SOC354H1F – Gender & Modernity
Sociology Department, St. George Campus
Fall 2025, Wednesday, 1:10 pm – 4pm (Online)

Instructor: Umaima Miraj
Email: umaima.miraj@mail.utoronto.ca
Office Hours: TBD

Course Description

In this course, we will examine the relationship between gender and modernity by rethinking the *modern.* We will explore competing theories and scholarship on modernity's origins and explore how modernity's different formations—capitalism, colonialism, war, crisis, and fascism—are gendered. We begin by discussing the origins of modernity through the state, class structures, and colonial conquest and investigate how these processes impacted or imbricated gender in various ways. Further, we examine how modernity is not flat but a contradictory process and thus study how and if revolutionary movements have sustained or redefined gender. Lastly, we will examine how the rise of authoritarian regimes and fascism is the manifestation of gendered states and structures.

Prerequisites: The prerequisites to take this course are SOC201H1, SOC202H1, SOC204H1, plus 1.0 credit from SOC251H1, SOC252H1, SOC254H1. This requirement cannot be waived and students without the prerequisite will be removed without notice.

Teaching philosophy:

My teaching philosophy is informed by pedagogy of reciprocal questioning and listening instead of "banking" (Freire, 1979) knowledge unilaterally. This is especially important given the nature of our course which questions the given understanding of modernity as liberal and progressive. Instead, throughout the course, I expect us to question how we understand our historical realities together. I will try my best to be a guide, but I am open to our collective and critical rethinking and open to suggestions that I might not have myself thought of. Moreover, I acknowledge that everybody comes from different standpoints, realities, and capacities of learning and time. While some of us will come to this course already questioning our received modernity, others might approach this question for the first time. But in both our engagement with the texts, and our discussions in class, I hope to uphold the integrity the question which is the understand how what we know as modern has informed us today.

Course Structure:

This is an online synchronous course. While in this Zoom world, we are used to turning off our screens during lecture, I urge you to keep your screens turned on so we can replicate an in-class environment as much as possible. This course has some charged and political themes, and I believe

we can take the best out from the readings by being present and participating in class during lecture. The structure will be as follows:

- We will begin by discussing our impressions of the readings and how it made us reflect on other ideas, readings, personal experiences, or current events.
- I will then conduct a lecture on the readings of the day. While this is a lecture, please feel free to comment and question during it by raising your hand.
- This will be a more flexible part of the class. We can continue our discussions if it falls over, or we will use this time to watch clips, short films, have a guest lecture, or do some activity regarding the materials.

Course Policies:

- **On readings:** I acknowledge that this is a reading heavy course. I will try my best to preview the readings for next week each class and contextualise them, especially when there are different histories or contexts that we might not be aware of. I will go over reading and note taking practices to ensure we can make the best out of the assigned readings.
- **Turn On Screens:** I require screens to be turned on for the duration of the class. The nature of our course is such that meaningful listening and discussion cannot take place on blank screens. Please send me a direct message if you cannot turn on the screen on a day for any reason.
- **Emails:** I am available via email and office hours. When emailing, please use your utoronto account and make sure to note the course code, SOC354, in the subject line so that I can prioritize it. I aim to respond within 24 hours. While we all have different time management priorities, I urge you to be respectful of time off on the weekends. I will not respond to any emails on the weekends unless absolutely necessary.
- **Class etiquette:** I intend to make this class an open of discussion and debate for all. However, debate goes hand in hand with respect and the practice of listening. We might not always agree with our peers or the instructor, but it is critical to listen, reflect, and be respectful as we think through our ideas together.
- **Course materials:** All course material will be uploaded to the Quercus page, including the slides after class. **Recording, sharing, and copying lecture material and slides from this course is not allowed.** I encourage you to practice note taking in class on your laptop or note pad as your words would help you remember and think through course content most clearly.

Learning Outcomes:

This course is designed to critically rethink modernity through a gendered perspective. The 'gendered' perspective will help push an understanding of modernity that is not centered on the experiences of the Big European Man. In other words, a critical perspective on modernity informed by gender constitutes an understanding that is also informed by a post-colonial and anti-racist perspectives. By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Rethink the origins of modernity, both temporally and spatially.
2. Understand modernity as a contradictory, and not linear process of progress.
3. Analyze the relationship between gender and modernity as intertwined in its various formations.
4. Understand theoretical concepts regarding gender in relation to the modern state.
5. Connect historical gendered processes to contemporary modernity.

These goals will be achieved through the following exercises:

1. Closely reading texts to engage in class. I encourage students to practice noting page numbers from the texts when contributing to develop a habit of deeply engaging with the texts.
2. Connecting reading impressions with other ideas, personal experiences, or current events to generate critical thinking of concepts in the readings in class discussions.
3. Writing reflection memos to practice writing short, concise pieces on the readings.
4. Analyze film, novel, art piece, or other creative work using themes/readings from the course to understand the use of modernity in multiple arenas. This assignment will help students connect the media to larger historical processes.

