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PSC 395.01: Women's Human Rights

Olatunde Ojo

The University Of Montana

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The University of Montana
Political Science Department
PSC 395 - Women's Human Rights
Spring 1997

Professor:	Olatunde Ojo	Class meets: LA 337
Office:	LA 354	MWF 2:10-3 pm
Phone:	243-4418	
Office Hours:	T 12:40-2, W 9-10 or by appointment	

Course Description

This course introduces students to the global struggle for human rights from the perspective of women activists and the international community. It examines the role of women NGOs in the expansion of UN's vista and activities, and in mainstreaming women's rights programs within the UN system.

The course explores the impact which the women's movement has had on national policies and programs for the actualization of women's rights. A substantial part of the course is devoted to the various identities - religious, ethno-cultural, national, etc. - that challenge the idea of universal norms and exercise of women's rights. Comparative strategies and experience in dealing with the obstacles are discussed.

Course Format and Requirements

This is a reading/discussion course, organized as a seminar. Students or student groups will take turns leading discussions on key issues, concepts and themes from the assigned readings for the relevant class sessions. The discussion leader launches the discussion by presenting a summary of the readings and posing the key issues. Discussion leaders are not expected to answer all questions in their presentations; their task is to identify important issues and areas of controversy for discussion. Meaningful discussion and rewarding class sessions can only occur if we all faithfully do the assigned readings when due. To ensure this and high quality discussion sessions, periodic short (no more than three type-written pages) reaction papers will be required on some of the assigned readings. These will constitute a part of the course assessment. In short, everyone is responsible for the material assigned for each session. The oral summary by the discussion leaders is only a convenient way of launching the discussion, not a substitute for a careful reading of the materials by every student.

In addition to leading class discussion in turns, each student will also write and present a term paper, a learning tool. The paper, on a topic of the student's choice, is expected to break new ground, i.e. go beyond the assigned class readings and discussions. It may cover topics left out or insufficiently covered in the course.

The presentation of the papers in class will occupy the last two weeks of the semester. The final draft incorporating relevant comments and suggestions from the class discussion will be due not later than the day and time scheduled for the final exam of this course, i.e. Tuesday, May 123, 3:20-5:20 pm.

Evaluation of Student Performance

There will be three components to the course evaluation. The first component comprising 40 percent will be based on the students' classroom performance, including the quality of class discussions led, quality of the reaction papers, and general contributions to other class sessions. Obviously, regular attendance is essential; it will account for 10 percent of the course grade. The second component, 30 percent, will be the term paper discussed above. The third component will be a mid-term exam (20 percent). There will be no final exam.

Texts

Eva Friedlander (ed.), Look at the World Through Women's Eyes.

Hilkka Pietila & Jeanne Vickers, Making Women Matter: Role of the United Nations.

Margaret Schuler (ed.), From Basic Needs to Basic Rights.

PSC 395 - Women's Human Rights:
International and Comparative Perspectives

Course Outline

- WEEK I Jan. 27 - Jan. 31
 (M) Introduction
 (W) General Discussion - Affirmative Action
 (F) Global Forces Shaping Women's Lives: Contrasting Regional Perspectives
 Friedlander pp. 13-29

Part One - Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights: Perspectives from the NGO Forum, Beijing

- WEEK II Feb. 3 - Feb. 7
 (M) Obstacles to Women's Rights: Peace and Security
 Friedlander pp. 41-56
 (W) Impact of Rapid Economic Globalization: Regional Perspectives - China, Latin America, Britain, and Africa
 Friedlander pp. 57-70
 (F) Effect of the Rise of Conservatism
 Friedlander pp. 72-84
- WEEK III Feb. 10 - Feb. 14
 (M) Media and Stereotyping of Asian Women
 Friedlander pp. 89-94; 99-104
 (W) Discussion of video
 (F) Strategies for Overcoming Perceived Obstacles to Women's Rights: Transforming Politics, governance and Women Participation
 Friedlander pp. 109-119
- WEEK IV Feb. 17 - Feb. 21
 (M) Overcoming the Challenges of Globalization of Economies
 Friedlander pp. 121-128
 (W) Strategies to Overcome Various Forms of Rising Conservatism
 Friedlander pp. 157-164
 (F) Strategies for Peace and Human Security
 Friedlander pp. 165-177
- WEEK V Feb. 24 - Feb. 28
 (M) Strategies to Overcome Violence Against Women
 Friedlander pp. 180-194
 (W) Video and further discussion
 (F) Video on Official Beijing: The Platform for Action Highlights

