Interdisciplinary Seminar
Thinking Sex/Gender Globally
IDSEM-UG1682
Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University
Fall 2015

COURSE INFORMATION
Professor Ritty Lukose, Office 715 Broadway (or 1 Washington Place),
room 610; email: ritty.lukose@nyu.edu.

Course Schedule: Tuesdays, 9:30-12:15pm, GCASL room 288 (238
Thompson).

Office Hours: My regular office hours are Thursdays 9:30-12:30 and 2-
3pm. Please go to http://goo.gl/Efb5Yi in order to sign up for appointment
slots.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This interdisciplinary seminar explores how gender and sexuality simultaneously produce and are
produced by global, transnational and international visions. For example, the project of
identifying affinities between women across cultures and national boundaries has long grounded
the work of feminist movements, scholars, journalists, institutions and activists in a variety of
locations, both within and outside the Euro-American context. More recently, struggles for the
rights of sexual minorities have become increasingly transnational. We explore such efforts to
forge enabling alliances and solidarities. We also critically examine how such efforts navigate
cultural and national differences, hierarchies within a global world order and complex histories of
imperialism, paying attention to the different locations through which such projects intersect with
the global. The course highlights the rise of a new post-war international order centered in the UN
system, exploring the links between colonial legacies and new global trajectories. How and why
are women and girls, gender and sexuality so central to this system? By examining development
initiatives that target women and girls, anti-violence and anti-trafficking campaigns, and the
rights of sexual minorities, we explore how gender and sexuality become grounds for debating
global, transnational and international visions and frameworks that, in turn, shape feminist and
queer politics in different locales. Readings include Antoinette Burton, Burdens of History:
British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, Kumari Jayawardena's Feminism and
Nationalism in the Third World, Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an
Empire by Mrinalini Sinha, Afsaneh Najmabadi's Women with Mustaches and Men Without
Beards, Are Women Human? by Catherine MacKinnon, Transnational LGBT Activism: Working
for Sexual Rights Worldwide by Ryan Thoreson and Queer Activism in India: A Story in the
Anthropology of Ethics by Naisargi Dave.
REQUIRED TEXTS

*Specers of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* by Mrinalini Sinha

*Making Transnational Feminism: Rural Women, NGO Activists, and Northern Donors in Brazil* by Millie Thayer

All books are available through a variety of websites. All other reading materials will be available through the course website (NYU Classes) which everyone MUST be able to use.

Also, this syllabus is a work in progress. There might be occasions during the course of the semester when readings might change and/or additional materials added and assignments shifted as well. While I don’t anticipate this happening very frequently (and of course, I will give you notice), I would like the course to be open to our evolving conversation.

COURSE PROCEDURES AND ASSIGNMENTS

This is a seminar course. Therefore, punctuality, regular attendance and participation are important for this class to work well. Arrival in a timely way and regular attendance is a requirement. If, due to illness or other emergency, you must miss class, please let me know via email.

**Weekly reaction/response papers** to the readings which must be posted to the discussion forum by *Monday noon*. In these responses of a page or two, you should pull out some sense of your understanding of the readings, an exploration of a concept or argument that you find compelling. You could also lay out what you do not understand or are wrestling with in the readings. You can use these responses to analytically clarify for yourself what the readings are saying. In addition, towards the end of this response, you might also raise questions that emerge for you out of the readings.

**Two 3-5 page discussion papers** (typed, double spaced, 12 point) will be due (see course schedule). These assignments are of two types:

The short discussion papers correspond with the last session of a thematically organized section of the syllabus (only the first two sections of the syllabus). In these papers, you should pull out a specific concept, an issue, or a question that enables an entry point into a meaningful and vigorous set of reflections and discussions that compare, contrast, and synthesize the readings of that section of the syllabus. The goal here is a well-conceived, substantive discussion paper. It will therefore be important to balance breadth and depth in choosing authors to compare. Each of these papers must include discussion of at least 2 but no more than 4 of the authors that were assigned for that section.

**A final paper, 10-15 pages in length** (again, typed, double-spaced, 12 point) will be due at the end of the course. This paper is an opportunity for you to explore and elaborate on
a theme or issue in the class that is of particular interest to you. There are two parts to this assignment.

In preparation for the final paper, write a paragraph that explains what you are attempting to explore in your final paper (what issue? What problem?) And identify the key sources that you will use in researching and writing your final paper. Name at least three sources and provide full bibliographic information (using whichever system of citation you choose: Modern Languages Association (MLA) or University of Chicago Style).

