogate and explain the politics of what does and does not gain cultural traction at particular historical moments and in particular cultural contexts;
- Apply a 'long view' perspective to the intellectual ideas that have animated feminist thought and activism;
- Present complex arguments cogently and with nuance, both in oral and written form.

Learning Methods

Reading lists and worksheets for each session are available on the module VLE; you should look at these at least two weeks before each session in order to arrange access to books, and to plan your pre-session work. The reading lists are designed to guide your seminar preparation. These methods will help you develop scholarly, self-directed research skills. Through being active in your learning – preparing in good time for each session and reading outside of the main resource list for assignments – you will reach far greater understanding and appreciation of these complex issues.

Indicative Programme

Week 1: Locating 'Feminism' and the 'Feminist Subject' (TBC)

Week 2: 'Waves' of Feminism and the Generational Paradigm (TBC)

Week 3: Feminism and Nationalism: Feminist Movements across Borders (AA)

Week 4: Feminist Ambivalences: Alexandra Kollontai, Feminism and Class Struggle (RA)

Week 5: Assessment Workshop (TBC)

Week 6: In Dialogue with Simone de Beauvoir (AA)

Week 7: Radical Ideas and Feminist Militancy (TBC)

Week 8: The Queer Turn: Judith Butler and ACT UP (BA)

Week 9: Motherhood as a Space of Protest (AA)

Week 10: Archival Visit (TBC)

Week 11: Coursework Tutorial (TBC)

Assessment

One essay of 3,500-4,000 words. GEMMA students will write a draft as a 'procedural essay' (compulsory but not assessed) partway through this module, and will receive detailed feedback.

Examples of Reading

Agnieszka Graff. A Different Chronology Reflections on Feminism in Contemporary Poland. In: Gillis S, Howie G, Munford R, eds. *Third Wave Feminism : a Critical Exploration /*. Expanded 2nd ed. Basingstoke :: Palgrave Macmillan; 2007:142-155.

Calvini-Lefebvre, M, Cleal, I E, Grey DJR, Grainger, A, Hetherington, N, Schwartz, L. Rethinking the History of Feminism. *Women: A Cultural Review*. 2010;21(3):247-250. doi:10.1080/09574042.

Jayawardena, K. (1986). *Feminism and nationalism in the Third World*. London: Zed.

Patricia Hill Collins. WHAT'S IN A NAME? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond. *The Black Scholar*. 1969;26(1):9-17. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41068619>.