

Prof. WANG Zheng  
Women's Studies Program  
2156 Lane Hall, 763-6635

Office Hours: Tue. 4:00-5:00  
By appointment  
[wangzhen@umich.edu](mailto:wangzhen@umich.edu)

Syllabus Winter 2006  
WS 357  
Th. 1:00-4:00 pm, 3510 FB

## **Feminist Practices in a Global Context**

Feminist activism has long been a global phenomenon. How do we understand feminist practices in various locations as well as the relationships between feminisms in the east and west, and the local and global? When racial relations, sexuality, and abortion right are important issues for feminists in the US, what are the major issues concerning feminists in other countries? Without assuming a universal course of development of women's activism, this course adopts a comparative approach to the investigation of particular historical processes of women's movements in three countries, the United States, India, and China. Focusing on the feminist activism in the three countries, this course attempts to ground our understanding of globalization in local history, and to present in a concrete way that feminisms have histories and meanings that extend far beyond the North American continent. By comparison, we also hope to illuminate the cultural parameters of each location that have shaped various feminist practices.

Personal narratives (in both textual and visual forms) of feminist activists from the three locations constitute the main body of texts for this course. Other readings and documentaries will provide historical backgrounds to these personal narratives. Students will be encouraged to actively participate in analyzing and comparing the textual and visual material in the process of learning diverse feminist issues crossing national borders and from the personal to the political. This course presumes a willingness to engage in hard thinking, questioning, and respectful listening to the voices (spoken and written) of others.

### **Required Books:**

1. *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, Estelle Freedman, Ballantine Books, 2002.
2. *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*, Ruth Rosen, Penguin Books, 2000.
3. *Living for Change: An Autobiography*, Grace Lee Boggs, University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
4. *Fields of Protest: Women's Movements in India*, Raka Ray, University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
5. *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories*, Wang Zheng, UC Press, 1999.

### **E-Reserves:**

Adrienne Rich, "Notes Towards a Politics of Location," *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds, Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, Routledge, 2003, pp, 447-459

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Feminist Encounters: Locating the Politics of Experience," *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds, Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, Routledge, 2003.

Lata Marni, "Multiple Mediations: Feminist Scholarship in the Age of Transnational Reception," *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds, Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, Routledge, 2003.

Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India," *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, eds. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, Kali for Women, 1989.

The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement". *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds, Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, Routledge, 2003.

Susan Mann, "Women in East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea," in Bonnie G. Smith ed., *Women's History in global Perspective*, vol. 2, University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Barbara Ramusack, "Women and Gender in South and Southeast Asia," in Bonnie G. Smith ed., *Women's History in global Perspective*, vol. 2, University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Vina Mazumdar and Indu Agnihotri, "The Women's Movement in India: Emergence of a New Perspective," in *From Independence towards Freedom: Indian Women since 1947*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

Wang Zheng, "Research on Women in Contemporary China," in Gail Hershatter et al eds., *A Guide to Women's Studies in China* (Berkeley, 1998).

Wang Zheng, "Gender, Employment and Women's Resistance," in *Chinese Society Second Edition: Change, Conflict and Resistance*, eds., Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden, RoutledgeCurzon, London, New York, 2003.

Ping-Chun Hsiung et al. *Chinese Women Organizing*, Berg, 2001

Tina Mai Chen, "Female Icons, Feminist Iconography? Socialist Rhetoric and Women's Agency in 1950s China," *Gender and History*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Aug. 2003.

Pun Ngai, "Opening a Minor Genre of Resistance in Reform China: Scream, Dream, and Transgression in a Workplace," *positions: east asia cultures critique*, 8. 242 Fall0 2000.

Mallika Dutt, "Some Reflections on United States Women of Color and United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and NGO Forum in Beijing, China," *Global Feminisms since 1945*, ed. Bonnie G. Smith, Routledge, 2000.

"Feminist Futures: Transnational Perspectives," *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in A Transnational World*, eds. by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, McCraw Hill, 2002.

<<http://www.lib.umich.edu/reserves/ures/lists/1/wi2006/wi2006WOMENSTD357wangzhen.php>>

### **Interview transcripts on C-Tools:**

US: Taylor and Kramer, Kathy Cohen, and Holly Hughes, Andy Smith

India: Neera Desai, Vina Mazumda, and Flavia Agnes

China: Wang Cuiyu, Li Huiying, Ai Xiaoming, Ge Youli

Poland: Barbara Labuda, Anna Gruszczyska, Malgorzata Tarasiewicz

### **Grading:**

#### 1. Class participation: 30%

Your in-class participation will be an essential element of this course. We learn not only from our own individualized readings of the course materials, but also by hearing different ideas, reactions, critiques, and questions about them. I encourage you to speak up if you have questions about a particular reading. You are expected to complete the reading by each Thursday and be prepared for class discussion. Regular attendance and active participation in discussion are required.

In addition to regular participation in class, students will take turns to lead discussion by preparing discussion questions for the assigned reading.

