



COURSE SYLLABUS

Women, Gender, Culture and Nation

Intercollegiate Sri Lanka Education Program (ISLE) Program

Suggested US semester credit hours: 4

IFSA-Butler Course Code: GWS282-10 and SO282-10

Delivery method: Face to Face

Language of Instruction: English

Coordinator: Prof. Carmen Wickramagamage, carmen.wickramagamage@gmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the factors, historical, social, legal, economic and political, that impinge upon and shape women's options and life experiences in Sri Lanka. A fundamental premise of the course is that there is no pre-conceived and ready-made category called "Sri Lankan woman/women" into which all women in Sri Lanka fit. Instead, the course will throw light on the different historical and political factors shaping as well as the socio-cultural and economic locations of women in postcolonial, post-independence Sri Lanka, always keeping in the foreground the complexities and differences that such factors and locations imply and entail as much as the similarities. Given that this is just one course in a larger Sri Lanka Education Program, the course will be a survey of the *principal* shaping factors that exert an impact on the gendered identity and status of women though it is hoped the course will pique the interest of students enough to research further into and obtain a more nuanced perspective on the factors shaping women's identities and the gendered status-quo in Sri Lanka.

COURSE OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, the students will:

- ✓ have a better grasp of the heterogeneity that underlies the seeming homogeneity of categories such as "Sri Lankan Women";
- ✓ be able to better explain the principal socio-historical trajectories and factors that determine what it means to be women (and men) in Sri Lanka;
- ✓ cultivate a more nuanced as well as well as critical perspective on such stark divides and widely prevalent truisms as First and Third World; West and Non-West, etc. and the separation of women (and men) along such lines;
- ✓ have developed their own questions on the broader topic of women and gender in Sri Lanka and an interest in doing further research into questions or aspects thrown up by the focus of the course.

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

- ✓ Lectures + discussions
- ✓ Readings
- ✓ Presentations
- ✓ Journal
- ✓ Movie-based discussions
- ✓ Field visits

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REQUIRED READINGS

Readings are available via Dropbox. Please talk to the course assistant on how to access or receive print copies of the readings. Students *should* read the texts listed under 'Required Reading' before coming to class. The readings will be incorporated into the discussion in class and students are expected to actively participate in the discussion.

EVALUATION METHODS

Grading Breakdown:

2 Response papers: 30%

Reflection based on the 2 field visits (Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Kandy): 15%

Critical Essay on Films: 20%

Journal Entries: 10%

Research-based final paper: 20%

Class Participation: 5%

Reflection Based on Field Notes (5/6 pages): Based on notes taken during your visits to women's organizations in Jaffna, Batticaloa and Kandy, write a reflective piece in which you articulate your thoughts on and questions about women, gender and activism here (in Sri Lanka) and there (in the U.S.) that the 3 visits triggered. In other words, what do the activists and organizations say about "doing feminism"? What did you identify/gather as the enabling/disabling factors? Did you come to gather any new insights into feminist praxis and did they lead to revisions in your previous understandings of gender and activism consequent to these visits? Feel free to reflect also on your own presence in and interactions with individuals in these spaces. **Due Date: See class calendar.**

2 Response Papers (5 pages each): At the close of each of the two modules of the course – *Gender, Society, Culture and Women and the Materiality of Culture* - students will reflect on and articulate their understanding of what the material read for class, the discussion in class, and their own experiences and observations here in Sri Lanka reveal about the module topic. This should be more analytical in approach and tone but you should feel free to include observations and experiences that are of relevance to the topic/focus of your paper or that enable you to find an entry-point into the paper. At least 05 readings listed for topics in the module should be incorporated into the discussion. **Due Date: See Class Calendar.**

Critical Essay on Films [6 pages]: This essay gives you an opportunity to reflect on the topic of Women, Gender and Culture in the context of War and Conflict, specifically, the 25-year old Civil War in Sri Lanka which was destructive, not simply in terms of life and property but also in terms of its impact on gender and ethnic relations, i.e. the social fabric. Students will have a choice between 03 films for this purpose: *Terrorist* by Santosh Sivan/John Malkovitch, *A Peck on the Cheek* (Tamil) by Mani Ratnam and the Sinhala film *Boradiya Pokuna* by Satyajit Maitipe [the second and third films will be watched at the ISLE Center on the dates marked in the syllabus]. I should warn you that the first and third films have disturbing content while the second is in a different, what is sometimes known as the "commercial Bollywood" genre (*films available with ISLE Program Assistant). On the day of the screening of *Terrorist* in class, students will share with the rest of the members their initial thoughts on the films they have watched (from the perspective outlined above, i.e. Women, Gender and Culture in the Context of War and Conflict). The basic questions are: how do the films portray the role of women in war and conflict (keeping in mind that one film is located in the Sinhala south and the other

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two deal with those located in the Tamil north)? What representative devices specific to the medium of film do the film-makers employ for this purpose? Look not so much at the stated or the obvious but for what remains 'unsaid' or 'unspeakable.' In other words, explore not what the films 'say' but what they 'signify.' *A la Gayatri Spivak*, you may engage in an 'against-the-grain reading' as much as an 'along-the-grain reading.'

