

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS PROJECT PODCAST SERIES:  
CONTEXTUALIZING FEMINIST VOICES:  
THE LESSON PLANS**

**Topic: Intersectionality**

**Host: Marisol Fila  
Speakers: Özge Savaş**

**University of Michigan  
Institute for Research on Women and Gender  
1136 Lane Hall Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1290  
Tel: (734) 764-9537**

**E-mail: [um.gfp@umich.edu](mailto:um.gfp@umich.edu)  
Website: <http://www.umich.edu/~glblfem>**

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**Marisol Fila: Hi, everyone. We are today with Özge Savaş. She is a faculty member at Bennington College, and she's also the creator of the Lesson Plan "Intersectionality" Özge, thank you very much for coming today. Can you please provide a brief overview of the Lesson Plan and its learning goals?**

**Özge Savaş:** Of course. First of all, thanks for having me. So this Lesson Plan is one of my favorites because the archive is so rich with different lived experiences of womanhood and this Lesson Plan is using that very helpful material in dismantling the idea of "ideal womanhood," so in a way helping students question the ideas about hegemonic definitions of femininity and womanhood, and the power embedded within those definitions, but also helping the instructors think together with the students and help students imagine what coalition building across difference looks like in feminism.

**MF: That's fantastic, and all of that using primary sources which is great for instructors and students to work with. What are some of the proposed activities that instructors can find in the Lesson Plan?**

**ÖS:** Yeah, there are two main activities. A set of PowerPoint slides that could be used together with the first activity and a proposed assignment associated with this Lesson Plan. So two activities and a proposed assignment. They kind of build on each other but the instructors can use as little or as much as they want or need. The first activity focuses on the idea of understanding the concept of hegemonic femininity or ideal womanhood or cult of womanhood through an exploration of different experiences of womanhood. Students are led to question the definition of who is considered a woman. One limitation is that this activity focuses on the US only and the interviews from the US. But all 3 examples in the first activity are representing different diverse experiences of womanhood. So this limitation of focusing on only the US also brings a strength, because by keeping it context-specific, we are able to explore the Western cis-hetero, white middle-upper class beauty ideal that travels the world, shaping women's and people's understanding of hegemonic femininity everywhere, not only in the US. In the activity, there is a handout with excerpts from the interviews and short video clips associated with these excerpts, or matching with the excerpts. I find it useful typically to use the video clips and the excerpts together, the handouts with the excerpts together. The students can take notes while they listen and look. You know what is being said. But for instructors who don't have enough time for the full activity, or to even print these out, they can only use the video clips if they want it. I think in the podcast before I heard Desi Rios talk about Adrienne Asch's interview, which is about being a disabled woman. I heard Patrick Grzanka talking about Loretta Ross's interview, which is about her experience as a black woman building a reproductive justice movement. The video clips in this activity provided in this Lesson Plan include those two examples, and also Martha Ojeda, who talks about being a migrant woman, and her

challenges in the labor movement. All these materials together help students explore different womanhood experiences. This is just the first activity. In the second activity, we focus on coalition building and the students are encouraged to identify the specific systemic inequities from the excerpts from the archive and find similarities across those differences. And last but not least, the assignment offers the instructors the ability to expand the knowledge students gain with the activities. It has a bunch of suggested keywords and prompts for the instructors so they can give this as an assignment to students using the interviews and these keywords and prompts to write an essay. There's also a grading rubric associated with this assignment that they can use if they want to.

**MF: Thank you so much. This is so helpful, and I see that this Lesson Plan is full of resources and of different proposed activities or mini activities that even the instructors can use or adapt, like the first big activity, into smaller chunks. You're great at connecting it with some of the other resources that we have on the website, like other podcasts in which other instructors are talking about the way in which they are using the different materials from the website. So why did you create this Lesson Plan?**

**ÖS:** I feel like the materials in the website are ever-evolving with our little community expanding and building on each other. So why did I create this? Some of the questions at the heart of this lesson plan are: Who is considered a woman? Can gender explain all systemic oppression of women everywhere? So those are the questions. And we know the short answer is, no. As our social realities and societies become more and more complex with migration, globalization, and and with different kinds of systematic and structural inequities that include social class differences, disability, racial and ethnic conflicts, it becomes more and more inevitable that intersectionality is an important tool in our toolbox in social sciences and humanities. Gender alone has never been able to explain all social differences and inequities, but we are perhaps at an intersectional turn in social sciences, even though Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote her two seminal pieces in the late eighties and early nineties. Maybe we're just catching up with that, and we're at this intersectional turn, I feel. So we're at the crucial time that every student of social science and, for the same matter in humanities, natural sciences and the arts, should understand intersectionality and learn intersectionality. And when I say this I mean not the weak version of intersectionality, because there are weak versions, but the strong version. And we in our hands have the right material and the data for it. Because these activists have lifelong experience dismantling those systems of oppression, their rhetoric is so invaluable in teaching about intersectionality and I wanted to honor those stories by creating this lesson plan. I use these stories all the time in class so it was really nice to give it a structure and provide this material for everyone for their use on the website.

**MF: This is so fantastic, and thank you so much for saying that you have used these different interviews and different stories in class too, and that you built the lesson plan to put together some of the work that you were using as a professor yourself. Is there anything else you would like to say, Özge?**

**ÖS:** Not much. I was listening to other podcasts on the website and one of the things Desi [Rios] said stuck with me because I had the exact same experience with students over and over again, and with myself too, using, for example, Adrienne Asch's interview where she talks about her experience as a disabled woman. It's just so eye-opening to see at a systemic level how these experiences are shaped by our structural realities and systemic oppression. That's just fascinating how extraordinarily beneficial and useful these interviews are in helping students understand.

**MF: Great. Thank you so much, and if an instructor is also interested, we have another Lesson Plan focused on Black Feminism that also draws from this intersectional approach and perspective, so it will be great for any instructors who want to put these two in conversation.**

**ÖS:** Yes, I completely agree. I feel like when we were having that other conversation with you about Black Feminism's Lesson Plan, that kind of builds nicely on this. This could be an initial Lesson Plan focused on the US and that Lesson Plan is more focused on Black feminists' experiences in the diaspora and in four different countries, which is a nice kind of building on this one.

**MF: Thank you so much, Özge. Thank you so much for coming, and for all your wonderful work.**

**ÖS:** Thank you, Marisol.