
BORDERS and BOUNDARIES: SOUTH ASIAN and MIDDLE EASTERN FEMINIST

Semester No 5th	Code LA-311	Credit Hours 3-0
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FICTION

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Impart an understanding of the thematic convergences and divergences in the selected texts and the socio-historical circumstances that have enabled their appearance
2. Allow critical appreciation of theoretically, formally and regionally specific treatments of various themes.
3. Help develop a degree of familiarity with theories of feminism and their application to the reading of literary texts.
4. Foster an intimacy between the texts and its readers in order to encourage them to explore their own engagement with feminism in a more intentional manner.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Discuss feminist fiction in cognizance of the larger historical, geo-political, linguistic and cultural circumstances that have birthed them.
2. Engage with definitional questions about feminism and evaluate texts accordingly.
3. Show critical discernment of the strengths and shortcomings of different theoretical lenses and their relevance to texts.
4. Draw a comparison amongst texts and a broader comparison with literary texts of other languages and cultures.

5. Think critically about the limitations and possibilities of choosing English as the linguistic gateway into feminist literature.

PRESCRIBED TEXT:

General References:

- Bell Hooks. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. 2000.
- Ellen Rooney. *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*. 2006.
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Edited by Carry Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. 1988.
- Mary Eagleton. *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*. 2010
- Wenona Giles, Jennifer Hyndman (eds.). *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*. 2004.
- Rajeswari Sunder Rajan. *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism*. 1991.
- Kumari Jayawardena. *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*. 2016.
- Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and nation*. In *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 1993. Pp. 621-632.
- Bell Hooks. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*. 1984.
- Chandra Mohanty. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. 2003.
- Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar. *Challenging imperial feminism*. *Feminist Review*. 1984. Pp. 3-19.
- Luce Irigaray. *The Sex which is not One*. 1985.
- Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Preetha Mani. "Feminine Desire Is Human Desire: Women Writing Feminism In Post-Independence India.", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*. 2016. Pp. 21-41.
- Chandra Mohanty. *Third World Feminism and the Politics of Sexuality*. 1991.
 - Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and A Critique of Imperialism" *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12. 1985. Pp. 243-261.
- Deborah L. Madsen. *Feminist Theory and Literary Practice*. 2000.

- Toril Moi. *Sexual/textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. 2002. *Readings on Development/Overview of Regional Literatures*:
- Robin Ostle. *Modern Literatures of the Near and Middle East, 1850-1970*. 1991.
- Gershon Shaked. *Modern Hebrew Fiction*. Translated by Yael Lotan. 2000. • Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami, and M. R. Ghanoonparvar, (eds.). *Critical Encounters: Essays on Persian Literature and Culture*. 2007.
- Hassan Kamshad. *Modern Persian Literature*. 1996



PREREQUISITE:
NIL

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course surveys key modern-day Feminist works from South Asia and MENA region. Through a close reading of short and long fictional texts either written by women and/or foregrounding their struggles and contributions, it will examine what Cultural Critic Ella Shohat has called 'decentered multiplicities of power relations' in postcolonial societies. However, while an important anchor to understanding how contemporary societies, particularly of the global south, function, colonialism is not the only condition feminists of these regions are responding to. Put together, their writings demonstrate a commitment to acknowledging and addressing conditions that have existed since long before the event of colonization and that are likely to remain prevalent in the future. It is, moreover, their skill as writers of fiction that qualifies them to put repeated emphasis on these issues regardless of their deep entrenchment in their

respective societies. Therefore, reading their stories will introduce us to the sociopolitical particularities of each region and their implications for those on the margins, especially women.