Course Grade Breakdown

Assignments	**Dates**
Participation **20%**	**Ongoing**
Reflection memos **40%**	**9 am, the day of class – 8 submissions over the course of the semester, 5% each**
Final Assignment **40%**	**Topic and scope (5%), due at 12 pm, Wednesday, October 22nd** **Proposal (10%), due at 12 pm, Wednesday, November 12th** **Final Project (25%), due at 11:59 pm, Sunday, November 30th**

Participation (20%): Since this is an online but reading intensive course, participation makes up a significant portion of the grade. It will be measured in 3 ways:

1) **1 point** for showing up and turning on screen.[1]

[1] If for some reason, you are unable to turn on your screen for a particular class, please send me a direct message during class.

2) **1 point** for contributing to class.
3) **1 point** for additional substantial comments by raising hand or posting in the chat.

Participation is not intended to force students to contribute for the sake of the grade but to stimulate discussion and so the marks on contribution will be holistic. We will discuss the nature of grading participation in more detail on the first day of class.

Reflection memos (40%): For any 8 weeks (except Week 1, Week 9, Week 12), write a memo reflecting on the readings. This reflection will include: (1) what you think are the main arguments of the readings, (2) how they made you feel or connect your personal experience or any other world event, (3) how do the readings speak to each other (do they complement/contrast/extend/contradict each other) (4) any questions that you might have that were left unanswered or any muddy concepts.

At least 2 of these submissions need to be before **Tuesday, November 11th, 2025,** as 10% of the final grade needs to be returned before the drop date.

This exercise is intended to help you closely engage with the readings before class. The suggested length for each reflection is 300-400 words. This is to practice writing in a concise and focused manner while closely engaging with the texts. I will read them before class and include your contributions in the discussion.

Final Assignment (40%): Analyze a film, short film, documentary, novel, art piece, or any other art form through the lens of gender and modernity. Some questions to think about:

(1) Does the piece show gender as historically structured?
(2) Is the conceptualization of gendered dynamics shown as unchanging or contradictory?
(3) How does it help us think about modernity as gendered?

One way to do this is to critically analyze pieces to show how they situate or obfuscate historical processes of empire within modernity. For example, see Edward Said's critique of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park,* in "Jane Austen and Empire" (1998). Excerpt from the text will be uploaded on Quercus.

Topic and Scope: Students will write a paragraph on their chosen topic for the final project along with the media they plan to analyze. This will be brief but can start contextualizing the problem and the RQ.

Proposal: This proposal will outline the scope, research question and the outline of the project more systematically, utilizing at least 2-3 articles/chapters on the topic. This is intended to build towards the final project.

Final project: 10-12 double-spaced page essay, including a consistent reference style bibliography. The final project is intended for you to work on academic writing skills and engage with outside scholarly works to analyze media of your choice. Further details of the assignment will be given in class.

Course Schedule & Readings

Dates	Readings
Week 1: September 3rd **Introductions and going over syllabus**	*Optional reading:* bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice" *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* (1991): 1-12.
Week 2: September 10th **Module I: Rethinking Modernity**	Julia Adams, Elisabeth S. Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff. 2005. "Introduction: Social Theory, Modernity, and the Three Waves of Historical Sociology," in *Remaking Modernity,* excerpts. Gurminder K Bhambra. 2023. "Modernity, Colonialism, and Postcolonial Critique" in *Rethinking Modernity,* 3-29. **Workshop on Reading Responses**
Week 3: September 17th **Module I: Rethinking Modernity: Gender and Historiography**	Joan Wallach Scott. 1988. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," in *Gender and the Politics of History,* 28-50. Mrinalini Sinha. 2000. "Mapping the Imperial Social Formation: A Modest Proposal for Feminist History," *Signs* 25:4, 1077-1082.
Week 4: September 24th **Module II: Gendering the Origins of Our Times**	Fredrich Engels. 1978. "The Origins of the Family, the State, and Private Property," excerpts. Julia Adams. 2005. "Patrimonial Problems, Familial States, and Chartered Companies in Seventeenth-Century Europe," in *The Familial State,* 106-136. **Workshop on Close Reading**
Week 5: October 1st **Module II: Gendering the**	Federici, Silvia. 2005. "The Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women," in *Caliban and the Witch,* 61-132.