#### 2. Written exercises: 30%

**One-page journal each week (20% total):** In the journal you should state the argument of the reading, evaluate the kind of evidence used, and consider whether or not it advances your thinking about feminism. Or you may discuss the effectiveness of a personal narrative and assess the strength or weakness of an interview. This exercise aims at improving your ability of critical reading. You should email me your journals by Tuesday evenings.

**One five-page essay (10%):** Drawing on the insights from the books and interviews assigned for the first part of the term, you may discuss (1) the key cultural, political, and social factors that were specific to the US at a particular historical moment that have helped shape the US feminist agendas and practices; (2) in what ways these local practices are connected to global processes. The essay is **due on Feb. 14**.

#### 3. Term paper: 40%

This is a research paper about a feminist organization selected by you. You should make the decision on which organization you want to study by the fourth week and submit an outline of your research paper by **February 20**. Your research methods may include interviewing and/or archival research. In the final paper, you are required to present a brief introduction of the history and structure of the organization, a discussion of its goals and activities, and an in-depth analysis of its strengths and limits in light of what we have learned from various feminist activities in different locations in this course. The goal of the term paper is to enable you to relate your textual learning to on-going feminist practices in a specific location for a better understanding of cultural and political dynamics and parameters in which feminists have taken action. The paper should not exceed 15 pages. **It is due on April 20**.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

- Jan. 5**                    **Introduction & Film:** *Beyond Beijing—The International Women's Movement*  
  
Estelle Freedman, *No Turning Back*, Preface, and pp. 1-72
- Jan. 12**                    **The Global Stage and the Politics of Location**  
**Film:** *My feminism*  
  
Freedman, pp. 95-119,  
Adrienne Rich, “Notes Towards a Politics of Location” (E-reserve)  
Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Feminist Encounters” (E-reserve)  
Lata Marni, “Multiple Mediations: Feminist Scholarship in the Age of Transnational Reception”(E-reserve)
- Jan. 19**                    **Race, Gender, and Class in the US**  
  
Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change*, Forward to p. 116.  
Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open*, Preface & Part One  
Freedman, pp. 73-94  
The Combahee River Collective: “A Black Feminist Statement” (E-reserve)
- Jan. 26**                    **Social Movements and Feminist Insurgence**  
  
Boggs, Chapters 5-9  
Rosen, Part Two  
**Video in class: Grace Lee Boggs**
- Feb. 2**                     **Sexuality and Intersectionality**  
  
Rosen, Part Three  
Freeman, Chapter 11  
Interview Transcript: Cathy Cohen  
**Video in class: Holly Hughes**
- Feb. 9**                     **Feminism and Global Capitalism**  
  
Rosen, Part Four  
Freeman, Part Three  
Interview Transcripts: Andy Smith, Taylor and Kramer  
**Video in class: Taylor and Kramer**
- Feb. 16**                    **Colonial History and Feminism in India**  
  
Lata Mani, “Contentious Traditions” (E-reserve)  
Barbara Ramusack, “Women and Gender in South and Southeast Asia”(E-reserve)  
Vina Mazumdar and Indu Agnihotri, “The Women’s Movement in India: Emergence of a New Perspective,”

Raka Ray, *Fields of Protest*, Chapter 2.  
**Film:** *No Longer Silent*

**Feb. 23**

**Multiple Voices and Diverse Organizing Strategies**

Raka Ray, Chapters 3-5  
Interview Transcript: Neera Desai  
**Video in class:** Vina Mazumda

**March 2**

**Recess**

**March 9**

**Constraints and Possibilities**

Raka Ray, Chapters 6-9  
Interview Transcript: Flavia Agnes  
**Film:** *Unlimited Girls*

**March 16**

**Nationalism and Feminism in China**

Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, & 4.  
**Film:** *From Confucius to Mao*

**March 23**

**Feminism and the Socialist State**

Wang Zheng, Chapter 5 & 8  
Tina Mai Chen, "Female Icons..." (E-reserve)  
Interview Transcript: Wang Cuiyu  
**Film:** *From Mao to Fall Equality*

**March 30**

**Chinese NGOs and Transnational Feminism**

Hsiung et al. *Chinese Women Organizing*, Introduction, chapters 3 & 8 (E-reserve)  
Mallika Dutt, "Some Reflections," (E-reserve)  
Wang Zheng, "Research on Women in Contemporary China," (E-reserve)  
Interview Transcript: Ge Youli, Gao Xiaoxian.

**April 6**

**Feminist Activism in the Post UN Conference on Women**

Interview Transcripts: Ai Xiaoming, Li Huiying, Zhang Lixi, Wang Xingjuan.  
**Film:** *Vagina Monologues: Stories Behind the Scene*

**April 13**

**Cultural Parameters and Feminist Futures**

Pun Ngai, "Opening a Minor Genre of Resistance" (E-reserve)  
Wang, "Gender, Employment and..." (E-reserve)  
"Feminist Futures: Transnational Perspectives" (E-reserve)  
**Film:** *The Global Assembly Line*

**April 20**

**Term paper due in my mailbox by 4:00 pm.**