It is worth noting that many of the issues highlighted in these writings are far from local. It is this recognition that motivates this course's simultaneous attention to local and global/transnational feminisms. In addition, the course aims to bring forth the structurally and ideologically diverse feminist literary practices employed in the selected writings. These range from Postcolonial Feminism, Dalit Feminism, Islamic Feminism, 'Third World' Feminism, Chick Lit (Post)feminism, Speculative/Utopian Feminism, and shades of feminism between and beyond them. Inclusion of these various strands is intended to allow students to engage with texts from multiple lenses in order to both expand their understanding of the texts and avoid essentialization based on a single point of view. On this subject, please be informed that the texts included in this course are neither authoritative nor representative of the literary traditions of their countries of origination, nor are they all-encompassing in taking stock of feminist issues. They do, however, suffice as entry points into the feminist literature of the region's literature reflecting – in many cases, speaking strongly about – the life of women at home and abroad, inside and outside the nation, and as real and imagined subjects (with the dual connotation) in the minds of others. The theme, Borders and Boundaries, is envisioned to help us traverse the vast terrain with a view towards difference and intersectionality. For instance, while they possess internally distinct identities and histories, these regions also share certain governing systems (e.g., neocolonialism and capitalism) and legitimizing ideologies (e.g., religion). Whereas literatures are linguistically, culturally, formally and methodologically diverse, they have in common several critical themes. The interpretation of Borders and Boundaries adopted in this course refers to, on the one hand, the multitudinous hoops women need to jump to assert their subjectivities and where these hoops coincide (e.g., the intersection of caste and gender). On the other hand, the theme lends itself to a meta inquiry about the crossing of discursive borders which, through repetition and reinforcement, imparts meaning to the categories of 'women' and 'gender'. To facilitate class discussion, the broader theme has been divided into sub-themes mentioned in front of each text in the table below.

Note on Text-Selection:

Due to inaccessibility of regional languages and unavailability of translations, only anglophone texts have been selected, i.e., texts originally written in English or available in English translation. We hope to make the fact of translation, its limits and possibilities, a part of our discussion and to stay mindful at all times of the absences within any translated text. Moreover, some countries of the regions in focus, including Turkey and Afghanistan, had to be left out for reasons stated above. Some helpful resources are provided at the end for independent study, should students wish to pursue it

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM:

Quizzes	15 %
Assignments 1st Response Paper 2nd Response Paper 3rd Response Paper	10%
1st Critical Analysis Paper 2nd Critical Analysis Paper	15%
Final Essay / Mid Term	20%
ESE	40%

Weekly breakdown of course contents is as follows:

WEEK	THEME/ QUIZZES	GENRE	REGION/ COUNTRY	PRIMARY TEXTS	FURTHER READINGS/ ASSIGNMENTS
1-2	Introduction to the course, objectives and policies				<p>Response Papers based on readings and class discussions (500 words each) – 03% each</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jamila Hashmi's Exile, Farkhanda Lodhi's Parbati, Farida Hossain's Transformation (due 2nd week) Urmila Pawar's The Odd One and Armor (due 5th week) Moniro Ravanipour's Mana, Kind Mana and The Shipwrecked (due 7th week) Liana Badr's Other Cities (due 12th week)

					<p>Critical Analysis Papers (1500 words each) – 30%</p> <p>• <u>First paper: (11th Week)</u></p> <p>Critically analyze any one of the following texts. Your argument should be original, clearly articulated and supported with sufficient textual evidence. Use 2-3 secondary references as well (may or may not be from the assigned secondary readings). Pick from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Monica Ali's Brick Lane2. Anuja Chauhan's Those Pricey Thakur Girls3. Sharmila Seyyid's Ummath: A Novel of Community and Conflict <p><u>Second paper (13th Week)</u></p> <p>Critically analyze any one of the following texts. Your argument should be original, clearly articulated and supported with sufficient textual evidence. Use 2-3 secondary references as well (may or may not be from the assigned secondary readings). Pick from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Salwa Bakr's The Golden Chariot2. Hanan al-Shaykh's Women of Sand and Myrrh3. Leila Aboulela's Minaret <p>Final Essay (3000 words) – 30% (due 16th Week)</p>
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					<p>Compare the feminist traits of any two texts from the syllabus. You are encouraged to challenge, expand, redefine, and think creatively about what constitutes 'feminism'. Your argument should be original, clearly articulated and supported with sufficient textual evidence. Aside from the two primary texts, 6-7 secondary sources should be used.</p> <p>READINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Women, not heroines or icons of modernity." Contemporary Arab Women Writers: Cultural Expression in Context. Anastasia Valassopoulos. 2007. Pp. 8-30. • "South Asian Feminisms: Contemporary Interventions." South Asian Feminisms. Edited by Ania Loomba and Ritty A.Lukose. 2012. Pp. 1-32. • "Feminist Longings and Postcolonial Conditions." Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East. Edited by Lila Abu-Lughod. 1998. Pp. 3-32. • Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." boundary 2.
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					<p>1984.Pp. 333-358.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Judith Butler. Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity.1990. pp. 3-44. <p>Response paper # 1 due this week</p>