Origins of Our Times	Mies, Maria. 1986. "Colonization and Housewifization" in *Patriarchy and Accumulation on the World Scale,* excerpts. Short film during class: *Juice* (2017), dir. Neeraj Ghaywan.
Week 6: October 8th **Module III: Colonial Modernity**	Jennifer L. Morgan. 2021. "Introduction: Refusing Demography," in *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic,* 1-28. Claudia Jones. 1949. "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women," in *Claudia Jones: Beyond Containment,* 74-85. **Workshop on research ideas**
Week 7: October 15th **Module III: Colonial Modernity**	Maria Lugones. 2007. "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," *Hypatia* 22:1, 186-209. Veena Talwar Oldenburg. 2002. "Engineering a Masculine World," in *Dowry Murder: the Imperial Origins of a Cultural Crime,* 99-130. Short film during class: *Raindrop in the Drought,* Godavari Dange
Week 8: October 22nd **Module IV: Toward Anti-colonial Modernity?**	Thomas Sankara. 1987. "The revolution cannot triumph without the emancipation of women," in *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle,* 21-66. Kumari Jayawardena. 2016 [1986]. "Introduction," in *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World,* 1-25. **Topic for Final Assignment due at 12 pm**
October 29th	**READING WEEK – NO CLASS**
Week 9: November 5th **Module V: Global Political Economy**	Valentine M. Moghadam. 2005. "Globalization and its Discontents: Capitalist Development, Political Movements, and Gender," in *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks,* 21-49. Nancy Fraser. 2017. "Crisis of Care? On the Social-Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism" in *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentring Oppression,* 21-36.

	Workshop on proposals
Week 10: November 12th **Module VI: Dispossession, Depletion, and War**	Bina Fernandez. 2018. "Dispossession and the Depletion of Social Reproduction," *Antipode* 50:1, 142-163. Jayanthi Thiyaga Lingham. 2024. "Dispossession after War: A Feminist Political Economy Perspective," *Feminist Economics,* 30:4, 16-41. **Proposal (10%), due at 12 pm, Wednesday, November 12th**
Week 11: November 19th **Module VII: Fascist Modernity**	Anuradha Gandhy. 2001. "Fascism, Fundamentalism, and Patriarchy." Jennifer V Evans. 2023. "Introduction," in *The Queer Art of History: Queer Kinship after Fascism,* 1-21. Slavoj Žižek. 2016. *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbors,* excerpts. **Workshop on Final Essays**
Week 12: November 26th **Futures and Imaginaries**	**TBD + Wrap up discussion**

Last Day to Drop Course: Tuesday, November 11th, 2025

Every attempt will be made to follow the course readings and schedules. Any changes will be duly informed to students.

Late penalty: 24% grace period after which a late penalty of 5% will be applied per day (including weekends and holidays).

Missed Deadlines and Tests:

Students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test unless the reason is circumstances beyond their control. **Within three days** of missing a paper deadline or test, you must send me a request for consideration. You must document your request **with one of the following:**

- Absence declaration via ACORN (can only be used once during the semester)
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

Regrade Policy

- A student who believes an individual item of work has been incorrectly or unfairly marked may ask the person who marked it for a re-evaluation. If a TA originally marked the work, the re-marking request should first go to the TA. Any appeal of that re-marking should then go to the course instructor.
- Such a request entails a re-marking of the work. Hence, if a re-marking is granted, **the student must accept the resulting mark as the new mark**, whether it goes up or down or remains the same. Continuing with the re-mark or the appeal means the student accepts this condition.
- Students should make such requests as soon as reasonably possible after receiving the work back, but no later than 2 weeks after it was returned.
- Instructors and TAs should ensure all communication with the student is in writing (e.g., follow-up email) and retain a copy for future reference.

Academic Integrity:

Our guides in thinking through the questions at stake in this course (and beyond) are those who have put effort, commitment, reflection, and time, into producing their works. In this course, we are committed to acknowledging this collective and critical questioning through our citational practices. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviors that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. You can find advice on "How Not to Plagiarize" and other advice on documentation format and methods of integrating sources at http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources.

If you are unsure about citational practices and what could entail plagiarism, please contact me and we can go through the importance of academic integrity.

Final Essays will be submitted to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

Turnitin

'Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be

included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service is described on the Turnitin.com web site.'

Assignments not submitted through *Turnitin* will receive a grade of zero (0 %), unless a student instead provides, along with their position paper, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via *Turnitin)* is in place because, strictly speaking, using *Turnitin* is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

USING AI (Generative Artificial Intelligence):

Use of AI for reflection memos and the final project is not permitted in this class. We will discuss in the beginning of this course the importance of closely reading texts for meaningful and generative discussion. For this reason, I strongly discourage the use of AI for summaries and main arguments of the texts. We will discuss alternatives to using AI for clarifications or summaries and reading practices, some of which include, book reviews, reading abstracts conclusions.

Accommodations

If you have a consideration that may require accommodations, please contact Accessibility Services: https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as, 416-978-8060 or accessibility.services@utoronto.ca