Eastern Illinois University
New Course Proposal
WST 4800: Non-western Feminisms: Gender, Culture, and Nation

1. Catalogue Description
   a. **Course Number:** Women’s Studies 4800
   b. **Title:** Non-western Feminisms: Gender, Culture, and Nation
   c. **Meeting times and credit:** 3-0-3
   d. **Terms to be offered:** On demand
   e. **Short Title:** NWEST FEMINISM
   f. **Course Description:** In-depth study of major social concerns and theoretical issues raised in non-western feminist discourses by male and female writers from non-western countries. The course will explore the treatment of gender themes in relation to culture, class, race, and nationality.
   g. **Prerequisites:** Women’s Studies 2309 or permission of the instructor or Coordinator of Women’s Studies Program. Junior, senior, or graduate student standing required.
   h. **Initial term of course offering:** Fall 2005

2. Objectives and Evaluation of the Course
   a. **Objectives:**
      
      Undergraduate and Graduate students will be able to:
      - **describe** cultural structures of non-western societies and their impact on gender treatment.
      - **explain** theories of non-western feminisms that challenge the commonly held assumptions about non-western women, both in the East as well as in the West, by contesting old conceptions and paradigms and experimenting with new methodologies and views.
      - **analyze** non-western feminist non-fictional and fictional writings. Students will write a critical analysis of a literary work or a theoretical essay as their final research paper (for % break-up, please see section 2b.).
      - **discuss and critique** various issues inherent in non-western women’s discourses such as heterogeneous definitions of the concept of ‘feminist emancipation,’ post-colonial negotiations of gender roles, critiques of monolithic and essentialist conceptions of non-western women’s social problems and their strategies of subverting their respective cultural ideologies.

   b. **Assessment:**

      Student’s achievement of the objectives stated above will be assessed and the grades earned in the course will be based on the following activities:

      **Undergraduate students:**

      One class presentation on a single topic, work or author – 15 %
      Active preparation and class participation – 15%
One Mid-term Exam – 30%
One Research Paper (10-12 pages) – 40% (First Submission—25%, Second Revised Submission—15%)

Graduate students:

One class presentation, comparing two topics, works or authors – 15%
Active preparation and class participation, and initiating one class-discussion by preparing two relevant questions on the assigned reading – 15%
One Mid-term Exam – 30%
One Research Paper (15-20 pages) – 40% (First Submission—25%, Second Revised Submission—15%)

c. This course is delivered in traditional format.

d. This course is open to juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

e. This is a writing-intensive course. Writing constitutes 70% of the total grade. Writing assignments are meant to deepen understanding of the course content and increase capacity for reflective and critical thinking. At least one assignment will be revised and resubmitted.

3. Outline of the Course  (sample only – this syllabus focuses on literary and theoretical approaches; instructors could explore other possibilities. The non-western countries included in this sample are three Asian countries including India, China, and Pakistan and three Middle-Eastern countries including Egypt, Lebanon, and Morocco).

a. Class will meet for fifteen weeks, with either three 50-minute class sessions per week (MWF) or two 75-minute class sessions (TTH) or one 150-minute session in the evening.

Weeks 1 and 2  Introduction to the Course and to the cultural histories of Asian (India, Pakistan and China) and Middle-Eastern societies. Discussion of traditional family structures and gender roles.

Weeks 3, 4, and 5  Theories of Non-western/Third World Feminisms. An in-depth study and discussion of non-western feminist theories that may include the discourses of Susie Tharu, Kumkum Sangari, Lourdes Torres, Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, Sally J. Sutherland, Nandita Shah, Evelyn Accad, Cheryl Johnson-Odim, Nandita Gandhi, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, C.S. Lakshmi, Meena Alexander, Lata Mani, Harveen Sachdeva Mann, Zakia Pathak, Beverly Lindsay, Rey Chow, Ketu H. Katrak, Sushila Singh, and others.

