Course Description

This course introduces students to theories and themes in the study of gender and international affairs. After an introduction to critical approaches to international affairs and gender, we will focus in on a number of topics including: transnational feminism; global sex and sexuality; gender, war and peace; gender mainstreaming in international organizations; and gender and the global economy.

PROFESSOR
Nicole Bourbonnais
nicole.bourbonnais@graduateinstitute.ch
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00-12:00 by appointment (please email in advance to select a time)

ASSISTANTS
Tanushree Kaushal
tanushree.kaushal@graduateinstitute.ch
Office Hours: By appointment
Urpi Saco Chung
urpi.saco@graduateinstitute.ch
Office Hours: By appointment

Syllabus

Discussions of gender abound in international forums: UN agencies are asked to “mainstream” gender into their programming, humanitarian groups speak of the need to protect “women and children” as vulnerable groups, and a handful of states have committed themselves to promoting a “feminist foreign policy.” This course seeks to put these developments into conversation with academic literature on gender, critical perspectives on international affairs, and the longer history of feminist activism. We will explore how gender shapes transnational activism, sexual rights, war and peace, humanitarianism, development, and the global economy. We will also consider a variety of different perspectives on how to challenge the existing gender order, including international norms and protocols, women’s inclusion, engaging men and boys, and the restructuring of the economic system.

Classes will alternate between lectures, discussion, and debates. Written assignments include short reading reflections, a position paper, and a final paper in which students will either
critically analyze (through a gendered lens) the policy platform of a given country's foreign affairs department, an aid agency, or an organization, OR design their own feminist policy platform.

The course requirements, policies, and schedule are outlined below. Weekly readings will be available on the course Moodle page. Students should self-enrol using the password “gender”.

**Course Requirements:**

**Class Participation – 20%**

There will be two mechanisms for participation: in-class discussion and responses posted on the Moodle discussion forums. Students are expected to complete the required readings listed for each week and to participate actively in weekly class discussions. Participation includes regular attendance: students should inform the TA when unable to attend class. It also consists of active listening: phones should be put away at all times, and computers used only for note-taking.

You are also required to complete 2 short “reading responses” (of maximum 300 words) over the course of the semester, to be submitted through the Moodle discussion forum during any week except the week you submit a position paper (see below). These responses can be relatively informal but should not be summaries of the texts. Rather, they should be critical engagements with the readings, which could highlight one or two concepts/arguments/pieces of evidence that were particularly interesting or unconvincing and explain why; compare/contrast one or two points across the readings; think through some of the strengths and limitations of the author’s methodology (the questions they ask, sources/materials/data they use to answer them); identify a couple of questions that arise from your reading of the text; or respond to some of the points made by other students. These responses must be submitted through the Moodle “discussion forum” two days before the session (ie. by 10:15 on the Monday morning before the relevant class). These responses will not be graded individually, but rather will contribute to your overall participation grade and will provide starting points for class discussion each week. Students can also use the forum to post any written comments that they did not have a chance to raise in class.

**Position Paper (max 1500 words, excluding footnotes and bibliography) (due the Friday before the relevant class by 23:59) and Presentation (in-class) - 35%**

Over the course of the semester, we will hold 5 class debates. Debate topics and positions are described under the relevant weeks in the course schedule below. A poll will be sent around once the course enrollment period ends and students can sign up for the week and position they will take.

For the relevant week, students will write a position paper (maximum 1500 words) outlining the central arguments in favor of their position, providing evidence/examples to support their claims, and predicting/addressing potential counter-arguments. They should reference the required readings from the relevant weeks for each topic, as well as at least 3 additional readings. The latter may be selected from the list of “additional readings” provided for that week, or could be other texts the student identifies on their own. Please see resources on writing
position papers under the course Moodle Page “Writing Resources” section for additional
guidance. These papers are due on the Friday before the relevant debate by 23:59.

Before the debate, you should meet also with the other students taking your position for that
week, and prepare a group presentation of the key arguments. You can decide whether several
or just one person will present on behalf of the group, but should be sure not to repeat
arguments, thus presenting a clear, rounded set of positions. The class will proceed as follows:
(1) 10 minutes to each side to present key arguments, followed by 5 minutes each for rebuttals
(2) 10 minutes for questions from the audience, followed by a short break
(3) 50 minutes of class discussion (including a mix of small and large group discussion,
depending on class size). Here, our goal will not be to declare a “winner” of the debate, but rather
to work towards consensus, focusing on the questions of how and under what conditions we
might support one position or another.

Final Paper – 45%
Including:
**Paper Proposal – due Friday, April 2 by 23:59**, including a 1-2 page maximum description of
your plan for the paper and a bibliography of sources you plan to consult
**Final Paper – due June 4 by 23:59, maximum 3000 words (excluding footnotes and
bibliography)**
Students will select one of the two following options:
*Option 1*: A critical analysis (through a gender lens) of the platform of a country's foreign policy,
an international aid agency, or an NGO, based on a recent report, a policy document, or the
platform/priorities outlined on the foreign affairs department or organization’s website. In
other words, you should not just speak generally about the country or organization, but dissect
the language of a specific source or set of sources in which they outline their policies. What are
the key principles and priorities the government/organization identify? What are the
underlying assumptions and ideologies that shape these priorities? Do they acknowledge gender
as a source of inequality, an organizing category, a structure, a form of power... etc.? Do they
identify any goals or projects that could be seen as “feminist”? What type/version of feminism?
Is there an acknowledgement/incorporation of the intersections of gender with class, race,
sexuality... etc? How/ in what ways/to what extent? What is included and what is missing? What
are the strengths and limitations of this approach? What problems and/or possibilities appear if
we view this policy through a gender lens?