Due Date: See Class Calendar.

Journal Entries on Women, Men and Gender in Sri Lanka: Students will maintain a journal in which they record and comment on conversations, encounters and experiences relevant to the course. These could be the result of interactions with fellow ISLE students or local students/staff of the University/host family members/casual encounters on passenger transport/non-Sri Lankan residents/visitors. The entries could also include reflections arising from their readings for the course or those that connect the readings and everyday experience. The journal, it is hoped, will offer a more personal and less formal/structured venue via which students can process their everyday experience of gender. Students will share 5 of their entries with the instructor for a grade. The students will be asked to share one (minimum) or more (if they so wish) of their entries with the class. They will read this selected journal entry either at the beginning or at the end of the class session after informing the instructor of their intent (*Please be sure to read your entries during class sessions offered by Prof. Wickramagamage. Possible dates are marked on the calendar). The student will decide which of their musings/entries they would share with the instructor by the end of the course. The grade for the Journal entries submitted will take into account the level of engagement and the degree of reflection, as manifested in the entries. **Length per entry: 1 - 1 ½ pages. Due Dates: See Class Calendar.**

Research-based Final paper [6/7 pages]: This essay invites you to engage with and reflect on an issue that is attracting media and public attention in the US as well as in Sri Lanka currently: Violence against women and children [particularly young girls]; Sexual harassment in the workplace; Women in electoral politics; Women in "battle/war" zones [America's involvement in wars abroad and Sri Lanka's Civil War]; Reproductive Rights; Sexuality/ies; Education. You are free to consider other topics. Regardless of the topic you choose, adopt a comparative perspective, look at what is similar and different in the way the two societies regard the issue and the solutions that are being proposed and in place; ground your observations in the material domain through 'facts', experience, observation; make the final analysis/reflection your own, make the tone as personal as you wish. Feel free to run the topic by me. Cite at least 5 secondary sources and be sure to acknowledge all borrowing. **Due date: See Class Calendar.**

Class Participation: Participation entails active engagement with the subject matter for the course. This means a) making pertinent contributions to class discussion and b) keeping up with the readings and other assignments.

PAPER GUIDELINES

- Type-written, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12- point font, one-inch margin on left and right. All sources consulted must be acknowledged using a standard documentation style.
- Papers may be emailed to carmen.wickramagamage@gmail.com. This is to minimize the hassle associated with last-minute printing! If emailing, please observe the deadlines given.
- There will be a penalty for late submission in the form of a deduction in one grade point for every day the paper is delayed beyond the due date.

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CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

- Attendance is mandatory. Excused absences in case of illness or other emergency are possible if they are routed through the ISLE Director.
- Please turn off and refrain from using any electronic devices in class. Laptops may only be used for note-taking related to class.

Students are requested not to leave the class or eat while class is in session unless it is an emergency. There will be a short break during which they may snack or use the bathroom if the need arises. Taking a drink is of course perfectly okay.

ATTENDANCE

Students studying on an IFSA-Butler program are required to attend all regularly scheduled classes, studios, recitations, workshops and laboratory sessions. Failure to attend classes may result in a loss of credit and a fail on your transcript. The specific application of the attendance guidelines is at the instructor's discretion. Lateness or absence can affect the student's grade.

COURSE OUTLINE

MODULE 1: GENDER, SOCIETY, CULTURE

Tuesday February 27 (8-10.30 am): Introduction

Required Reading:

Deniz Kandiyoti, "Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation"
Carmen Wickramagamage, "The Story of the Sari"

Thursday March 01 (8-10.30 am): "Motherhood and Family"

Required Reading:

Michele R Gamburd, "Milk Teeth and Jet Planes: Kin Relations in Families of Sri Lanka's Transnational Domestic Servants"
Malathi de Alwis, "Motherhood as Space of Protest"

- READING FROM JOURNAL POSSIBLE

Friday March 02 (9am – 12 noon): VISIT TO THE SHELTER FOR WOMEN [maintained by Women's Development Center, Kandy]

Recommended Reading:

Chulani Kodikara, "Only until the Rice is Cooked? Domestic Violence Act, Familial Ideology and Cultural Narratives in Sri Lanka. Working Paper no. 1, ICES Working Paper Series, ICES, Colombo, 2012
Farzana Haniffa, "Sex and Violence in the Eastern Province: A Study in Muslim Masculinity"

Tuesday March 06 (8-10.30 am): "Gender & Sexuality/ies"

Required Reading:

Malathi de Alwis, "Embodiment of Respectability"
Jodie Miller, "Violence and Coercion in Sri Lanka's Commercial Sex Industry: Intersections"

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of Gender, Sexuality, Culture and the Law”

- READING FROM JOURNAL POSSIBLE

Thursday March 08 (8-10.30 am): “Gender & Sexuality/ies” contd.

