

GOVT 584.001: GENDER & POLITICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Professor Diane Singerman
WARD 113 Tuesday 02:10PM-04:50PM
Spring 2011

(THIS IS A PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS ONLY: FINAL VERSION IS POSTED ON BLACKBOARD)

Office Hours: Tues/Thursday 11-12 AM; Wedn 11:30-3 & By Appt.
(My office hours change sometimes due to meetings (on Wedn),
so it is sometimes more efficient to let me know you are coming)
Ward 242, Department of Government, x2362 (an internal office; enter through Govt. or JLS Dept.)
dsinger@american.edu

This course explores the ways in which the social, political, and cultural construction of sexual difference influences the nature and practice of political life in the Middle East. It will examine both theoretically and empirically the ways in which power is gendered and how gender has served as a basis for political organization, the distribution of power, and the boundaries of public life.

Many themes will be examined in the course in order to understand the political and economic context of struggles around gender issues; the mobilization of women's movements; the interaction of religion, law, and interpretation; the gendered nature of the state; the gendered course of nationalism, secularism, resistance, and globalization in the Middle East. Although the focus of the course will be on the "political" in the context of comparative politics and the larger discipline of political science, it will draw heavily from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, women's studies, and political economy, among others. The focus of the course is largely on the geographic area of North Africa and the Middle East. Intentionally, the course includes a balance between empirical knowledge of particular cases and theoretical debates on gender and politics. Students will be expected to master both theoretical and empirical dimensions of the course. Success in this class will be a factor of the timely completion of all the assigned readings, active classroom participation and responsible collaboration, and astute writing and analysis.

Class Project and Case Study: We will be widening the typical geographic center of the "Middle East" by turning to a student-centered, collaborative class project at the end of the class that examines how the US and other external actors in Afghanistan instrumentalized gender to further their agendas. Once gender has become associated with foreign policies and powers, what will happen to women as the balance of power shifts and the US and its allies withdraw/wind down military operations in the near future? This is obviously a contemporary political issue and the theoretical and thematic material in the class will be employed to examine this very complicated, controversial, and challenging issue. Then, students will develop their own research question and individual role in the class project by presenting research/policy paper as a final exercise. Students will participate in dynamic groups (students may be part of two working groups). There will be no final exam in the class.

Beginning in the third week, each week will include some class discussion and preparation of the case study on the instrumentality of gender in Afghanistan. At the outset, brainstorming sessions will raise questions, suggest preliminary avenues to explore, present ideas for organizing this case study and relating it to seminars and speakers later in the term. What are the relevant issues related to our research agenda? How should we break down, categorize, conceptualize, unpack the issues? What kind of division of labor should we deploy? What working groups should the class form? What is the best vehicle to present the material (thinking outside the box)? How can or should these issues be examined in the public realm? What are the normative positions about this issue in the academy, the policy world, among governments, think tanks, etc.?

Barfield's *Afghanistan: Cultural & Political History* and readings on gender in Afghanistan are assigned for March 31st, but really students should start reading this material at once. Classes will meet in April but will not use the lecture/discussion format, since students will be organizing and presenting their work in classes and the class will critique them. Students will also have input in deciding how to evaluate and grade individual and group contributions. Every effort will be made to work collaboratively and working groups will be decided upon

by the class. The advanced undergrad and graduate students will devise shorter assignments with due dates to collect, sift through and analyze this complex issue. Students can opt for subjects and approaches which interest them and will be encouraged to use their creativity to produce material for a website (videos, blogs, technical assistance for the website, graphics expertise) or analytic essays, to interview people in the DC area such as diplomats, activists, or Afghans with experience about this issue, and to conduct in-depth research. Students will be encouraged to dig into printed and online material to find diverse opinions and to think critically about forming conclusions about this topic.

This class project will compliment a grant from the Social Science Research Center's "Academy in the Public Sphere" program to Professor Singerman and Middle East Studies @ AU, to confer small seminars and lectures on this topic. Thus, students work will directly influence and contribute to the design and success of campus seminars and guest speakers. I hope students will also be interested in assisting with the conference and selecting guest speakers, and being part of the public seminars.

