

Prof. WANG Zheng  
Women's Studies Department  
2156 Lane Hall

Office Hours: W. 4:00 – 6:00  
Personal Meeting Room via Zoom  
[wangzhen@umich.edu](mailto:wangzhen@umich.edu)

WGS 151-002 Fall 2020

Tuesday 3:00- 6:00 pm Remote via Zoom

## **Life Stories of Global Feminist Activists**

Have you ever encountered a feminist activist from a foreign country? Why have some women decided to take actions to make a difference in their societies? Feminist activism has long been a global phenomenon but our knowledge of feminists in diverse regions is very limited. This course introduces you to some feminist activists in Brazil, China, India, Nicaragua, Poland as well as the US by studying their life stories collected by the pioneering UM interdisciplinary and transnational oral history project – *Global Feminisms Project*. No prior knowledge of the history of these countries is required, although the course will introduce these activists against their specific historical and cultural settings. The purpose of the course is to expand students' intellectual horizon with a global perspective and to prepare students for an academic life in college by introducing some analytical skills, such as historical analysis and close reading of texts in both written and visual forms. The course will also highlight oral history as a research method for producing new knowledge.

Personal narratives (in both textual and visual forms) of feminist activists from multiple 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. Besides a historical perspective, the course encourages students to pay close attention to different key words used by feminists in various locations as a method to engage with situated knowledge. This course presumes a willingness to engage in hard thinking, questioning, and respectful listening to the voices (spoken and written) of others.

### **Technical Support:**

Please feel free to contact the IT service if you need immediate assistance to access online courses.

[LSATechnologyServices@umich.edu](mailto:LSATechnologyServices@umich.edu), or 734.615.0100 (Prompt 1)

You may want to write this information on a post-it note and keep the note on or near your computer.

### **Course Readings:**

Required readings can be accessed on Canvas (Files).

Interview transcripts and videos can be accessed on Global Feminisms Project website: <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/globalfeminisms/>

To guarantee smooth virtual communication for each class, please view all the required videos on your own before class.

### **LSA COMMUNITY STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The LSA undergraduate academic community, like all communities, functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. The College holds all members of its community to high standards of scholarship and integrity. To accomplish its mission of providing an optimal educational environment and developing leaders of society, the College promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. Conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards of the College community cannot be tolerated. The College seeks vigorously to achieve compliance with its community standards of academic integrity. Violations of the standards will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences and disciplinary action.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** WGS 151 follows the academic integrity guidelines set forth by the College of LSA [<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/>]. Students should familiarize themselves with this document, which explains the standards of academic integrity and clarifies the prohibited forms of academic misconduct. Students in WGS 151 should utilize the Chicago Manual of Style Online for all issues of source citation, along with any specific guidelines provided in the course assignments. Clarifying the disciplinary standards of research ethics and source citation is part of the educational mission of this course, and students should consult the faculty instructor regarding any questions. The penalties for deliberate cases of plagiarism and/or other forms of academic misconduct are failure for the course. Cases that the instructor judges to be particularly serious, or those in which the student contests the charge of academic misconduct, will be handled by the office of the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education. All cases of deliberate academic misconduct that result in formal sanctions of any kind will be reported to the dean's office, as required by LSA policy, which also ensures due process rights of appeal for students.

### **Grading:**

1. Class participation: 40%

This course is organized as a seminar. 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. In order to make the course a meaningful learning experience for you, you are expected to meet the following requirements for class participation.

- A. Regular attendance. If you have to miss a class, you should obtain permission from me by email beforehand or submit related documents afterwards. **You should consider dropping the class if you have to be absent for more than one class.**
- B. Follow a classroom etiquette for the virtual seminar. Let's try our best to create a learning environment that enhances academic learning experiences. Please prepare to sit up for the class. Casual clothes are fine but no pajamas. Mentally prepare yourself for an engaging class that demands full concentration even though you are at home or in your dorm.
- C. Complete assigned readings before coming to each class and compose one paragraph of thoughtful response to each narrative you are assigned. The purpose of the response is to demonstrate to me: one, you have done your homework before coming to the class; and two, how much you have grasped the key points of the reading. I will prepare my following day's class largely based on your responses, focusing on helping you explore further the rich meanings of the texts. You are also welcome to include a question or two following the responses that you would like me to address in class. Please post your responses on Canvas (Discussion) **every Monday by 5 pm**. You are welcome to read each other's responses after posting yours. Your responses on time account for 26 points out of the 40 points (2 points for each submission). Late submission will receive 1 point deduction.
- D. Active participation in discussion, which accounts for the remaining 14 points.

