

WOMEN AND SOCIETY (2050)  
SPRING 1996  
WOMEN STUDIES PROGRAM  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER

INSTRUCTOR: DR. Tahira S. Khan

TIME: Tue, Thu, 2:00-3:15 p.m.

OFFICE HOURS: 1:00-2:00 p.m.

INTRODUCTION

"Women are made and not born"  
(Simone de Beauvoir, 1952).

Social and anthropological studies regarding women's status reinforce the above mentioned assertion even today. Feminist studies in particular argue that biology need not be destiny. It is the society and its cultural norms which are mostly responsible for gender stratification. In other words, women's role and status in society has been determined not by her biology but by the social structure and mode of production.

This course intends to examine theories and concepts of gender stratification by bringing together various studies of women's status and roles in different socio-cultural settings and political systems. The course will revolve around two basic questions:

- Are there essential differences between males and females beyond the obvious sex differences?
- Should males and females have different status and serve different and specific roles?

In addition, there are many more queries which need to be addressed while studying the topic of women and society. The central assumption of the course is that by examining many dimensions of women's lives and their status through different phases of human history we shall be able to make cross-cultural comparisons in a global context. An attempt will be made to explore cultural, economic and political determinants of women's changing roles and their status in developed and developing societies.

The course is divided into three sections:

- I. The study of theoretical and conceptual literature on the topic of sex and gender stratification.
- II. The study of cross-cultural empirical literature, in a global context. This section has been further subdivided into three parts by clustering together some societies on the basis of their socio-economic systems. They are:
  - A. Women in the capitalist/industrialist societies
  - B. Women in the former socialist states
  - C. Women in the developing (Third World) societies

- III. The comparison of national, regional and global differences of socio-economic determinants of women's roles and status with particular reference to Third World women.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS

- J.M. Neilsen, Sex and Gender in Society, Waveland Press, 1990
- L.L. Adler (ed), Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective, Praeger, New York, 1991.
- Mohanty, Russo, Torres (eds), Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism, Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Articles on the Reserve Desk

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADING

- Completion of weekly reading assignments.
- Class attendance and participation (20%)
- More than three absences during the semester will result in reduction of a student's grade automatically.
- Two quizzes (20% + 20%)
- Format of the quiz will be mixed, i.e., multiple choice, T/F, or short answers. Quizzes will cover the readings and lectures to the quiz date.
- Final Exam (40%)
- The format of the final will be explained in advance.

#### NOTE

**There will be no make-up for quizzes or the final exam.** Excessive absence will have an adverse impact on the final grade. Students who are habitually late to class or leave class early may be marked with an absence unless prior notice is given to the instructor. Students who anticipate problems regarding readings/attendance should consult with the instructor in advance.

## WEEKLY READINGS

### Week One

January 16 Introduction.

January 18 Defining Sex and Gender,  
Neilsen, Chapter 1

### Week Two

January 23 Gender and Status: A Historical Survey  
Neilsen, Chapter 2

January 25 Social; Learning Experience (Socialization)  
Neilsen, Chapter 7  
Reserve Readings

### Week Three

January 30 Race, Class and Age Factor  
Neilsen, Chapter 4

February 1 Psychological Theories of Sex Differences  
Neilsen, Chapter 5

### Week Four

February 6 Theories of Sex Stratification  
Neilsen, Chapter 6

February 8 Functional and Ideological Theories  
Neilsen, Chapter 8

### Week Five

February 13 Materialist Theories  
Neilsen, Chapter 9

February 15 The Future of Gender  
Neilsen, Chapter 10  
Reserve Readings

### Week Six

February 20 An Overview of Theoretical Literature: Discussion

February 22 FIRST QUIZ

### Week Seven

February 27 Section Two: Study of Cross-Cultural Literature  
A: Capitalist/Industrialist Societies  
Neilsen, Chapter 3

February 29 Women in the US, Canada and Britain  
Adler, Chapters 1, 4  
Reserve Readings

### Week Eight

March 5 Women in Japan and Thailand  
Adler, Chapters 13, 15

March 7 Women in Australia and Israel  
Adler, Chapters 17, 8

### Week Nine

March 12 Former Socialist World: Another Perspective (Soviet Women)  
Adler, Chapters 6, 7

Week Ten

- March 19 Women in the Developing Societies:  
Third World Perspective  
Latin America, Alaska  
Adler, Chapters 2, 3
- March 21 African Identities  
Women in Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria  
Adler, Chapters 9, 10

March 25-29 SPRING BREAK

Week Eleven

- April 2 Women in India and Samoa  
Adler, Chapters 11, 12, 16
- April 4 An Overview: Discussion

Week Twelve

- April 9 SECOND QUIZ
- April 11 Politics of Feminism or Feminist Politics: Third World Women  
Mohanty, pp. 1-50

Week Thirteen

- April 16 Power, Representation and Feminist Critique  
Mohanty, pp. 51-129
- April 18 State Politics and Gender  
Mohanty, pp. 133-171

Week Fourteen

- April 23 National Liberation and Sexual Politics  
Mohanty, pp. 215-260
- April 25 Race, Identity and The Feminist Struggle  
Mohanty, pp. 271-310

Week Fifteen

- April 30 Common Themes, Different Contexts  
Mohanty, pp. 314-327
- May 2 An Overview of the Empirical Literature: Discussion