Why study Gender, Security, and Human Rights?

This course examines the gendered dimensions of security and human rights. Gender equality has been at the heart of human rights and development efforts over the past half-century. International institutions and actors have created legal and normative frameworks to address the ongoing marginalization of women and girls around the world, including the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action, and the UN Women, Peace, and Security framework.

Yet despite these frameworks, gender-based violations and inequalities continue to exist around the globe with alarming pervasiveness. Moreover, there remain profound gaps between legal provisions aiming to promote gender equality and the lived experiences of women, men, and gender-queer individuals on the ground. Drawing from critical gender analyses and postcolonial feminist thinking, this class will introduce you to the concept of gendered rights, challenge you to think about intersectionality as a way of considering “rights,” and introduce you to many of the contemporary human rights and security crises unfolding around the world today. Critically, this class takes an inclusive view of “gender,” examining the security and human rights of all people through an intersectional lens where we map and identify the multiple and overlapping oppressions that keep people on the margins. We will pay particular attention to how power operates to keep these oppressions in place—and identify where and how people are actively pushing back to fight for liberation.

The course is roughly divided into three sections:
The first two sessions of the course focus on clarifying the concepts and theories that we will employ throughout the quarter (and beyond), including gender, feminisms, masculinities, femininities, intersectionality, colonialism, inequality, power, privilege, and so forth.

The second five course sessions are focused on themes that reflect some—although certainly not all—of the major substantive topics in discussions of security and human rights. These topics move from the body outwards to the collective, and include: (1) sexual and reproductive rights and carceral feminisms; (2) labor, trafficking, and forced migration; (3) gender and gendered violence during war; (4) gender and gendered violence after war; (5) religion, culture, and conflict. For each class session, you will typically have several readings that expand on the issue accompanied by several case studies (often through organizational reports or news articles) that ground the ideas from the academic readings in particular cases. In class, we will pull from additional readings (including on human rights reports) to apply the concepts and theories we discuss to real-world contexts.

During the final three classes of the quarter we will turn to the limitations of our current frameworks for understanding security and human rights; we will also critically assess various approaches and movements which aim to dismantle some of the oppressive systems involved in perpetuating gendered insecurities and violations. The final class period will be a chance for group reflection on the issues discussed and researched throughout the quarter.

Throughout, we will talk about how security is a distinct concept from human rights or human development, but will also discuss how all are necessary and related. We will explore feminist approaches to international security and critically engage concepts like militarization, peacekeeping, and intervention. We will emphasize the importance of looking at structural causes of insecurity and at the linkages between various forms of insecurity. We will pay particular attention to the agency of local actors and to the strategies employed by grassroots movements to oppose war, secure peace, and promote human security.

Objectives:

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Conceptualize gender not as an equivalent of sex or “women,” but rather a system of social constructs that creates social hierarchies associated with masculine and feminine characteristics;
2. Explore the relationship between gender and other intersecting forms of oppression, including race, class, ethnicity, ability, language, and so forth;
3. Evaluate current human rights and international security frameworks from a feminist perspective and understand the limitations of these frameworks, with a commitment to understanding how all knowledge is entangled in power relationships;
4. Appreciate the underlying systems of inequality that structure the world today; discuss how and why power operates to maintain these systems; and be able to suggest ways of dismantling them;
5. Conduct a(n intersectional) gender analysis of a contemporary human rights or security issue.
Requirements:

**Personal Narrative (10%)**: For the second week of the quarter, please prepare a personal narrative of approximately 1,000 words which describes your interest in this course and critically reflects on your own career goals in relation to the goals of this class. What motivated you to take this course? What experience do you have thinking or working about issues related to gender, security and human rights? What do you hope to gain from the class? (Via Canvas)

**Participation (20%)**: This seminar will be driven by the active and thoughtful participation of all students. You must come to class prepared to discuss the readings and ready to comment on the specifics of each case we study. While I don’t take attendance, your presence and participation in class is the primary factor determining this grade. I may occasionally ask you to post short reflections from the course readings on our class discussion page on Canvas. I will notify you of this in advance. In addition, we will hold a debate during week 8 which will count towards your participation grade (stay tuned for details).

**Op-Ed Assignment (25%)**: You will write one short essay in the style of a New York Times Op-Ed during the course of the quarter. This Op-Ed-style piece must be approximately 800 words. This piece should use the literature from class to critique and comment on a contemporary human rights or security issue, stating a firm position and backing it up with evidence. These Op-Eds should be inspired by the literature while engaging contemporary issues. This Op-Ed may be turned in at any point during the quarter, but must be submitted by the beginning of class (via Canvas). It should not be a summary of the readings. A critical approach is encouraged, and I expect each to make an argument.

