

**Global Feminisms Conference, Sept. 15, 2006:
Changing the World, Changing the Academy**

**USING GF PROJECT IN CLASSROOMS:
GLOBAL FEMINISMS (LAL, WANG ZHENG)**

Questions about syllabus:

At the University of Maryland, there are two different courses, both of them required:

- Theories of Feminism
 - An upper division course required course for Women's Studies majors
- Feminism and Women's Movements: Genealogies
 - Required graduate level course
 - Use to be: Advanced Feminist Theory
 - Covers: U.S., France, India, Egypt

***Questions:* What needs to be covered in a required course which is different than creating a course on feminism in a global context? How do we give the students enough local material to understand something about the country? How can we use the materials you have presented here today?**

Suggestions:

- Today, we showed examples from the films in order to demonstrate how you could use these examples in a classroom.
- If we're going to talk about creating conversations globally, then we should have the voices – that's the importance of this material.
- We must consider the relationship between the viewer and the subject in the film.
- There is a fear that for US students, the interviewee would become the native informant.
- How do we present this in the classroom?
- One of the ways of getting around students not having a lot of contextualization is getting them to look at how the issue has been framed. Shift the gaze slightly so they're looking at ways that the dialog has occurred.
- "In trying to tiptoe around reproducing a certain discourse, I shift the gaze. I'm afraid of exposing them to activism around which there may not be an agreement about what constitutes a correct feminist approach. I think it's very diverse and very complicated. My strategy is turning their gaze to looking and being reflective about the construction of the problem. I feel like that's the most I can do in one week on FGM. It's also a question of what my skills and knowledge base are."
- Putting the above into practice: During the week FGM was discussed, the class looked at Alice Walker and how she worked as an activist, and what influenced her. They looked at how the issue was framed.

The term "global":

- The term "global" is suspect and ambiguous. We are still making up the term "global" as we go, which is great.

Questions: Why do we evoke this term? Who does it benefit intellectually and otherwise? What exactly are we talking about?

- It allows for the possibility of comparative *and* integrative studies
 - We need to make a distinction between the two types of studies
- There is always a need to step back to ask, “What’s the framework that brought us face to face with these people?”
- Global feminism is different from international feminism, though both terms can be ambiguous.
- Feminism is a global phenomenon that must be acknowledged.
 - This global phenomenon is meaningful at a local level. **The local is not in isolation.** The feminist movement at whatever local level is not in isolation. It always has some relationship with other locations. That is why context is necessary. We use the global context to contain all these thoughts.
- We have begun to claim the term “global” more.
 - “Global” has a problematic edge to it. How do we compare? How much context should we provide in a week?
- Recognizing the multiple sites and moments of the global opens up a lot more discourse and is a way to talk back to this specific use of the term “global” that was masquerading as a universal history.
- It would be helpful to consider this from a contrapuntal standpoint instead of an integrative one.
 - How are histories related? Connected?
 - This often has to do with power.

Issue of comparability and globality:

- One can be effective at teaching FGM because she/he is not a local informant
- Local voices are so powerful and so strong. How do we mediate and contextualize their voices?
- Global feminism is about creating a new subjectivity.
- “Global” as an organizing framework might get us away from some issues raised about the relationship between the Third World and the United States, but it still returns us to the question: “What do we do about the US?”

Western intellectual domination within feminism:

- We can miss it if we’re not aware of it, but we can also do the opposite.
- We’re giving ourselves credit for doing ill, but we’re still locating ourselves at the center.
- We can also be US centered even when we’re critiquing or criticizing ourselves – by saying we are the cause of the situation.

Culture and its different meanings:

- What are the terms that the women in the films use to discuss culture? What is it that we translate here as culture?

- Understanding this might allow us to go beyond these tired debates in English and use these non-Romance language terms to enrich our metaphors
- How to formulate culture in different contexts?
- Since Women's Studies is integrating intercultural studies, it might be helpful to have different strategies for teaching Culture and for teaching culture.
- What are the tools we're really trying to communicate with a global feminisms course?