The requirements of the course include an essay, **two** critical reviews, and an exam on the assigned readings, as well as a final research/policy paper/project on gender and politics in Afghanistan. Twice during the class, each student will post a review about the week's readings on blackboard (under discussion board). Students will compose one review in the first four weeks of class of an important article and write another review in the second half of the class (of a book *or* the assigned articles of a particular week if there is no assigned book). This 'review assignment' also includes acting as **class facilitators** of the material reviewed and handing out (and posting on blackboard) four questions and four main points about the readings to the class. This review should also include at least a paragraph or two about how this reading relates to previous material in the semester. Students can be somewhat creative in the visual presentation of this review of the week's readings. Various assignments throughout the semester will be linked to the final project, depending on the degree program. See "Writing Tips" under assignments for my expectations about writing assignments.

Grading for the course will be calculated in the following manner: *informed* classroom participation, including class facilitation [of book reviews of assigned reading] and collaboration, leadership, and preparation for the class project (15%); two book reviews; one in the first four weeks of the class of an important article (7.5%) and the other in the second half of the class (of a book *or* the assigned articles of a particular week if there is no assigned book). This 'review assignment' also includes acting as **class facilitators** of the material reviewed and handing out (and posting on blackboard) four questions and four main points about the readings to the class (7.5%); the first essay on the theoretical articles from the first half of the class (15%); midterm/first exam (20%); policy/research/online paper/project (20%) material produced for the Afghan project (15%). Classroom participation and a collaborative *ethic* and enthusiasm are very important for this class. At the same time, students should do the assigned reading, according to the timing of the syllabus.

This syllabus WILL change as we collectively structure and design the collaborative class project. Please consult the online version of the syllabus on Blackboard as the final authoritative version of the syllabus. **Check to see that your email works within the Blackboard course page and check your email regularly for class updates.** Late work without an excuse may be penalized. Please communicate by email or telephone about any attendance problems or other difficulties throughout the semester. Graduate students in the class will be held to a higher standard, particularly regarding the final assignments and leadership.

Please turn off all cell phones in class and do not use personal computers unless you have explicit permission from the professor. The grading scale in the class is as follows: 0-50 = F; 60-69=D; 70-72 = C-; 73-77=C; 78-79=C+; 80-82=B-; 83-87=B; 88-89=B+; 90-92=A-; 93-100= A.

Book Reviews

In preparing your reviews, keep in mind the following pointers. At most, they should be 3 pp. Those writing a review of an article will also be 'class facilitators' that day, presenting four questions and four main points in a handout for the class. A sign-up sheet will be distributed in class.

- a. *Provide a description, not a summary, of the article.* Sufficient description should be given so that the reader, as one reads the review, will have some understanding of the author's thoughts. This account of the contents of a book can often be woven into the critical remarks.
- b. *Be critical, not merely descriptive.* A critical review is one in which the writer describes and evaluates the book in terms of the aims and purposes of the author,

and supports this evaluation with evidence from the text.

c. *Build an argument based on what is there, not on what you want to be there.*

While a critical review is a statement of opinion, it must be a considered judgment including: (i) a statement of the reviewer's understanding of the author's purpose; (ii) how well the reviewer feels the author's purpose has been achieved; (iii) evidence to support the reviewer's judgment of the author's achievement.

d. *Quote with care.* Refer to specific portions of the books to illustrate your statements and conclusions. Generally, however, extensive quotes are not advisable. Do not leave quotes dangling, without analysis. In reviewing a draft, ask yourself whether quotations are awkwardly placed and, if so, adjust their usage.

e. *Structure your paper.* The opening paragraph, like the concluding one, is in a position of emphasis and usually sets the tone of the paper. Among the various possible introductions are:

- a statement of the thesis
- a statement of the author's purpose
- a statement about the topicality of the work or its significance
- a comparison of the work to others by the same author or within the same genre
- a statement about the author

The main body of the review should logically develop your thesis as organized by your outline. Changes in the outline may need to be made and transitional paragraphs introduced, but the aim should be toward logical development of the central point. Quoted material should be put in quotation marks, or indented, and properly footnoted. The concluding paragraph may sum up or restate your thesis or may make the final judgment regarding the book. No new information or ideas should be introduced in the conclusion.