Required Reading:

Sandya Hewamanne, “Negotiating Sexual Meanings: Global discourses, local practices, and Sri Lanka’s Free Trade Zone (FTZ) Factory Workers”

Shermal Wijewardene, “‘But no one has explained to me who I am now’: Trans Self-Perceptions in Sri Lanka”

- READING FROM JOURNAL POSSIBLE

****Reflection Paper on Activism Due****

*WATCH FILM *A Peck on the Cheek* and/or *Boradiya Pokuna* AT THE ISLE CENTER*

Tuesday March 13 (8-10.30 am): “Reading Culture, Reading Gender” contd.

Screening of Film, *Terrorist*, and discussion

Thursday March 15 (8-12 noon): “Hegemonic Nationalisms and Sinhala (Buddhist) Women”

Required Reading:

Michele Gamburd, “Economics of Enlisting”

Sandya Hewamanne, “Duty Bound? Militarization, Romances and New Forms of Violence among Sri Lanka’s Free Trade Zone Factory Workers”

- READING FROM JOURNAL POSSIBLE

****ESSAY ON FILMS DUE****

Tuesday March 20 (8-10.30 am): “Navigating displacement – Policy perspectives and the case of the Northern Muslims” [Guest Speaker: Ms. Esther Surenthireraj]

Required Reading:

Farzana Haniffa, “Competing for Victim Status: Northern Muslims and the Ironies of Sri Lanka’s Post-war Transition”

Sharika Thiranagama, *In my mother’s house*. Ch. 4

Thursday March 22 (8-10.30 am): “Female subjectivity in relation to Tamil Women—experiences of women of the families of disappeared” [Guest Speaker: Ms. Sarala Emanuel]

Required Reading:

Shreen Saroor & Mythili Bala, “In Post-War Sri Lanka, Hope Fades for Families of the Disappeared”

Read page 176 to 233 of Vol. 1 of the Full Report by the Office for Missing Persons GoSL. <http://www.scrm.gov.lk/documents-reports>

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MODULE 2: WOMEN AND THE MATERIALITY OF CULTURE

Tuesday March 27 (8-10.30 am): “Women in/and Politics” [Guest Speaker: Prof. Kamala Liyanage]

Required Reading:

Wickramasinghe & Kodikara, “Representation in Politics”

****FIRST RESPONSE PAPER ON MODULE DUE****

Thursday March 29 (8-10.30 am): “Law, Women and Sri Lanka” [Guest Speaker: Dr. Dinesha Samararatne]

Required Reading:

Ambika Satkunanathan, “Gender and the Law in South Asia: Law – a Vehicle for Emancipation or a Victim of Identity Politics?” 285-303.

Supreme Court Case 1 S.C. Appeal No. 17/2013: AG v Sampath.

Supreme Court Case 2: SC/FR/No. 76/2012: AG v M. Palaketiya.

Recommended Reading:

Neloufer de Mel & Dinesha Samararatne, “The Law’s Gender: Entanglements and Recursions – Three Stories from Sri Lanka.”

Tuesday April 03 (8-10.30 am): “Gender, Development and the Economy”

Required Reading:

Amali Philips, “Rethinking Culture and Development: Marriage and Gender among the Tea Plantation Workers in Sri Lanka”

Elizabeth Frantz, “Of Maids and Madams: Sri Lankan Domestic and their Employers in Jordan”

- **READING FROM JOURNAL POSSIBLE**

Thursday April 05 (8-10.30 am): “Gender, Development and the Global Economy” contd.

Required Reading:

Caitryn Lynch, “Good Girls or Juki Girls? Learning and Identity in Garment Factories”

Michele Ruth Gamburd, “Breadwinners no more: Masculinity in flux”

- **READING FROM JOURNAL POSSIBLE**

Tuesday April 17 (8-10.30 am): Sri Lankan Muslim Women and Identity Politics” [Guest Speaker: Ms. Shreen Saroor]

Required Reading:

Farzana Haniffa, “Under Cover: Reflections on the Practice of “Hijab” amongst Urban Muslim Women in Sri Lanka”

“Sharmila Sayyid: Hounded and Harassed”

****JOURNAL ENTRIES DUE****

Thursday April 19 (8-10.30 am): “Women’s Activism and Feminist Politics in Sri Lanka”

Required Reading:

Kanchana Ruvanpura, “Awareness and Action: The Ethno-gender Dynamics of Sri

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Lankan NGOs”
Michele Gamburd, “Advocating for Sri Lankan Migrant Workers: Obstacles and Challenges”

- **READING FROM JOURNAL POSSIBLE**

****SECOND RESPONSE PAPER ON MODULE DUE ****

****April 20: FINAL ESSAY DUE****

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any academic endeavor must be based upon a foundation of honesty and integrity. Students are expected to abide by principles of academic integrity and must be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work while studying abroad. Any academic work (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill an academic requirement must represent a student’s original work. Any act of academic misconduct, such as cheating, fabrication, forgery, plagiarism, or facilitating academic dishonesty, will subject a student to disciplinary action.

IFSA-Butler takes academic integrity very seriously. Students must not accept outside assistance without permission from the instructor. Additionally, students must document all sources according to the instructions of the professor. Should your instructor suspect you of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty, you may receive a failing grade for the course and disciplinary action may result. The incident will be reported to the IFSA-Butler resident director as well as your home institution.

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