**Final Report (45%)**: The capstone assignment for the course will be to conduct a gender analysis of a contemporary human rights or security issue, written in the style of a Human Rights Watch briefing report. This report will critically engage one contemporary human rights issue or security crisis. The report will then analyze the issue/crisis through an intersectional gender lens (e.g., identifying sex-disaggregated data, control versus access to resources, beliefs and perceptions shaping issue, laws and policies at play), note areas for action, and suggest concrete steps that governments, international NGOs, the UN, and other institutions might take toward remediating these violations. This analysis should not simply summarize the course readings, but should rather apply the concepts and themes discussed in class (e.g., intersectionality, colonialism, patriarchy) to the discussion. I will provide additional details in class, and I strongly encourage each student to discuss your topic with me at some point in the quarter during my office hours. **DUE Tuesday, June 5th, 2018 at 5 pm MST online through Canvas. Each day late results in a 10% reduction in your overall grade. No exceptions, ever.**

My classroom commitment:

This class will be intellectually rigorous and personally challenging for many of us. We will
be critiquing some fundamental constructs of gender, patriarchy, capitalism, racism, sexism, and more, so I ask you to come to the material prepared to interrogate your own biases and engage from a well-informed, thoughtful, and respectful position. We will also be addressing topics that can be intellectually and emotionally triggering and exhausting. I will do my best to add a “Content Note” to materials on the syllabus which may be particularly difficult for some students. That said, please be aware that most of our class discussions deal with difficult topics like racism, sexism, violence, and violence against women. I invite you to skip readings, take time out from class, skip class, and generally take care of yourself if the topics become too overwhelming or if you are experiencing any sort of distress. I am always available to discuss your needs further.

I do not expect you to share the intellectual position of the authors of the course readings, me (the instructor), or your classmates. Instead, I ask you to thoughtfully analyze the arguments of the texts using the provided empirical evidence, assume that all of your classmates are doing the best they can at this point in time, and engage in thoughtful, informed discussion.

As your instructor, I unconditionally reject every form of bigotry, discrimination, hateful rhetoric, and hateful action, whether directed towards one’s race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability, citizenship, political views, socioeconomic status, veteran status, immigration status, or any other form of difference, in class and out. For any member of this class (or the wider DU community) who may feel fear or oppression, my doors are open and I am ready to help.

I also affirm people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is indicated on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun. I prefer she/her/hers. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please also see the Canvas module on participating in an inclusive and respectful classroom.

If there are any ways that I can make your experience in this class, and at Korbel in general, more safe and supportive, please reach out (inside my office hours or out).

Honor Code

All students are expected to abide by the University of Denver Honor Code. These expectations include the application of academic integrity and honesty in your class participation and assignments.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability/medical issue protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and need to request accommodations, please visit the Disability Services Program website. You may also call (303) 871-2372, or visit us in person on the 4th floor of Ruffatto Hall; 1999 E. Evans Ave., Denver, CO.
**All course readings will be provided via Canvas**

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 (March 27th): Introduction to Core Concepts in Gender, Security, and Human Rights**

Questions: What is gender, and how is it different from sex? How does this shape the way we examine security and human rights in our world today? What is security, and how is it defined and understood? What are human rights, and what is the legal framework through which we understand them? What are some of the limitations of these frameworks? What do we mean when we talk about power, and how can we make sense of how it operates?

**Readings**

*Please familiarize yourself with these international frameworks before coming to class:*

UN Declaration of Human Rights: [http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/b1udhr.htm](http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/b1udhr.htm)


**UN Women, Peace and Security Framework summary** (read UNSCR 1325 & 1820)

**Millennium Development Goals** and **Sustainable Development Goals:**

And read this:


**Week 2 (April 3rd): Feminist Approaches to Security and Human Rights**

**In class case study: Indigeneity and First Nations in the Americas**

Questions: How are systems of power and oppression integrally linked to gendered dimensions of security and human rights? How can we pursue security and human rights through a feminist, intersectional lens? What is the relationship between masculinities/femininities/power/privilege/race/indigeneity/colonization/neoliberalism/patriarchy and security and human rights? What do all these concepts mean?

**In class:** Gloria Steinem, *Women Series.* “Canada, the Missing First Nations” CN* for sexual violence and violence against women
Readings:


Optional and recommended:


7 Things Feminists Of Color Want You To Know [http://bsl.io/VOW](http://bsl.io/VOW)
Week 3 (April 10th): Sexual & Reproductive Rights in a Carceral World

In class case studies: Ireland, Eastern Europe, El Salvador, and the U.S.

Questions: What are sexual and reproductive rights? What is reproductive justice? Are these concepts related to human rights or security? In what parts of the world are such rights under threat? And, for whom are these rights threatened? How does the state interfere with gendered subjects’ bodily autonomy? How are punishment regimes linked to issues of security and human rights? How are reproductive rights always racialized and classed?

Optional evening event: 5-7 pm, Maglione Hall: War, Women, and Power – Book launch and panel discussion on gender and conflict

Readings/films:

The 13th (Ava DuVernay’s documentary, available on Netflix -- please watch before class)


**Week 4 (April 17th, 2018): Labor, Trafficking, and Forced Migration in a Globalized World**

In class case studies: Migrant labor in the UAE; Garment factories in Bangladesh; Tobacco farms in the U.S.; Europe refugee crisis

Questions: How central are labor rights to human security? What forms of gender-based violence exist in labor institutions around the globe? How is trafficking linked to labor exploitation? How are current efforts to mitigating trafficking helping (or hurting) so-called “victims” of trafficking? What are some of the limitations of the current approach? How is migration and the current refugee crisis linked to both of the above, and what are some of the gendered concerns that stem from the crisis?

