

## **POL 331: Gender in Developing Countries**

**Term 9, 2005**

**Aparna Thomas, Instructor**

**Office: 305, South Hall**

**Office Hours: MWF 11-12, TR 2-3 and by appointment**

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**Classroom: 300, South Hall**

**Class meets: 9-11 M-F (and some afternoons).**

### **Course Description:**

This course will critically investigate the complex ways in which gender relationships shape history, ideology, economy and polity in developing countries. The role and status of Asian women will be examined to enable students to compare and contrast non-Western experiences with Western experiences. Drawing on case material from the developing world, the course will address questions such as “What is gender? What is development? How do different economic models, religions/cultures, and political regimes rely on particular configurations of gender relations to achieve their goals?”

A theoretical perspective will include the study of culture, cultural evolution, patriarchy and sexual stratification. This will be followed by a close examination of several cultures and their norms and values; differential behavioral patterns between males and females; social control mechanisms and socioeconomic and political forces impinge on gender relationships. The forces of modernity and the impact on colonialism will also be discussed especially in relation to the economic and political conditions of the non-Western world and development.

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Understand various theories of gender and development and apply them to an analysis of the challenged of sustainable and equitable development.
- Explore women’s contributions to development, in various societies against a backdrop of heterogeneity.
- Analyze how women’s experiences are shaped by ethnicity, class, colonialism, and globalization worldwide.
- Discuss some of the challenges that face women in the developing world such as the nature of inequality and politics of patriarchy and protest.
- Improve critical thinking and writing skills through reflection papers and a research project.

### **Readings:**

Four books are required for this course. Students are expected to keep up with all the required readings and be prepared to participate in class discussions. The required books are:

- Visvanathan, Nalini et al 1998. (Ed). *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*. Zed Books.
- Markandaya, Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve*.
- Friedl, Erika. *Women of Deh Koh*.
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. *Woman Warrior*.

Additional readings may be assigned during the course of the term.

## Structure of the Course

Pol 331 will include “traditional” lecture sessions as well as group discussions & assignments, films/videos and handouts, in addition to individual writing exercises. Although I will be providing some lectures during class, we will be spending a good deal of time having in-class discussions on the assigned topics and materials.

The readings and other materials for the course will focus on theory as well as case studies and examples. Please know that although I have listed a few case studies/issues/examples under each sub-heading of the syllabus, the cases/examples noted are in no way the exclusive domain of the theory/perspective with which it is placed. In other words, the cases/examples provided may compliment &/or problematize the theoretical perspective with which it is placed, and will be used to help us get a better grasp on the theories presented in class, as well as the diversity of issues often (though not always) considered “feminist”.

Similarly, don’t expect that we will have time to cover all relevant theories or issues relating to women/gender, power & politics in this course. If however, there is something missing that is particularly important to you, let me know and we will try and integrate it into the course.

## Some Ground Rules

We will be spending a great deal of time discussing & debating a number of diverse views, standpoints, strategies & so forth in this class. It is expected that we will come to class with different sets of opinions and philosophies and we should all feel free to agree and disagree with one another. We will however, listen to one another with respect and foster an environment in which we are safe to share our views & opinions.

**How to get the most out of class discussions:** Classroom participation is a key requirement in this course. The most important policy is to be polite and respectful. Consider other people’s feelings. Every person in this class is equally responsible for the success of the course. Here are some tips to make most of your experience in this class:

1. Enter into class activities with enthusiasm
2. Openly share related experiences
3. Respect the views of your classmates
4. Be patient with others
5. Be honest and sincere about your thoughts and feelings
6. Restrict discussions to relevant topics
7. Try not to monopolize discussions

## Assignments and Requirements:

1. **Two Examinations:** The exams will cover the readings as well as class discussions. Make-up exams will not be given unless in the case of emergencies.
2. **Critical Essays:** Two short papers of 2-3 pages each are required based on the readings. The papers should be analytical and reflective. Rather than summarize the main points from the readings, the papers should critically examine the different viewpoints from the readings and relate them to other topics/issues discussed in class. The essays should specifically address the readings from the Women, Gender and Development Reader.
3. **Term Paper and Presentations:** Students are required to write a research paper of 8-10 pages. The detail requirements will be handed out in class. *All students need to get their term paper topics approved by me. Unapproved paper topics may not be accepted.* Additionally, each student is required to meet with me individually to discuss the paper topic. On the day of the paper conference, you are required to hand in a brief description of the proposed paper topic (typed). The paper is due on **Wednesday, May 25** by noon. We will have paper presentations on the last 2 days of the term. Sign up sheets will be distributed. No late papers will be accepted, unless you get consent from the instructor in advance.
4. **Attendance and Participation:** Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Students are expected to participate actively in sharing their ideas on various classroom discussions. Students who

fail to maintain a regular attendance cannot expect to score well on classroom participation. You are allowed **one unexcused** absence after which, grades will be lowered by ½ grade for every unexcused absence. Additionally, I reserve the right to lower the **final grade** in case of repeated absences.

