

## East of Equality? Critical Feminism and Global Gender Politics

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### Course Description:

This course explores feminist theory and gender politics with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). We examine how different historical periods - from pre-socialist suffrage struggles, through state socialism, to postsocialist transformation - shaped gender norms, women's rights, labour, family policies, and social reproduction. We then turn to contemporary issues: migration, LGBTQ+ rights, anti-gender politics, EU gender governance, labour and care, and intersectional inequalities. Throughout, theoretical perspectives (intersectionality, postcolonial/decolonial feminism, feminist political theory) guide our inquiry, while empirical cases ground our discussions. Students will learn to connect historical developments with ongoing gender struggles, applying feminist theory to real-world issues and understanding how the CEE region both shapes and is shaped by global gender politics. Discussions with civil society professionals and academics, as well as site visits, excursions, and film screenings, will be vital components of the course.

### Grading Policy:

- **Active class participation: 30%**

Active participation is a key component of this course. This includes both engaging in class discussions and completing the required readings beforehand to ensure informed contributions. Participation involves actively sharing your ideas and engaging in discussions not only with the lecturer but also with fellow students. Participation is assessed continuously throughout the course and accounts for 30% of the final grade. This assessment is divided into two parts: an interim evaluation at the midpoint of the course (15%) and a final evaluation at the end (15%). To foster meaningful discussions, students are not permitted to use laptops or other electronic devices during discussions, except for those with special accommodations. Screens can create barriers between participants, fragmenting the space and diminishing engagement in the discussion.

- **Reading journal (in-class reflections): 10%**

Using the method of personal journaling, students will reflect on the literature and key themes for that week. We will begin each class session with a brief reflective writing exercise based on the required reading (students may use their notes), and we will continue to draw on this practice throughout class discussions.

In addition to regular participation, each student will sign up for one class to serve as the "discussion leader." This role requires students to go beyond the standard reading by formulating two to three discussion questions for each assigned reading, audio, or video material. The discussion leader will facilitate the discussion section of the class, ensuring an engaging and critical conversation.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

- **Mid-term project: 25%**

The midterm project is an in-class written essay that allows students to synthesize course concepts, readings, and reflections from the first half of the semester. Students are encouraged to use their journal entries and notes from weekly reflections.

- **Final research project: 25%**

The final research assignment is an academic project that applies critical feminist theory to a specific issue, case study, or policy in Central and Eastern Europe. Students are expected to demonstrate engagement with course readings, relevant academic literature, and empirical or qualitative sources.

- **Final research paper oral presentation of the project & discussion: 10%**

### **Mandatory Completion Policy**

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

### **AEP Academic Integrity Policy**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

### **AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy**

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

### **AEP Diversity Policy**

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

## Weekly Schedule

### Week 1

*CEE Introductory Lecture Series & AEP Introductory Lecture Series*

### Week 2: Introduction: Course Overview & Key Concepts

Orientation to the course, expectations, and key terms - feminism, gender, patriarchy, intersectionality, postsocialism. Brief mapping of CEE in global gender politics. What images or assumptions come to mind when you think about feminism in CEE? What differences might we expect between feminist movements in Western vs. Eastern Europe?

## PART I - THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Week 3: Foundations of Feminist Theory(ies)

Introduction to major feminist theoretical frameworks: liberal, radical, socialist, postcolonial and others. Situating these debates globally. What does Mohanty critique in Western feminist scholarship, and why does it matter for studying CEE?

#### Readings:

- Bryson, V. Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction. (Selected chapters)
- Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges." *Feminist Studies* 14(3), 1988, 575–599.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes." *boundary 2*, 1984, 333–358.

#### Recommended Readings:

- Tong, R. *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. (Sel. chapters)

### Week 4: Intersectionality: Origins, Debates, and Expansions

Development of intersectionality as a theoretical tool and its relevance for analyzing postsocialist societies. Engagement with internal critiques and global applications.

#### Readings:

- Berger, M. T., & Guidroz, K. (2010). *The intersectional approach: Transforming the academy through race, class, & gender* (Selected chapters). University of North Carolina Press.
- May, V. M. (2015). *Pursuing intersectionality, unsettling dominant imaginaries* (Sel. chapters). Routledge.
- McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs*, 30(3), 1771–1800.

### **Recommended Readings:**

- Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory*, 9(1), 67–85.
- Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist, queer, crip* (Sel. chapters). Indiana University Press.

## **PART II - HISTORY & CONTEXT: FROM SUFFRAGE TO POSTSOCIALISM**

### **Week 5: Pre-socialist Feminisms: Suffrage, Emancipation & Nation-building**

Explores feminist activism before socialism - nationalist movements, education, suffrage, and the tension between women's rights and national projects.