3-4	Partition, home and exile Weekly Quiz # 1	Short stories	Pakistan , Bangladesh	<p>Jamila Hashmi's Exile</p> <p>Jamila Hashmi. "Exile." Kahani: Short Stories by Pakistani Women. Edited by Aamer Hussein. 2005. Pp. 105-118.</p> <p>Farida Hossain's Transformation</p> <p>Farida Hossain. "Transformation." 1971 and After: Selected Stories by Niaz Zaman. Edited by Niaz Zaman. 2001. Pp. 104-111</p> <p>Farkhanda Lodhi's Parbati</p>	<p>• Debali MookerjeeLeonard. "Divided Homelands, Hostile Homes: Partition, Women and Homelessness." Interpreting Homes in South Asian Literature. Edited by Malashri Lal and Sukrita Paul Kumar.2007. Pp. 3-15.</p> <p>• Urvashi Butalia. "Community, State and Gender: On Women's Agency During Partition." Economic and Political Weekly. 1993. WS12-24.</p> <p>"At a Loss for Words: Reading the Silence in South Asian Women's Partition Narratives." Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender, Memory. Jill Didur.2006. Pp. 125-56</p> <p>First response paper due this week</p>
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				Farkhanda Lodhi. "Parbati." Kahani. Pp. 119-140.	
5-6	East-West Borders	Novel	Bangladesh-Britain	Monica Ali's Brick Lane Monica Ali. Brick Lane. 2003. (Chapters 1-7)	
				Monica Ali's Brick Lane Monica Ali. Brick Lane. 2003. (Chapters 8-17)	Talal Asad. "Multiculturalism and British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair." Religion and Politics. 1990. Pp. 455-80
				Monica Ali's Brick Lane Monica Ali. Brick Lane. 2003. (Chapters 18-21)	"Globalisation, Labour, Narrative and Representation in Arundathi Roy, Monica Ali and Kiran Desai." Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women's Fiction: Gender, Narration and Globalization. Ruvani Ranasinha. 2016. Pp. 49-53, 59-63. • "Working men's way? Exploring masculinity at work." Man and Masculinities: Theory, Research and Social Practice. Chris

					Haywood and Mairtin Mac an Ghaill. 2003. Pp. 19-41.
					Response Paper # 2 due
7	Unbounded by Genre	Novel	India	Anuja Chauhan's Those Pricey Thakur Girls Anuja Chauhan. Those Pricey Thakur Girls. 2013. (Chapters 1-7)	Response Paper # 2
				Anuja Chauhan's Those Pricey Thakur Girls Anuja Chauhan. Those Pricey Thakur Girls. 2013. (Chapters 8-15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girl Power and Chick Lit." Stephanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon. Post feminism: Cultural Texts and Theories. Pp. 119-38. • Jonathan Anjaria and Ulka Anjaria. "Mazaa: Rethinking Fun, Pleasure and Play in South Asia." Journal of South Asian Studies. 2020. Pp. 232-242.
8	Bo(u)nded by caste and gender	Short Story	India	Urmila Pawar's The Odd One (Vegli) "The Odd One (Vegli)." Motherwit. Urmila Pawar. Translated by Veena Deo. 2013. Urmila Pawar's Armor (Kavach) "Armor (kavach)." Motherwit. Urmila	<p>Dalit Feminist Theory: A Reader. Edited by Sunaina Arya and Aakash Singh Rathore. 2020. Pp. 1-23, 139-149, 188-198, 223-236. (The whole book is relevant but especially the marked chapters).</p> <p>2nd response paper due this week.</p> <p>Response Paper # 3 due this week</p>

				Pawar. Translated by Veena Deo. 2013.	
9	Mid Term				
10-11	Estrangement and Excommunicatio n	Novel	Sri Lanka	Sharmila Seyyid's Ummath: A Novel of Community and Conflict Sharmila Seyyid Ummath: A Novel of Community and Conflict. Translated by Gita Subramanian. 2018. Part 1 (10 chapters)	
				Sharmila Seyyid's Ummath: A Novel of Community and Conflict Sharmila Seyyid Ummath: A Novel of Community and Conflict. Translated by Gita Subramanian. 2018. Part 2 (8 chapters)	