Questions to consider: What is (are) the overall thesis(es) -- the points of view or conclusion? what are your reactions? Did the book(s) enhance your understanding of the issues? What are his or her relevant qualifications and background (or lack thereof) for writing on this subject? What were his or her reasons for writing this book? You should consider the time during which the book was written and, if evident, the author's values and biases. What evidence is cited, and has new documentation become available? If so, identify the new documentation. Or, does the book present a novel interpretation based on previously available documents, or does it provide a new account of a subject already treated by others. What is your ultimate judgment of the style, format, contents, and historical value of each book? Has each author achieved the purpose, explicit or implicit, for writing the book? Has he or she persuasively argued the thesis to your satisfaction? Why or why not? Compare the evidence cited and argumentation used to support the respective conclusions. Has the book challenged you intellectually, increasing your knowledge, raising new questions, and/or presenting the material in a novel, even provocative manner? Or does the author simply rehash what everyone already knows? Would you recommend any or all of these books, and at what level -- secondary, undergraduate, graduate? What book on this subject still needs to be written? [Thanks to Professor Julie Mertus for her great instructions on how to write a review]

Academic Integrity Code

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. It is expected that all examinations, tests, written papers, and other assignments will be completed according to the standards set forth in this code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary action will be taken should such violations occur.

The following texts are available in the American University Campus Store and will be on reserve at Bender Library and all articles can be found under "E-RESERVES" on Blackboard:

- Leila Ahmed. *Women and Gender in Islam. Historical Roots of Modern Debate*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Kecia Ali. 2006. *Sexual Ethics & Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*. Oneworld Publications: Oxford.
- Thomas Barfield. *Afghanistan: Cultural & Political History*. Princeton University Press, 2010. Availb as e-book.
- Nilufer Gole. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*. University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Rhoda Kanaaneh. *Birthng the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel*. University of California Press, 2002.
- Marnia Lazreg. *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*. Routledge, 1994.
- Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*. Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, *Women of Jordan: Islam, Labor, & the Law*. Syracuse University Press, 2003.

Lectures and Assigned Readings

Week One, January 11: Introductions; Gender, The Middle East, and the Course Objectives

By February 8th, students will write a short review of one of the assigned books or articles except for Leila Ahmed's book. See directions above for the style and content of the review. Maximum 3 pp. The review will be posted on Blackboard for all students to review.

Week Two, January 28: Gender, Comparative Politics, and "The Woman Question"

Leila Ahmed. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of Modern Debate*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992, pp. 1-123.

Rhoda Kanaaneh. "We'll Talk Later." *Arab Society: Class, Gender, Power and Development*, Nicholas Hopkins and Saad Eddin Ibrahim, eds., 263-273, The American University in Cairo Press, 1997.

Laura Nader. "The Subordination of Women in Comparative Perspective." *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 15 (Fall-Winter 1986): 377-397.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Chandra Talpande Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres, eds., 51-80, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Week Three: January 25: Feminist Theory

Carole Pateman. "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy." In *Public and Private in Social Life*, S.I. Benn and G.F. Gaus, eds., 281-303, Croom Helm, 1983.

Terrel Carver. "A Political Theory of Gender: Perspectives on the 'Universal Subject.'" In *Gender Politics, and the State*, Vicky Randall and Georgina Waylen, eds., 18-28. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Susan Okin. "Gender, The Public, and the Private." In *Political Theory Today*, David Held, ed., 67-90, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Sandra Harding. "Introduction: Is There a Feminist Method?" In *Feminism & Methodology*, Sandra Harding, ed., 1-14. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Michael L. Ross, "Oil, Islam, and Women" *American Political Science Review* 102 (February 2008): 107-123.

