Gender, Sexuality and War

Anticipated Weekly Class Schedule: M, W 9-1

Course Description:

Mainstream war studies scholarship assumes that gender is irrelevant to understanding the causes and consequences of wars. In most war narratives, women are absent or treated as the object of history. This course brings together the literature on gender, sexuality, and war to explore the gendered dimensions of armed conflict, sexual violence, and militarization. In Part I of the course, we will study the effects of war and militarism on women’s lives, locating our inquiry within the intersection of race, class, gender and national identities in conflict and post-conflict settings. In Part II, we will focus on the experiences of Vietnamese women during and in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

Possible excursions in Ho Chi Minh City:
- **South Vietnam Women Museum**: Displays thousands of rare photos and artifacts of Southern Vietnamese women’s contribution to the foundation and defense of South Vietnam.
- **The War Remnants Museum**: Portrays the horrors and details of the Vietnam War
- **Hồ Việt - The Soul Of Vietnam Cultural Show**: The show includes seven acts depicting ancient stories from the history and traditional music art of Vietnam. Features stories on Vietnam’s most revered heroines such as the Trưng Sisters.

Course requirements:
1) **Group project**: The group project will require 3 to 4 students to work together. The project will focus on a “text” or cultural object such as museums, films, monuments, novels etc., which pertain to the themes of the course but are not covered directly by the course. The group will present their projects to the class in the last 2 weeks of the course.
2) One **midterm** paper
3) One **final** paper
4) **Attendance** and **active participation** in class. Discussions will focus on the readings. Everyone is expected to have completed the reading assignments and to be prepared to participate constructively in the class discussion.

Part I: Introduction to Gender and War

Week 1- Global Militarization of Women's Lives


**Week 2 - Colonialism and Militarism in Asia and the Pacific Islands: Indigenous and Feminist Perspectives**


**Part II—The Case of the Vietnam War**

**Week 3 — The Impacts of War on Vietnamese Women**


**Week 4 -- Vietnamese “Women Warriors”**


Nguyen Thi Dinh and Mai Elliot. *No Other Road to Take: Memoir of Mrs Nguyen Thi Dinh.* [Memoir of one of the most important southern woman revolutionary in the war].


**Film:** Đừng Đốt/ Don’t Burn (2009). Director: Dang Nhat Minh. [Based on a diary that belongs to Dang Thuy Tram, a medical officer for the People’s Liberation Army.]
**Week 5 – Women’s Lives in Postwar Vietnam and in the Diaspora**


Le thi diem thuy. 2003. *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*. Knopf. [This acclaimed novel reveals the life of a Vietnamese family in America through the knowing eyes of a child finding her place and voice in a new country.]


**Film:** *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*. Directed by Trinh T. Minh Ha. [Explores the lives of five women in postwar Vietnam. It underscores the inferior place of women in Vietnamese society both before and after the war, but also elicits the strong bond each woman feels for her country and society.]