*Option 2*: Design your own feminist policy platform for a country, agency, or organization of your
choice. What would be the key principles/priorities of this policy platform? What underlying
ideological principles shape these principles? What makes it “feminist,” ie. how are you defining
feminism and what version of feminism are you promoting? How are you accounting for the
intersection of gender with race, class, sexuality...etc? What practical goals, projects, alliances, or
other actions would this policy require? What are the short and long term goals of this policy?
What are the potential limitations of this approach and what difficulties might it encounter in
implementation?

In both cases, you should provide relevant context on the particular
country/agency/organization and cite a body of relevant literature that is informing your
analysis or original policy platform. Students might find the resources on the website for the
Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy helpful in planning their papers, including the “Feminist
Foreign Policy Reading List.” General resources on writing policy papers will also be available under the “Writing Resources” section on Moodle.

**Policies**

**All assignments must be submitted to the course Moodle page.** Reading responses should be submitted in the form of a “post” on the weekly discussion forum, but position papers and final papers must be submitted in **Word format, double-spaced, Times New Roman font.** Late submission of assignments will be penalized at a rate of -0.25 per day unless there is just cause for an extension (please contact the professor as soon as possible). If you experience technical difficulties through Moodle, you should email the assignment and/or place a print version in my mailbox before the due date and then try again to upload once the problem is resolved.

**Papers must use footnotes in the Chicago citation style.** Please see Purdue OWL’s [Chicago Manual of Style](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/) for guidelines on how to use this format and sample citations, as well as the sample paper and resources available under “Writing Resources” on Moodle. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please see the Institute's “Internal Guidelines” for further information.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1, February 24–Applying a Gender Lens to International Affairs**

Questions: What are the origins of the study of gender and international affairs? How does looking internationally enhance our understanding of gender relations, and how does looking for gender enhance our understanding of international affairs? How does feminist theory engage with critical race theory and other critical perspectives on international relations?

**Background Readings:**


**Week 2, March 3–Gender: Key Concepts**

Questions: What key concepts (sex vs. gender, intersectionality, hegemonic masculinity...etc.) are used by gender scholars? What is “feminism” and what different forms can it take?

**Required Readings:**


**Optional Supplementary Readings:**

**Week 3, March 10 - Transnational Gender Issues and Global Feminism: Lecture**

Questions: Why have feminists mobilized transnationally, and what problems/possibilities have shaped these alliances? How are gender issues translated/mistranslated across borders?

**Required Readings:**


**Week 4, March 17 - Transnational Gender Issues and Global Feminism: Debate**

*Question: Do international women’s rights norms help advance feminist struggles at the local level?*

*Position 1: Yes*

*Position 2: No*

**Required Readings:**


**Additional Readings:**


**Week 5, March 24− Global Sex and Sexuality: Lecture**

Questions: How does sex and reproduction shape global affairs? How have states and international organizations intervened in the “private” realm and how have activists mobilized transnationally to defend reproductive and sexual rights? What tensions shape these movements?

**Required Readings:**

**Week 6, March 31 − Global Sex and Sexuality: Debate**

*Should prostitution be recognized as a form of labor in international protocols?*

**Position #1: Yes**
**Position #2: No**

**Required Readings:**

**Additional Readings:**
• Sarah Hunt, “Decolonizing Sex Work: Developing an Intersectional Indigenous Approach”. In E. van der Meulen, E. Durisin & V. Love (Eds.), *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy and Research on Sex Work in Canada* (pp. 82-100). (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).
• Christine Overall, “What’s Wrong with Prostitution?: Evaluating Sex Work”, *Signs*, 17 (1992): 705–24

Spring Break, April 2-11

**Week 7, April 14 - Gendering War and Peace: Lecture**
Questions: How are war and peace “gendered”? What underlying ideologies and hierarchies shape military structures and popular discussions of war and peace?
Required Readings:

**Week 8, April 21 - Gendering War and Peace: Debate**
*Question: Can integrating more women into security institutions transform gender relations, prevent conflict and enhance peace?*
*Position #1: Yes*  
*Position #2: No*

Required readings:


Additional readings:

Week 9, April 28 – Gender Mainstreaming in International Organizations: Lecture

Questions: How have humanitarian and development organizations attempted to incorporate gender into their institutions/work? What contradictions and underlying assumptions shape gender mainstreaming?

Required Reading:

Week 10, May 5 – Gender Mainstreaming in International Organizations: Debate

Question: Should boys and men be given more attention in gender mainstreaming?

Position #1: Yes
Position #2: No

Required Readings:

Additional Readings:
- Shari L. Dworkin, Christopher J. Colvin, Abbey Hatcher & Peacock Dean, "Men’s perceptions of women’s rights and changing gender relations in South Africa: Lessons for


**Week 11, May 12 – Gender and the Global Economy: Lecture**

Questions: How does gender shape the global economy? What hidden forms of feminized reproductive, care, and affective labor make the “productive” economy possible? What contradictions shape capitalism, globalization, and the provision of care?

Required Readings:

**Week 12, May 19: Gender and the Global Economy: Debate**

*Question: Can a feminist agenda be pursued through neoliberal institutions?*

**Position #1: Yes**

**Position #2: No**

Required Readings:

Additional Readings:

Week 13, May 26: Feminist Futures
Questions: What might a feminist, anti-racist, postcolonial approach to foreign policy and to international affairs more broadly look like? How else could we organize global affairs/our world? What would be needed to bring these visions into practice?
Required Readings:

Week 14, June 2: Conclusion.
No required readings.