				Sharmila Seyyid's Ummath: A Novel of Community and Conflict	
				Sharmila Seyyid Ummath: A Novel of Community and Conflict. Translated by Gita Subramanian. 2018. Part 3 (8 chapters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryam Khalid. "Feminist Perspectives on Militarism and War: Critiques, Collusions, and Collusions." The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements. Edited by Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt. 2015. Pp. 632-50. "Women, Wars and Gendered Subjectivities." Women and Militant Wars: The politics of injury. Swati Parashar. 2014. Pp. 28-54.
12	Peripheries of Society	Novel	EGYPT	Salwa Bakr's The Golden Chariot	Hoda El Sadda. "Women's Writing in Egypt: Reflections on Salwa Bakr."
				Salwa Bakr. The Golden Chariot. 1995. Chapters 1-2	Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives. Edited by Deniz Kandivoti. 1996. 127-44
				Salwa Bakr's The Golden Chariot	
				Salwa Bakr. The Golden Chariot. 1995.	First critical analysis paper due this week

				Chapters 3-6	
13	Boundaries of form and materiality	Short story	Iran	<p>Moniro Ravanipour's Mana, Kind Mana Moniro Ravanipour. "Mana, Kind Mana." Afsaneh: Short Stories by Iranian Women. Edited by Kaveh Basmenji. 2005.</p> <p>Moniro Ravanipour's The Shipwrecked Moniro Ravanipour. "The Shipwrecked." The Shipwrecked: Contemporary Stories by Women from Iran. Edited by Fereshteh Nouraie-Simone. 2014.</p>	<p>Iran: One Woman's War as Told by Moniro Ravanipour</p> <p>https://asterixjournal.com/iranone-womans-war-as-told-bymoniro-ravanipour • "Women and Women and Women." Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative. Wendy B. Faris. 2004. Pp. 170-220.</p> <p>• Anna Vanzan. "From the Royal Harem to a Post-Modern Islamic Society: Some Considerations on Women Prose Writers in Iran from Qajar Times to the 1990s." Women, Religion and Culture in Iran. Edited by Sarah Ansari and Vanessa Martin. 2002. Pp. 88-98. (Optional)</p>

14	Borders under Occupation	Short story	Palestine	<p>Liana Badr's Other Cities Liana Badr. "Other Cities." Qissat: Short Stories by Palestinian Women. Edited by Jo Glanville 2006.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ami Elad-Bouskila. "Introduction." Modern Palestinian Literature and Culture. 1999. pp. 1-20. • "Bodies beyond Boundaries? Transitional Spaces and Liminal Selves." Palestinian Literature and Film in Postcolonial
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					<p>Feminist Perspective. Anna Ball. 2012. Pp.101-130</p> <p>Second Critical Analysis Paper due this week</p>
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15	Limitless stories and storytelling	Short story	Iraq	Lutifiyya al-Dulaimi's Shahrazad and her Narrators "Lutifiyya al-Dulaimi." Contemporary Iraqi Fiction: An Anthology. Edited by Shakir Mustafa. 2008. Pp. 30-39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Introduction." Contemporary Iraqi Fiction: An Anthology. Edited by Shakir Mustafa. 2008. (Optional) • "Narration and Desire: Shahrazâd." Woman's Body, Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing. Fedwa Malti-Douglas. 1991. Pp. 11-28. • Wen-Chin Ouyang. "Metamorphoses of Scheherazade in Literature and Film." Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. 2003. Pp. 402-18. (Optional) <p>Mernissi and Scheherazade in Dialogue: Rereading and Acts of Subversion." Myth of the Silent Woman: Moroccan Women Writers. 2009. Suellen Diaconoff. Pp. 3758</p>
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16	The fold of Religion				
		Novel	Sudan-Britian	Leila Aboulela's Minaret Leila Aboulela. Minaret. 2005. Parts 1, 2	

				Leila Aboulela's Minaret Leila Aboulela. Minaret. 2005. Parts 3, 4, 5	
				Leila Aboulela's Minaret Leila Aboulela. Minaret. 2005. Part 6	<p>"Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?"</p> <p>Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences. Margot Badran. 2009. Pp. 242-252.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The Discourse of the Veil." <p>Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate. Leila Ahmed. Pp. 144-68.</p> <p>Second Critical Analysis Paper due this week</p>
17	Revision				
18	END SEMESTER EXAMINATION				