The final paper: This paper resembles the shorter discussion essays you will have turned in throughout the semester and might even build on one of them, but it must incorporate at least 5 outside sources (academic in nature – book or article) to provide additional background, evidence and support. You may incorporate non-academic sources beyond the 5 academic ones that are stipulated. This paper must reflect some of the readings and issues we have discussed during the semester, but should also extend beyond them to explore issues in more depth and/or breadth.

NYU Classes: All students are required to know this program and use it. I have created a discussion forum on blackboard for use by the class where the reaction/responses will be posted. I encourage you to use it and supplement our in-class discussions. I am not requiring that you post to the forum, but your participation on this forum will be incorporated into your participation grade if you do and I will be monitoring the forum to see what kinds of issues come up. Also, all written work must be submitted electronically via blackboard. Please use the “assignments” tab on the left hand bar.

Breakdown of grade: 30% participation, 40% shorter discussion papers, 30% final paper.

Plagiarism is an increasingly important and difficult issue in college teaching that I take very seriously. If you have any questions about plagiarism, there are many guides about plagiarism and how to avoid it (see for example: http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/guides/engineering/ee/plagiarize.html).
COURSE SCHEDULE

September 8 – Introduction

Gender, Feminism and the Making of the Modern Imperial World

September 15  Gender and Empire edited by Phillipa Levine (read chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 12). PLEASE NOTE: Book is available in electronic form from Bobcat.

Screening: Rabbit Proof Fence

September 22  “Type, Acts, or What? Regulation of Sexuality in 19th Century Iran” by Afsaneh Najmabadi

“Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India” by Lata Mani

“Colonialism, Nationalism and the Colonized Woman: The Contest in India” by Partha Chatterjee

“Matriline and Its Discontents” by G. Arunima

September 29  “The White Woman’s Burden: British Feminists and ‘The Indian Woman’, 1865-1915” by Antoinette Burton (selection online)

“The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and ‘Global Sisterhood’, 1900-1915” by Antoinette Burton (online)

White Woman’s Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia During British Rule, by Kumari Jayawardena (selections online)

October 6  Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World by Kumari Jayawardena (selections)

October 13  No Classes, Legislative Day

October 20  Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire by Mrinalini Sinha

DUE: 3-5 page discussion paper.
Sex/Gender and Feminism in the New International Order

October 27  
*Development – 1*

“Women and Equality: The Capabilities Approach” by Martha Nussbaum (online)

“Universalism Without Foundations?” by Nivedita Menon (online)

“Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” by Chandra Mohanty (online)

“The Rise and Rise of Gender and Development” by Ruth Pearson

November 3  
*Development – 2*

“Demystifying Micro-credit: The Grameen Bank, NGOs and Neoliberalism in Bangladesh” by Lamia Karim

“Crossbreeding Institutions, Breeding Struggle: Women’s Employment, Neoliberal Governmentality and State (Re)Formation in India” by Aradhana Sharma

November 10  
*Sex Trafficking in a Global Frame*

“Global Sex Work, Victim Identities and Cybersexualities” by Wendy Hesford

“Now You See Her, Now You Don’t: Sex Workers at the UN Trafficking Protocol Negotiations” by Jo Doezema (online)

“Queering Approaches to Sex, Gender and Labor in India: Examining Paths to Sex Worker Unionism” by Ashwini Sukthankar (online)

November 17  
*Gender, Militarism and International Politics*

*Are Women Human? And Other International Dialogues* by Catherine MacKinnon (selections)

“Witnessing Rape Warfare: Suspending the Spectacle” by Wendy Hesford
“Uncomfortable Alliances: Women, Peace and Security in Sri Lanka” by Vasuki Nesiah (online)

November 24  Globalizing Sexuality

“Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World” by Joseph Massad (online)

“Dating the State: The Moral Hazards of Winning Gay Rights”

“Indian and Lesbian and What Came Next: Affect, Commensuration and Queer Emergences” by Naisargi Dave (online)

December 1  NGOs and Transnational Organizing

Making Transnational Feminism: Rural Women, NGO Activists and Northern Donors in Brazil by Millie Thayer

DUE: 3-5 page discussion paper

Global Sex/Gender and Feminism in the US/Europe

December 8  Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy by Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Hochschild (selections)

“Femonationalism and the Regular Army of Labor Called Migrant Women” by Sara R. Farris

“The Public/Private Mirage: Mapping Homes and Undomesticating Violence Work in the South Asian Immigrant Community” by Anannya Bhattacharjee

DUE: Paragraph description and bibliography for final paper

December 15  “Feminism, the Taliban and the Politics of Counter-Insurgency” by Saba Mahmood

“Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others” by Lila Abu-Lughod
“Mapping US Homonormativities” by Jasbir Puar