Weeks 6 and 7  Asia: India and Pakistan. This segment will focus on the ‘Discourses of Negation: Women at the Crossroads’. Discussion topics will include the problems of modern educated women’s attempts to critique and negate patriarchal norms, themes of loss of
social and/or familial support, rebellion, growth, issues of marriage and divorce, unequal treatment of male and female children in the writings of contemporary writers like Anita Desai, Mahasweta Devi, Altaf Fatima, and others.

**Weeks 8 and 9**  
*Asia: China.* This segment will focus on the ‘**Modern vs. Traditional Ideas: Conflicts and Resolutions**’. Discussion will include the themes of physical freedom and economic independence, reproductive rights versus women’s emotional needs and the portrayal of modern Chinese society in the writings of contemporary Chinese writers like Eileen Chung, Zhang Jie, and others.

**Weeks 10 and 11**  
*The Middle East.* This segment will focus on the issue of ‘Women as ‘Insiders’ and ‘Outsiders’’. Discussion will include exploring the reasons behind a scathing critique of traditional gender roles, the nature of treatment of women, and the role of women in female oppression, in the writings of Egyptian writer Nawal El Saadawi, Lebanese writer Hanan Al-Shaykh, Moroccan writer Fatima Mernissi and others.

**Weeks 12 and 13**  
*The Male Perspectives.* This segment will focus on male response to women’s place in the private and public spheres or ‘**The Home and the World**’. Discussion will include male views on traditional/patriarchal and feminist values; the primary focus will be on the theme of women’s education and a critique of the plight of widows in the writings of ancient and modern writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, Kalidasa, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, and selections from the Qur’an.

**Weeks 14 and 15**  
Conferences with the instructor to discuss students’ research papers. Class presentations by students on individual topics, or works, or authors.

b. For technology-delivered or other nontraditional-delivered courses/sections, explain how the course content “units” are sufficiently equivalent to the traditional on-campus semester hour units of time described above. Not applicable.

4. **Rationale**

a. **Purpose and Need:**  
There is currently no course in Non-western/Third World Feminism available at EIU. This course enhances the interdisciplinary and the much-needed multi-cultural nature of the Women’s Studies Program. The topics and questions addressed in this course reveal the range of feminist issues and agendas of non-western women from a variety of religious, linguistic and cultural traditions. The feminist visions of non-western women, in turn, unveil the limitation of the terms ‘non-western’ or ‘Third World’ as ways of categorizing non-western women from so many different countries and cultural
backgrounds as a monolithic, homogeneous group. Thus, this course will do two things. It will disperse many of the stereotypical, essentialist and reductive notions about non-western or Third World women and feminism and, by the same token, show the need to see non-western women as heterogeneous groups of women from diverse Third World communities with varying social problems, concerns and feminist solutions.

b. **Justification of the level of the course and of course prerequisites:**
Since this course focuses exclusively on the study of non-western cultures and feminism, the proposed level of the course assumes that students will have basic knowledge of general gender related concerns, issues and multi-cultural feminist theories that they will acquire in WST 2309 and other WST courses and in the University’s general education requirements. Further, the intensive theoretical and critical aspects of this course would make it more appropriate for advanced and not beginning students. The prerequisite for this course will be WST 2309 or the permission of the instructor or the coordinator of the Women’s Studies Minor Program. Junior, senior, or graduate student status is also required.

g. **Implication on program:**
This course would be an elective for Women’s Studies minor students.

5. **Implementation**
   
a. **Faculty member(s) to whom the course may be assigned:**
   Drs. Jyoti Panjwani (English), Lynne Curry (History), Ashley Tellis (English), Mehdi Semati (Communication Studies), Wilson Ogbomo (History and African American Studies)

b. **Specification of any additional costs to students:**
   There are no additional costs to students.

c. **Texts:**
   (Instructors could select from these examples)
   


6. **Community College Transfer**

A community college course will not be accepted as a substitute for this course.

7. **Date approved by Women’s Studies Minor Program: November 15, 2004**

8. **Date approved by CAHCC: January 26, 2005**

9. **Date approved by CAA: March 4, 2005**

10. **Date approved by CGS: April 19, 2005**

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