



Academic Year 2019-2020
Syllabus
Gender Flows
Gender and the Environment
CFU 6
Prof. Alessandra Chiricosta

Course Description

This course will provide students with an overview of the field of *Gender and the Environment*, with a specific focus on the global, intercultural and transnational dimension of Women's, Feminists and LGBTQI debates and activism on environmental issues. The field of *Gender and the Environment* " is a 'multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary body of scholarship that lacks clearly defined boundaries" (MacGregor 2017: 6). It stemmed out from the intersection of feminisms and environmental theories and activism in the 1970s (ecofeminisms) and was developed during the 1980s and 1990s among women from the anti-nuclear, environmental, and lesbian-feminist movements as well as in the Academic contest and in the agenda of International Agencies. In recent times, due to the worsening of the ecologic crises, its importance as both a field of research and a social movement has grown considerably. Following the suggestions of Feminist Political Ecology (FEP), the course will adopt an intersectional perspective which illustrates how systems of oppression surrounding race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, citizenship are interconnected and bound to the contemporary ecological crisis. As an introductory course, it is designed to offer a range of interdisciplinary tools and methods for understanding and analysing issues at stake.

The course will analyze various approaches that the interconnection between gender and ecology is capable of originating in different cultural context and globally. It will be shown to which extent ecofeminists, feminists and queer ecological transnational activism have provided a basis for understanding the utility of gender analyses for global environmental politics (GEP) to be adopted by International Agencies.

As both ecological philosophies and a social movements, ecofeminisms, feminist and queer ecologies also embody a multifaceted critique of Global Environmental Politics (GEP). In contrast to mainstream approaches to GEP, which focus on the role of the nation state or institutions in global, collective efforts to protect and manage the natural environment, feminist critiques emphasize the contextualized experiences of women in politics. Specifically, ecofeminisms, feminists and queer ecologies have made critical and significant contributions to the discourses on environmental ethics and the interrelationships among gender, environment, and development, unveiling the importance of theoretically and practically contrasting "Monocultures of the Mind", as Vandana Shiva suggests.

Thanks to the endorsement of Post-Colonial and De-colonial perspectives in FEP, *Gender and Ecology* discourses progressively recognize the importance of enhancing the role of women who belongs to indigenous and rural communities, coming especially from the "Global South". It has been acknowledged that indigenous and peasant women (as well as women involved in

fishery, forest and environmental conservation), women of low income communities of colour are taking the brunt of contemporary ecologic crisis that originates from neoliberal criteria of exploitation. Basing on different cosmovisions and rationales vis-a-vis the so-called “Western antropocentrism/anercentrism”, the knowledge gained throughout centuries by women belonging to cultures often labelled as “undevelopped” by a colonialistic and ethnocentric logic is on the contrary considered as fundamental in providing analysis and possible solutions to contextual and global environmental issues.

The necessity of overcoming the dualistic vision of the Nature-Culture relation and patriarchy stimulates also a critical reflection on mainstream scientific approach in “the West”, that challenges presuppositions on the way scientific research should be conducted, and results in original theoretical and practical contributions, such as Donna Haraway’s and Braidotti’s theory of *zoecentrism* and *naturcultural continuum* or Jane Goodhal *empathic* approach to biology and ethology.

This new paradigm paved the way for unespected alliances and connections, that has been developed in queer ecologies, cyber-eco-feminisms and new indigenous movements.

It will then explores the connection between the economic development of the natural world and women's (as well as other “feminized” subjectivities’) status and roles worldwide and analyzes Case Studies that shows how women (especially youg girls) agency is gaining momentum in protecting the environment, providing models for sustainable development, establishing gender equality and developing mutually enhancing human- non human animals and human-earth relations.

Teaching Method

The course will be articulated into two Sections: **Lectures** and **Lab**.

Section 1: Lectures. (4 hours per week)

Each **Lecture** will provide a description of the Topic from an historical angle, outlining the theoretical framework in which the Topic has been conceived and discussed. Then it will move to provide a critical analysis on how specific meanings, concepts and categories related to the Topic at stake have been developed and used in the contest of Gender and Women’s Studies, Feminisms and Queer Theories.

Section 2: Lab. (2 hours per week)

Lab is seen as a space of interaction and debate, in which students are asked to actively participate.

Specific readings and audio video materials will be analysed and proposed as themes of discussion. Attending students are requested to read the articles in advance.

Schedule of Topics

Topic 1	Lecture. Introduction: Challenging the Nature/Culture Paradigm and the Gendered Division on the World. Lab. What is “Gender”? What is “Environment”?
Topic 2	Lecture. Ecofeminisms and FEP. Theories and Transnational Movements. Lab. Case Study. <i>The Green Belt Movement</i> in Kenia
Topic 3	Lecture: Gender and Ecology in the context of International Agencies. Lab. Intersectionality
Topic 4	Lecture. Bio and Cultural diversity Vs Monocultures of the Mind. Post Colonialism, De colonialism and New Indigenism Lab. Case Study. Vandana Shiva and the <i>Chipko</i> movement in India
Topic 5	Lecture. FEP and the Posthuman: creating kinship from a zoecentric perspective. Lab. Reframing “the human”. From Jane Goodall to the Cyborg
Topic 6	Lecture. New generations of gender and environmental activists merging dualities. Queer Ecology and Cyber-eco-feminisms. Lab. New generations.