**5. Leading Class Discussions:** We will conduct this class as a seminar. Students are responsible for leading class discussion at least once during the term. Discussion leaders should plan material for about an hour. The goal is to work together to understand the themes and questions raised in the readings.

#### **6. Grading:**

Exam I	50 points
Exam II	50 points
Critical Essays (2)	50 points each
Attendance and Participation	100 points
Final Paper and Presentation	100 points

#### **Academic Honesty:**

The following section is reprinted from Compass, the Cornell Student Handbook. Please see me if you have any questions.

A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty.

Dishonesty in academic work includes both cheating and plagiarism. Please refer to the Cornell Student Handbook for more details or come and talk to me.

A safe guide is to provide a full citation for every source consulted. Sources may include, but are not limited to, published books, articles, reviews, Internet sites, archival material, visual images, oral presentations, or personal correspondence. In addition, students should always keep previous drafts of their work in order to provide documentation of their original work. Finally, due to disciplinary differences, students should consult their professor, a librarian, and/or the Writing Studio for specific instructions on properly providing citations for sources.

#### **Term Paper and Presentation:**

In the course of this term each student will be involved in a substantial research project. The paper should utilize several sources (5 as a minimum) that contain different views on the selected topic. It should be 8-10 pages long (excluding bibliography). Students are required to present the paper in class. The presentations will be 10-15 minutes each. You are required to select your topic by Friday, May 6 at the latest.

An excellent research paper and oral presentation must conform to the following criteria:

- good, clear and complete description of the problem
- clear thesis statement on the selected problem (your own argument) developed out of empirical evidence or theoretical perspective
- theoretical framework(s) that explain your problem the best
- empirical evidence and/or plausible examples to support your argument
- your own contribution to the problem -- e.g., unique arguments supported by evidence that others missed, synthesis of previous findings or new empirical updates of previous findings that prove one side to be correct
- proper citation and bibliography based on APA, MLA or Chicago Style guidelines.

## **Schedule and Reading Assignments:**

**Note: The contents in this syllabus may be changed during the term to reflect the progress of the course. I will announce any changes in the classroom. All readings should be completed before class.**

### **Week 1—May 2-6**

**Monday, May 2: Course Introduction**

**Tuesday, May 3:  
(Morning Class)  
Culture and Ethnocentrism**

**Tuesday, May 3:  
(Afternoon Class)  
Guest Lecture: Dr. Kornelia Slavova**

**Wednesday, May 4:  
Theories of Women, Gender and Development  
Readings:  
Pg 1- 54 (from the reader)**

**Thursday, May 5  
Theories of Women, Gender and Development Contd  
Readings:  
Pg 54-92 (from the reader)**

**Friday, May 6:  
(Morning): Households and Families  
Readings:  
Pg 103-142 (from the reader)**

**(Afternoon): Individual Paper Conferences (my office)  
Paper Topic Due  
Critical Essay Due!**

### **Week 2- May 9-13**

**Monday, May 9:  
Hinduism and Caste in India  
Readings: Handouts given in class**

**Tuesday, May 10:  
(Morning)  
Nectar in a Sieve**

**(Afternoon)  
Film: TBA  
South Hall, #17**

**Wednesday, May 11**

**Exam 1**

**Thursday, May 12**

**(Morning):**

**Women in the Global Economy**

**Readings:**

**Pg 177- 238**

**(Afternoon): Film: TBA**

**South Hall, Room #17**

**Friday, May 13**

**International Women in Social Transformation**

**Readings:**

**Pg 257- 284, 293-317**

**Critical Essay Due**

**Week 3: May 16-20**

**Monday, May 16**

**Islam and Gender**

**Readings:**

**1) Woman, Marriage and the State in Iran (pg 317-320, Gender and Dev Reader)**

**2) Return to the Veil: Personal Strategy and Public Participation in Egypt (pg 320-325, Gender and Dev Reader)**

**3) Handouts given in class**

**Tuesday, May 17:**

**Readings: Women of Deh Koh**

**Film: TBA**

**Wednesday, May 18:**

**Exam II**

**Thursday, May 19:**

**Readings:**

**Gender, Chinese Revolution and Self-Actualization**

**Readings:**

**1) Abuses against Women and Girls under the One-Child family Plan in the People's Republic of China (from the reader, pg 284)**

**2) Wife Abuse in the Context of Development and Change (from the reader, pg 142)**

**Friday, May 20:**

**Readings: Woman Warrior**

**Week 4- May 23-25**

**Monday, May 23-24: Paper Presentations**

**Wednesday, May 25: Final Paper Due @ noon**