Week Four, February 1: Gender, History, Islam, and the Middle East

Lerner, Gerda. 1986. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 3-140.

Febe Armanios, "The 'Virtuous Woman': Images of Gender in Modern Coptic Society." *Middle Eastern Studies*. 38:1 (January 2002): 110-130.

Week Five, February 8: Gender, History, Activism, and Re-Interpretation

Leila Ahmed. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of Modern Debate*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992. 127–248.

All article reviews (one of two required book reviews) should be completed by February 8th, and presented during the appropriate week. Students will facilitate discussion of their review and circulate and post a handout listing four main questions and four main points about the readings to the class. Please email me this handout by Tuesday 10 AM of the week your book review falls.

Week Six, February 15: Colonialism, Nationalism and the Mobilization of Women

Marnia Lazreg. *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*. Routledge, 1994.

Emma Sinclair-Web. "'Our Bulent is Now a Commando': Military Service and Manhood in Turkey." In *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*. Mai Goussoub and Emma Sinclair, eds. Saqi Books, 2000, 65-102.

Julie Peteet, "Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A Cultural Politics of Violence." In *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*. Mai Goussoub and Emma Sinclair, eds. Saqi Books, 2000, 103-126.

First Analytic Paper Due in seminar. What are some of the main theoretical and methodological concerns that we bring to the study of gender and politics in the Middle East? What is the utility of these approaches and what remains problematic? Discuss some of the particular concerns that Middle East women and scholars raise when examining gender and politics in the region. Further details to follow.

This paper should be approximately five pages and follow the format and style suggested in the Writing Tips, found under ASSIGNMENTS in Blackboard

Week Seven, February 22:

First Half of Class: First Exam on Assigned Readings

Second Half of the Class: Group Planning/Brainstorming Gender and Afghanistan Project

There is no reading for this week; instead we will continue planning and brainstorming to build our knowledge and direction about exploring the instrumentality of gender in Afghanistan.

In small rotating groups, students will brainstorm and collaborate to figure out how to quickly and deeply learn about the experience and history of politics and gender in Afghanistan. This group project will be student-centered and students will devise a plan to learn about this case study, divide up labor, and represent and evaluate work. In particular, the class will explore the way different national and international forces have instrumentalized gender to further their aims, not always with success. What positions might Afghan women adopt (and their supporters) to maintain a seat at the bargaining table as the US and its allies leave or national/global alliances shift?

This class project will be enhanced, and contribute to a seminar/conference and guest lecturers on the same topic during this semester. I will use the class' energy, ideas, and initiatives to design and enrich programming this semester funded by a grant to "Middle East Studies @AU" (I am the Co-Director) from the Social Science Research Council, "Islam in the Public Sphere." I hope that the class will present its work and analysis through the use of new media and online technology. For a model of online projects from earlier courses, see Vanessa Steven's "[The Gulf Women's Diwaniya](http://eagle1.american.edu/~vs9835a/index.html)" (<http://eagle1.american.edu/~vs9835a/index.html>), Enough Silence: <http://www.american.edu/faculty/singerman/enoughsilence/index.html> or Eagle Eye On Darfur: <http://www.american.edu/faculty/singerman/eagleeyeondarfur/>

Week Eight, March 1, Informal Politics, the Familial Ethos & Political Participation

Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*. Princeton University Press, 1995. Intro, Chapters 1-3, conclusion.

Recommended: Anouk de Koning, "Café Latte and Caesar Salad: Cosmopolitan Belonging in Cairo's Coffee Shops." In *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*, Diane Singerman and Paul Amar, eds., 221-233. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006.

SPRING Break Week, March 8:

Week Nine, March 15: Piety, Veiling, Learning, Religious Agency and Politics

Nilufer Gole. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*. University of Michigan Press, 1996.