2. Midterm Essay: 20%

Following the example of interviews you have learned in this class, interview a feminist activist student on campus and write a three-page essay introducing the activism of them and discussing the meanings of such activism. The essay is **due on October 20 by 11 pm**. Send your essays in word format to my email. Further instruction on essay writing will be given in class. Please double-check your file when you submit it. A late submission will receive 5 points deduction.

3. Term paper: 40%

Instructions for the Term Paper:

Please select 3 activists from 3 different locations in the Global Feminisms project to write a paper comparing and analyzing diverse feminist practices. You can watch the video or read the transcript of the life stories of the activists. While reading the

transcripts or watching the video, make note of the life events that transformed them into leaders of their communities. Discuss the significance of their activism to their communities and compare their similarities and differences in their activism that reflect their diverse historical contexts, political dynamics and cultural parameters. Explore the relevance of the narratives of these activists in relation to your own values and vision of your own role in social change you have been thinking of. Discuss the aspects of transformational leadership qualities of these feminist leaders that personally resonate with you and the lessons you learned in creating your personal vision of taking leading role in the issues you are passionate about.

The paper should be 6 pages long (**double space** 12” font). If you need more space, please feel free to do so. Write a brief description of each activist (1 page for each). Your personal reflection on the leadership qualities that resonate with you and the lessons learned in creating your personal vision should appear in the conclusion part (1-2 pages). **It is due on December 15 by 10 pm.** Send your paper to me via email.

### SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

- Sept. 1**            **Introduction: The Global Stage and the Politics of Location**  
Situating feminist activists against historical and cultural contexts  
The Combahee River Collective: “A Black Feminist Statement”
- Sept. 8**            **Multiple Systems of Oppression**  
Understanding feminist theories and practices from a historical perspective
- Film:** *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*  
Grace Lee Boggs: “On My Own,” in *Living for Change: An Autobiography*, University of Minnesota Press, 1998
- Sept. 15**           **The Personal is Political**  
Analyzing personal narratives to understand the politicization of activists
- GFP** Interview Transcript: Aapa, Wang Cuiyu  
Amrita Basu, “Introduction,” in *Women’s Movements in the Global Era*, Westview Press, 2017 pp. 1-21 (the first three sections)
- Sept. 22**           **Feminist Struggles against Global Capitalism**  
Economic justice and human rights
- GFP** Interview Videos: Martha Ojeda, Taylor and Kramer,  
**Film:** *The Global Assembly Line*
- Sept. 29**           **Art and Feminism**
- GFP** Interview Video: Holly Hughes & Mangai

GFP Interview Transcript: Ai Xiaoming

**Oct. 6 Feminist Knowledge Production**

GFP Interview Transcripts: Vina Mazumda & Cathy Cohen  
GFP Cross-site: Urvashi Butalia

**Oct. 13 Raising Voices from the Margin**

GFP Interview Transcripts: Mahasweta Devi, D. Sharifa  
Film: *No Longer Silent*

**Oct. 20 LGBT Activism and Feminism**

GFP Interview Transcripts: Laura Castro, Anna Gruszczynska  
Midterm paper due at 11 pm

**Oct. 27 Reproductive Justice**

GFP Interview Video: Loretta Ross  
GFP Interview Transcript: Juanita Jiménez  
Film: *One Child Nation* (Amazon prime)

**Nov. 3 Gender and Violence**

GFP Interview Video: Sista II Sista  
GFP Interview Transcript: Maria da Penha

**Nov. 10 Changes and Continuities across Generations in Historical Context**

GFP Interview Transcripts: Wang Xingjuan & Duan Jiling

**Nov. 17 Feminism and the State**

GFP Interview Transcripts: Huang Xueqin & Wei Tingting  
Film: *Hooligan Sparrow*

**Nov. 24 Recess**

**Dec. 1 Women's Activism in the Context of Revolution and Regime Change**

GFP Interview Transcripts: Monica Baltodano & Barbara Labuda

**Dec. 8 Writing about Feminist Activists – Research Methods**

Review of selected texts.

McGuire et al. "Becoming Feminist Activists," *Feminist Studies*,  
Vol. 36, No. 1, Spring 2010

**Dec. 15**      **Term paper due**