Part Two - The Road to Beijing: Evolution of Women's Rights at the United Nations

- WEEK VI Mar. 3 - Mar. 7

- (M) UN and Women's Rights: Phase One - From Securing the Legal Foundations to Recognition of Women's Role in Development 1945-1975
Pietila & Vickers, Making Women Matter - The Role of the UN chs. 4, 5, & 2
- (W) UN and Women's Rights: Phase Two - From Mexico City to Nairobi, The Forward Looking Strategy, FLS
Pietila & Vickers, chs. 1 & 3
- (F) The Convention on Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women: Reservations and Implementation in the Light of The 1995 Platform of Action
Pietila & Vickers, Annex I (pp. 173-180)

WEEK VII Mar. 10 - Mar. 14 - Institutional Breakthrough and Commitment to Women

- (M) Organs and Bodies for Decision-Making and Implementation
- (W) Rights Implementation Procedures
- (F) Rights Implementation Procedures continued
Pietila & Vickers, chs. 6, 7, & 8

Mar. 17 - Mar. 21 (Spring Break)

Part Three - Challenges and Prospects of Universality of Women's Human Rights.

WEEK VIII Mar. 24 - Mar. 28

- (M) Effectiveness of the Protection of Women's Socio-Economic Rights: Women Rights' Activists and the State
Margaret Schuler, From Basic Needs to Basic Rights, chs. 1 & 2
- (W) Enforceability of Women's Socio-Economic Rights: The Caribbean Experience
Schuler, ch. 5
- (F) Making the State Accountable: The Experience in India and China
Schuler, chs. 6 & 7

WEEK IX Mar. 31 - Apr. 4 State & Protection of Women's Socio-Economic Rights, continued

- (M) GATT, NAFTA and Undermining of Socio-Economic Rights in Canada - Schuler, ch. 10
- (W) Failure of Women's Socio-Economic Rights in the USA
Schuler, ch. 11
- (F) **Mid-Term Exam**

WEEK X Apr. 7 - Apr. 11 - Religious, Cultural, Socio-Economic and Ethnic Identities as Obstacles to Universalism

- (M) The Case of Multiple Identities in India - Schuler, ch. 14
- (W) Culture or Abuse of Human Rights? The Case of Female Circumcision in the Sudan - Schuler, ch. 15
- (F) Universal Women's Rights vs. the Need to Maintain Unique, Culturally Specific Women's Status: the experience in the Czech Republic - Schuler, ch. 19

- WEEK XI Apr. 14 - Apr. 18 - Obstacles to Universalism, continued
(M) Islamic Laws and Women's Rights: Views from the Middle East - Schuler, chs. 13 & 18
(W) Indigenous Rights vs. the Rights of Women: The Native American Experience - Schuler ch. 16
(F) Immigration and Nationality Laws and the Rights of Married Women
- WEEK XII Apr. 21 - Apr. 25 - The Challenge and Prospects of Universality continued
(M) The Case of Sexuality and Women's Sexual Rights - Schuler chs. 21 & 20
(W) Women Activism to Advance Women's Human Rights: Implementation of Reproductive Rights in Bangladesh and Colombia - Schuler chs. 23 & 25
(F) The Case of Immigrant Women's Rights in the USA and Securing Women's Rights in Chile - Schuler chs. 28 & 30
- WEEK XIII Apr. 28 - May 2 - Student Presentation of Term Papers
- WEEK XIV May 5 - May 9 - Student Presentation of Term Papers
(F) Conclusion
- WEEK XV May 13 - Term paper due, latest 5:30 pm.