

**WSTD 254-601, Gender and Warfare: Contemporary Fronts**  
**Course Syllabus**  
Spring 2006

Instructor Information:

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Class Meetings:

**Tuesdays, 6pm, 316 Williams Hall**

Office Hours:

**M 3p-4p; Th 2p-3p; and by appointment**

**Course Description**

In what ways is gender affected by war? In what ways are war, warfare, and military activity affected by gender? How are contemporary culturally-specific notions of femininity and masculinity produced, challenged and/or perpetuated by and through current military engagements across the globe? In this course we will examine the relationship between war and gender in a contemporary socio-political framework. We will focus on particular fronts of civil and international war including here in the U.S. and abroad in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Congo, and Haiti.

Some of the questions we will ask are: Why is sexual degradation and violation such a prominent instrument of domination in warfare? How does the shaping of masculinity in a time of war coincide with defending one's nation, one's religion, or one's tribe? In what ways are contemporary notions of femininity in particular cultures challenged or reinforced in times of war? Why is it that in all of these contemporary fronts of war civilian girls and women are subjected to sexual assaults while men are emasculated or feminized as part of the process of marking one's enemies and degrading them? We will examine all of these questions with a commitment to discerning what sort of possibilities war and its aftermath provide for challenging current conceptions of gender. Facilitated discussion, writing assignments, and presentations will be the primary forms of assessment in this course.

**Required Course Materials**

*Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping*, edited by Dyan Mazurana, Angela Raven-Roberts, and Jane Parpart (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

*Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance*, edited by Marguerite R. Waller and Jennifer Rycenga (Routledge, 2001).

**Course Requirements**

Discussion/Participation: 10%

Team Teaching Session: 10%

Weekly Reporting (12): 20%

Response Papers (3): 25%

Book Review & Presentation: 15%

Final Exam: 20%

On discussion and participation (10%)

In addition to learning more about the questions listed above, this class provides us with an opportunity to develop our critical thinking skills. In order to be able to think critically about what we have read, we must first *understand* what we have read and be able to accurately represent the text's main points and its logic. Some of the material is demanding and requires patience and often **repeated readings**. Prepare yourself by taking notes as you read (as well as in class). I expect you to come to class having read and thought about the assigned reading so that you are prepared to participate in discussion—any lectures in class will not take the place of, nor give a comprehensive summary of, the text assigned. I expect you to complete all of the assignments. The emphasis on writing and discussion will help you to develop your oral and written communication skills as well as your ability to understand arguments.

### On Response Papers (25%)

I will assign these three times throughout the semester and the papers will be due on **January 31st, February 28th, and April 4th**. Each time, I will ask you to apply a particular question or set of questions to a particular text or set of readings. It will be your job to a) write about how the author(s) answers or responds to this particular set of questions in his/her text and b) discuss how the author's treatment of the question informs/influences *your* response to this particular set of questions. More detailed instructions will be handed out at the time the papers are assigned (one week prior to the due dates listed above). Each paper will be progressively weighted so that the first paper will be worth 7% of your final grade, the second, 8%, and the third, 10%.

### On the Team Teaching Session (10%)

Each student will be required to pair up with another student (I will assign the pairings in the beginning of the semester) to teach the class **once during the semester** for approximately **30 minutes**. The team should be prepared to summarize the readings assigned for that class meeting, hitting on the main points of the texts (approximately 10 minutes). After summarizing the main points of the texts read for that day, the team will lead a class discussion with several questions designed to prompt critique and analysis of the readings. The team's response to these questions (in the form of feedback, comments, or further questions) should demonstrate the team's ability to both integrate the specific readings into the larger framework of the course and relate them to current global political upheavals/developments that the readings may not address. (Knowledge of current conflicts around the globe and how they relate to gender will be produced and made accessible through the students' weekly journalistic logs—see below.)