Recommended: Homa Hoodfar. "[The Veil in Their Minds and On Our Heads: Veiling Practices and Muslim Women](http://www.umass.edu/wost/syllabi/spring06/hoodfar.pdf)." In *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader*, Elizabeth A. Castelli, ed. Palgrave MacMillan, 2001. <http://www.umass.edu/wost/syllabi/spring06/hoodfar.pdf>

Week Ten, March 22, Reinterpretation, Law, Political Economy, & Women's Activism

Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, *Women of Jordan: Islam, Labor, & the Law*. Syracuse University Press, 2003.

Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr. "Can Women Act as Agents of a Democratization of Theocracy in Iran?" Final Research Report prepared for the project Religion, Politics and Gender Equality. The Heinrich Böll Foundation and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, October 2009, 1-37.

Week Eleven, March 29: Struggles Around Personal Status Law, Marriage, and Divorce, in the Region

Kecia Ali. *Sexual Ethics & Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*. Oneworld Publications, 2006.

Diane Singerman, "Rewriting Divorce in Egypt: Reclaiming Islam, Legal Activism, and Coalition Politics." In *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization*, Robert Hefner, ed., 161-188. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. (<http://nw08.american.edu/%7Edsinger/hEFFNER.PDF>)

Leon Buskins, "Recent Debates on the Reform of Family Law in Morocco." *Journal of Islamic Law and Society*. 10:1 (2003). [Students with last names from A-L]

Annelies Moors, "Public Debates on Family Law Reform. Participants, Positions, and Styles of Argumentation in the 1990s." Special Issue of *Islamic Law and Society* 10, 1 (2003). [Students with last names from M-Z]

Recommended: Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. "The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought: Strategies for Reform." *Hawwa: Journal of Women in the Middle East and Islamic World* 1/1, 2003: 1-28. http://www.dr.soroush.com/PDF/E-CMO-20010610-Ziba_Mir-Hosseini.pdf

Recommended: Pardis Mahdavi, "Passionate Uprisings: Young People, Sexuality, and Politics in Post-revolutionary Iran. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 9(5), 445-457.

Recommended: Joseph Massad. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World, *Public Culture* 14(2) 2002: 361-385.

http://www.safraproject.org/bibliography_sgib.htm

Week Twelve, March 31: Case Study: Gender and Politics in Afghanistan; Student Analysis/Working Groups

Thomas Barfield. *Afghanistan: Cultural & Political History*. Princeton University Press, 2010 (e-book as well).

Rubina Saigol, "Militarization, Nation and Gender: Women's Bodies as Arenas of Violent Conflict." In Pinar Ilkkaracan, ed. *Deconstructing Sexuality in the Middle East: Challenges and Discourses*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008.

Week Thirteen, April 5: Gender and Politics in Afghanistan; Student Analysis/Working Groups

All Recommended readings below; Final Readings To be announced by class

Cheryl Benard et al., "Women and Nation-Building," RAND Corporation. 2009. ISBN: 9780833043115.

Cheryl Benard, "Caution Nation-Builders: Gender Assumptions Ahead"

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reprints/2008/RAND_RP1356.pdf

Reprinted from *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Winter 2008, Vol 32:1, pp. 25-37. Copyright © 2008 The Fletcher School, Tufts University. [short version]

Ayotte, Kevin J. and Husain, Mary E. 2005. "Securing Afghan Women: Neocolonialism, Epistemic Violence, and the Rhetoric of the Veil." *Feminist Formations*, Volume 17, Number 3, Fall (112-133).

Grissom, Adam(2010) 'Making It Up As We Go Along: State-building, Critical Theory and Military Adaptation in Afghanistan', *Conflict, Security & Development*, 10: 4, 493 – 517

Week Fourteen, April 12: Gender and Politics in Afghanistan; Student Analysis/Working Groups

Final Presentations and "Launch" of New Media Options for Afghanistan case study.

Week Fifteen, April 19: Resistance, Demography, & Representation

Rhoda Kanaaneh, *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel*. University of California Press, 2002.

Tuesday, MAY 3, 2:10-4:40. We may meet during the final exam time for classroom presentations and final projects, but there will be NO FINAL EXAM.