### **Readings:**

- Malečková, J. (2004). The emancipation of women for the benefit of the nation: The Czech women's movement. In S. Paletschek & B. Pietrow-Ennker (Eds.), *Women's emancipation movements in the nineteenth century: A European perspective* (pp. 168–188). Stanford University Press.
- Musilová, D. (2012). Mothers of the nation: Women's vote in the Czech Republic. In B. Rodríguez-Ruiz & R. Rubio-Marín (Eds.), *The struggle for female suffrage in Europe* (pp. 207–223).

### **Recommended Readings:**

- Pateman, C. (1994). Three questions about women's suffrage. In C. Daley & M. Nolan (Eds.), *Suffrage and beyond: International feminist perspectives* (pp. 331–348). New York University Press.

### **Week 6: Women and Gender Under State Socialism: Equality, Control, Paradoxes**

Examines official equality policies, labour expectations, reproduction, and how women navigated constrained and enabling aspects of socialist gender orders.

### **Readings:**

- Funk, N. (2014). A very tangled knot: Official state socialist women's organizations, women's agency and feminism in Eastern European state socialism. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 21(4), 344–360.
- Jusová, I. (2016). Situating Czech identity. In J. Šiklová & I. Jusová (Eds.), *Czech feminisms: Perspectives on gender in East Central Europe* (pp. 29–45). Indiana University Press.

### **Recommended Readings:**

- Lukić, J. (2016). One socialist story, or how I became a feminist. In F. de Haan, K. Ghodsee, K. Daskalova, M. Grabowska, J. Lukić, C. Bonfiglioli, R. M. Popa, & A. Ghit (Eds.), *Ten years after: Communism and feminism revisited* (pp. 135–145). *Aspasia*, 10(1).

### **Week 7: Midterm project**

## **PART III - CONTEMPORARY THEMATIC ISSUES IN CEE**

### **Week 8: Gender, Migration & Global Dynamics**

Focus on international migration flows from and into CEE, global care chains, masculinities, and climate-linked mobility patterns.

### **Readings:**

- Parvulescu, A. (2014). *The traffic in women's work: East European migration and the making of Europe* (Selected chapter). University of Chicago Press.
- Chindarkar, N. (2012). Gender and climate change-induced migration: Proposing a framework for analysis. *Environmental Research Letters*, 7(2), 1–7.

### **Recommended Readings:**

- Kalmar, I. (2022). How Eastern Europeans became less white. In *White but not quite: Central Europe's illiberal revolt* (pp. 33–45). Bristol University Press.

### **Week 9: LGBTQ+ Rights in CEE: History, Movements & Backlash**

Overview of LGBTQ+ politics in CEE, post-1989 openings, activism, legal change, and recent conservative backlash.

### **Readings:**

- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). (2024). *LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads: Progress and challenges 2024*. <https://fra.europa.eu>
- Kříčková, L. (2023). Same-sex families' rights and the European Union: Incompatible or promising relationship? *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, 37(1), 1–21.

### **Recommended Readings:**

- Buyantueva, R., & Shevtsova, M. (Eds.). (2020). *LGBTQ+ activism in Central and Eastern Europe: Resistance, representation and identity* (Sel. chapters). Palgrave Macmillan.

### **Week 10: Anti-gender Politics & Democratic Backsliding in CEE**

Examination of anti-gender mobilization, the populist moment, and how gender becomes a symbolic battleground in illiberal politics.

#### **Readings:**

- Graff, A., & Korolczuk, E. (2021). Anti-gender politics in the populist moment (Sel. chapters). Routledge.
- Amnesty International. (2024). [Hungary: From freedom to censorship: The consequences of the Hungarian Propaganda Law](#). Pp. 13-45.

### **Week 11: Gender Equality in EU and Local Institutions: Policy, Mechanisms & Reality**

Understanding how the EU structures gender policy: strategies, funding, institutional mechanisms, and tensions between EU norms and national politics.

#### **Readings:**

- Czech Government Office. (2021). [Gender equality strategy 2021–2030](#).
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2021). Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the EU: [Present realities, future priorities](#).

#### **Recommended Readings:**

- EIGE. (2021). Responding to gender-based violence in the context of migration: Mapping EU Member States' policies and actions.

### **Week 12: Student Research Workshop: Applying Theory to CEE Cases**

This week is dedicated to developing students' final research projects. Building on the theories and regional case studies covered throughout the semester, students will workshop their ideas.

#### **Readings:**

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Handbook of qualitative research. London: SAGE Publications (Sel. chapters).
- Pilcher, J., & Whelehan, I. (2004). Fifty key concepts in gender studies. London: SAGE Publications (Sel. chapters).

### **Week 13: Presentation of Final Research Project Proposals**

In the final week, students will present their research project proposals to the class. Presentations should clearly articulate the research question, theoretical framework, methodology, key sources, and preliminary arguments.