Textbook and Materials

Books

- Pilcher, J. and Whelehan, I. *Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, Sage, Los Angeles, London, New Dehli, Singapore, Washington D.C., Melbourne, 2015 (only chapters discussed in classroom)
- *Global Gender and Evironmental Outlook*, United Nation Environment Programme 2016
- Merchant, C. *Radical Ecology. The Search for a Livable World*, Routledge 2005 (Selected Chapters).

Articles

- Braidotti, R. “A Theoretical Framework for Critical Posthumanities” *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2019, Vol. 36(6) 31–61
- Casselot, M. A. "The Inevitability of Care in a Posthuman World" *Gnosis, Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 14 n. 2 (2015)
- Doak, c. *Queering Nature: The Liberatory Effects of Queer Ecology*, (2016). Dickinson College Honors Theses. Paper 246.

- Haraway, D. "The Promises of the Monster: a Regenerative Politics for the Inappropriate/d Others" In Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York; Routledge, 1992) , pp. 295-337.
- Hunt, K. "It's More Than Planting Trees, It's Planting Ideas": Ecofeminist Praxis in the Green Belt Movement" *Southern Communication Journal*, University of Utah, 2014
- Kapoor, P. "The Challenge of an Earth Democracy: Vandana Shiva and the Relevance of Transnational Feminism" in *Mediaciones*, Bogotá, July-December 2014
- Parke-Sutherland, Tina, "Ecofeminist Activism and the Greening of Native America" *American Studies in Scandinavia*, 50:1 (2018), pp. 123-149. Published by the Nordic Association for American Studies (NAAS).
- Shiva, V. and J. Bandyopadhyay "The Evolution, Structure, and Impact of the Chipko Movement" *Mountain Research and Development*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (May, 1986), pp. 133-142
- Sturgeon, N. "Ecofeminist Movements" in Carolyn Merchant (ed. by) *From Ecology: Key Concepts in Critical Theory*, Second Edition, 2007
- Sundberg, J., "Feminist Political Ecology", *The International Encyclopedia of Geography*, Wiley-Blackwell & Association of American Geographers, Editor-in-Chief Douglas Richardson, 2015
- Volkart, Y. "TECHNO-ECOFEMINISM. Nonhuman Sensations in Technoplanetary Layers" in Cornelia Sollfrank (ed.by) *The Beautiful Warriors. Technofeminist Praxis in the 21. Century*. Minor Compositions 2019.
- Worsley, C. "Jane Goodall: Humanity and the Chimpanzee", *Journal O/ the Manitoba. Anthropology Students' Association*, 28, 106–122. Xu, T. (2013)

Conventions

Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995.

Indigenous Woman Declaration, Beijing 1995.

Further readings:

On Feminist Philosophy and Gender Studies:

- Butler, Judith, *Undoing Gender*, New York/London: Routledge, 2004.
- Braidotti, Rosi, *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Second Edition, Columbia University Press, New York, 2011.
- Haraway, Donna. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge, New York.
- Jaggar, Alison M. and Bordo, Susan R., *Gender, Body, Knowledge*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1997
- Stone, Alison, *An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007

On Post-Colonial and De-Colonial Feminist approach:

- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, *boundary 2*, Vol. 12, No. 3, On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism, 1984. pp. 333-358. On line version is available at http://www2.kobeu.ac.jp/~alexroni/IPD%202015%20readings/IPD%202015_5/under-western-eyes.pdf

- Shiva, Vandana, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity*, Natraj Publishers, 2011

- Spivak, G.C. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg's *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois Press, 1988.

On line version is available at http://abahlali.org/files/Can_the_subaltern_speak.pdf

- Trinh Thi Minh Ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Duke University Press Books, 2003.

On Feminist Political Ecology:

- Diamond, Irene, and Gloria Orenstein, eds. 1990. *Reweaving The World: The Emergence Of Ecofeminism*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

- Elmhirst, Rebecca. 2011a. "Introducing new feminist political ecologies." *Geoforum*, 42(2): 129-

132. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.01.006

- Nightingale, Andrea J. 2006. "The nature of gender: Work, gender, and environment."

Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 24(2): 165-185.

-Seager, Joni. 1993. *Earth follies: Coming to feminist terms with the global environmental crisis*. New York:

Routledge.

-Shiva, Vandana and Maria Mies. 1993. *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books.

Assessment

By the end of the course, students will:

- demonstrate an introductory understanding of the field of gender and women's studies, and utilize a range of interdisciplinary tools and methods;
- construct and enhance a critical understanding of intersectionality, including an awareness of gender and its complex intersections with other social, cultural, and biological categories, including but not limited to sex, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality, ability, and age;
- understand multiple levels on which ecological issues and gender issues interact;
- cultivate a language framework for thoughtfully articulating the critical vocabulary in the field of gender and women's studies;
- show an understanding of post-colonial and de-colonial theories and practices in the context of environmental studies and activism;

Methods of evaluation for attending students: attendance 30%, active participation to the in-class discussions 30%, final exam 40%.

Methods of final exams for attending students There will be a final written exam and a discussion.

Attending students must be present at least to 80% of classes.

Non attending students will be evaluated only on the final examination.

Office hours

Monday afternoon, at the end of the lesson.

E-mail

alessandra.chiricosta@gmail.com

NOTE: Since the course is provided for a limited number of students, **Erasmus students** who would like to attend this course and take this exam need to contact the Secretariat of Global Governance by e-mail global.governance@uniroma2.it for registration.