In class film: Becky’s Journey

Readings:


Optional:


Recommended films: Maquilapolis & Libya 4-ever

**Week 5 (April 24th, 2018): Gender During War**

**In class case studies: Nepal, Sudan, Iraq, and Rwanda**

Questions: How are periods of insecurity and violence gendered? What is gender-based violence? Why is it important to think of gender-based violence as not only something targeting women and girls? How common is it in armed conflict? Why is some violence considered “political” and other violence considered “personal”? How fluid are identities in wartime (and in peacetime)? How do intersecting oppressions shape wartime experiences?
Are the boundaries between war and peace always clear? To echo Judith Butler, “What makes for a grievable life?”

CN* for sexual violence, violence in general

Read this:


And then pick three of these:


Optional and recommended:


Recommended films:

“I Came to Testify” & “Calling the Ghosts: A Story about Rape, War, and Women” (1996) (available on DU’s course media)

**Week 6 (May 1st, 2018): Gender After War**

**In class case studies: DDR and peacebuilding, continuums of violence**

Questions: How is the aftermath of armed conflict gendered? How do interventions—such as DDR programs, peacebuilding initiatives, or women’s empowerment schemes—help promote security and human rights in the aftermath? What are the limitations of these interventions? How are local initiatives part of these processes?

**Readings:**


**Optional and Recommended:**


**Week 7 (May 8th, 2018): Religion, Security, and Human Rights**

**In class case studies: Syria, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, the “Arab Spring” and Islamic Feminisms**

Questions: How do culture and religion factor into discussions about human rights and security? How are rights discussed in reference to Islam and Muslim women in particular? What about in relation to women from other parts of the world (e.g., South Asia)? How have the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa affected gender relations in each country? What roles have women played in the various “Arab Spring” uprisings? How have these roles differed? How have they been affected by the cultural, political, or economic specifics of each country?

**Readings:**

Please watch at least 2 of the short films that are part of *The Trials of Spring* documentary project, here: [http://www.trialsofspring.com/stories](http://www.trialsofspring.com/stories)


**Week 8 (May 15th, 2018): Contradictions: Limits of Rights**

Questions: What are some of the limitations of a rights-based framework for promoting gender equality, security, and human rights? What are the costs and benefits of practicing rights? How are women often positioned as vulnerable subjects within security and human rights discourses?

Read this:


And then pick three of these:


In class: Debate

**Week 9 (May 22nd, 2018): What now? Modes and Methods of Mobilizing for (Feminist) Change**

Questions: Given the limitations of rights-based frameworks, how are various people and groups mobilizing to address some of these security and human rights issues from a feminist, progressive, gender-sensitive perspective? Where are the strengths and weaknesses of these movements? What seems to be successful, and what has failed? What are some of the innovations we see in approaches to mobilizing for change?
In-class case studies: Please select 2 of the following 5 reading clusters and come to class prepared to discuss both in small groups for an in-class exercise. You are encouraged to read beyond the readings listed here.

Case studies:

1) #MeToo Movement


2) #NoDAPL, Standing Rock Water Protestors – and its impact globally

- Standing Rock Syllabus, including timeline: https://nycstandswithstandingrock.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/standingrocksyllabus7.pdf
3) **Black Lives Matter**

- Black Lives Matters Platform: [https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/](https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/)
- African American Policy Forum. “Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women”: [http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53f20d90e4b0b80451158d8c/t/55a810d7e4b058f342f55873/1437077719984/AAPF_SMN_Brief_full_singles.compressed.pdf](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/53f20d90e4b0b80451158d8c/t/55a810d7e4b058f342f55873/1437077719984/AAPF_SMN_Brief_full_singles.compressed.pdf)

4) **#NiUnaMenos**


*CN* for sexual violence.

5) **Representing Violence and Rape Culture through Art** (adapted from: Laura Ciolkowski’s Rape Culture Syllabus, found here: [http://www.publicbooks.org/feature/rape-culture-syllabus](http://www.publicbooks.org/feature/rape-culture-syllabus)).

- Käthe Kollwitz, *Raped* (etching, 1907)
- Emma Sulkowicz, *Self-Portrait* (performance, 2016); see also *Conversation: Emma Sulkowicz and Karen Finley* (YouTube video, 2016)
- Eve Sussman, *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (video-musical, 2007); Giambologna, *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (marble sculpture, 1583)
• Sue Williams, *Irresistible* (sculpture, 1992)

*CN* for sexual violence.

**Week 10 (May 29th, 2018): Wrap up with in class discussion and presentation of reports**

No readings assigned – come to class prepared to discuss your final report project.

**Finals Week: Final gender analysis report DUE Tuesday, June 5th at 5 pm via Canvas**