### On the Book Review and Presentation (15%: 10% for the review, 5% for the presentation)

Each student will choose a book (preferably non-fiction) that relates to the topics addressed in the course and write a short review that is both descriptive and analytical. The review should consist of no more than 6 double-spaced pages. In order to prevent overlapping of students' book choices, students will be required to submit a proposal before beginning the review. The proposal should be brief (no more than 1 typed double-spaced page) and should list 2 books the student is willing to read and review along with an explanation of why the student wants to review the books and how they are related to the course. **Proposals due February 21st. Reviews due March 21st.** Each student will be required to present his or her review of the book to the class on **March 28<sup>th</sup>**. Students **will not read from their book reviews**, but rather will use notecards/powerpoint, etc. to present the main points of the book and provide an analysis of the way in which the book directly relates to the course. Students will also be expected to provide the class with a critical assessment of how the book examines (or fails to examine) the relationship between war and gender. Presentations should be approximately **10-15 minutes** in length. After the presentation, students should be prepared to field questions from classmates.

### On Weekly Reporting (20%)

Beginning Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> and continuing on a weekly basis through Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup> (with the exception of March 6<sup>th</sup> which is during spring break) I will send out an email that contains the reports on war-torn or conflict-ridden regions across the globe and how such wars/conflicts are affecting gender (and vice-versa) in those areas. Each student will be responsible for picking a war-torn region to monitor throughout the semester. **Every week by Sunday evening at 8pm beginning on Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> and continuing on a weekly basis through Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup>** (with the exception of March 5<sup>th</sup>) students will be required to submit to me via email ([bshannon@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:bshannon@sas.upenn.edu)) his or her regional report. The report itself should be approximately **2 paragraphs** and should consist of a description of: how a particular conflict in a specific region of the world affects men, women, girls, boys; how it affects local conceptions of femininity and masculinity; how the conflict/war itself is predicated on certain assumptions about gender; and how the conflict/war itself challenges or reinforces local gender norms.

### On the Final Exam (20%)

The final exam for this course will be a take-home essay exam. I will distribute the exam in our last class meeting (**April 18<sup>th</sup>**) and the exam will be due **Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6pm**. You will be given 5 essay questions and you will have to **choose 3** essay questions to answer. Each essay should consist of **at least 3 but no more than 4** double-spaced, typed pages for a **total of 9-12** double-spaced, typed pages.

### **Attendance, Class Decorum, and the “Rules of Engagement”**

You are expected to attend every class session and arrive promptly at 6pm on Tuesdays. Since the primary format of the class will be discussion, you are expected to be respectful of each person’s opinion which, among other things, involves listening to your fellow classmates while they hold the floor in a discussion. If you choose to engage in any form of disruptive behavior during our class time you will be asked to excuse yourself from the class.

Please keep in mind that this class is not about *solving* local, regional, or global conflicts. Rather, our readings and our class discussions will always be focused on two questions: 1) how do these conflicts a/effect gender and 2) how does gender a/effect these conflicts? Therefore, everyone is expected to bracket out of our discussions how a given conflict/war should be “won” or whether a *particular cause* of a given conflict is “just.”

### **Plagiarism**

All Academic Dishonesty offenses are reported to the University’s Office of Student Conduct. Plagiarism consists of copying or paraphrasing too closely the work of someone else without giving that person appropriate credit. An act of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for that assignment and depending upon the degree of severity, may result in a failing grade for the course. For the University of Pennsylvania’s Code of Academic Integrity go to: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html>. For the University of Pennsylvania’s official policy on plagiarism go to: [http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/PORT/documentation/plagiarism\\_policy.html](http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/PORT/documentation/plagiarism_policy.html).

### **Blackboard**

This class is registered on Blackboard. In order to login to your Blackboard account go to <https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu/>. You will be able to use Blackboard to access the class syllabus as well as most class handouts and assignments. You will also be able to use Blackboard to communicate on discussion boards.

### **Information to Students with Disabilities**

Student Disabilities Services (SDS) provides comprehensive services and programs for undergraduate, graduate and professional students with disabilities to ensure equal educational opportunities and access to opportunities for learning and personal growth. All services are free and confidential. SDS staff is available to discuss a range of disability management issues, including eligibility, documentation, academic accommodations, housing and transportation needs, learning strategies, academic skills instruction, use of assistive technology, and referral to campus and community resources. Consultation for perceived disabilities is also provided. As of September, 2004, the Weingarten Learning Resources Center (LRC), including two offices: Student Disabilities Services and the Office of Learning Resources will be located at Stouffer Commons, 3720 Spruce Street, Suite 300; Suite 110 Harnwell House. (The entrance is on Woodland Walk..) Phone: 215-573-9235 (voice); 215-746-6320 (TDD); web address is: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/>.