Syllabus

Gender Studies

Frankfurt Summer School 2019

05 – 15 August 2019
Decolonization and Feminisms

General Outline

The political debate about the restitution of objects removed from the colonies and exhibited in European museums is in full swing. Decolonizing knowledges, cultures and policies, socialities and practices, decolonizing power relations in general are an urgent concern of global justice. Feminisms around the world emphasize that these are crucial political and epistemic questions. A critical reflection upon processes of ‘othering’ and disappropriation seeks to understand how colonality is embedded in political and social structures and how experiences and perceptions of modernity are shaped by colonial heredities. Raising awareness for exclusionary practices includes self-reflection within emancipatory movements. Bearing this in mind decolonial feminist theory analyses unequal, intersecting power relations and brings forward solidarities and policies to overcome these inequalities.

This two weeks module for advanced master students provides insight into theoretical approaches of current feminist theory focusing on postcolonial/decolonial thought. Seminar presentations and discussions are accompanied by lighthouse lectures and practical experiences like face-to-face encounters with local activists and a walking tour along Frankfurt’s colonial ‘sights’.
Seminars

Week 1

5 August, 14-17:30

Session 1: The Coloniality of Gender
Vanessa Thompson

This session offers an introduction to critiques of colonialism and racial capitalism from a feminist perspective. It explores how gendered dynamics, relations and representations have significantly shaped and structured the projects of European enslavement, colonization and empire. Departing from an analytic that brings together the complex workings of race and gender, we will analyze and discuss the history, discourses and re-productions of (various forms of) colonialism, as well as resistance to it. The set of readings includes foundational texts on race, gender, enslavement and colonialism from a variety of perspectives (postcolonial-feminist, decolonial-feminist and black feminist thought) that offer some theoretical and methodological tools to critically explore prominent themes in the field such as labor, property, dispossession and representation.

Mandatory Readings:

Additional Literature:

6 August, 9:00-12:30

Session 2: Entanglements, Differences and Intersectionalities
Vanessa Thompson

Black, Chicana, Jewish, Muslim, third world and migrant feminisms have crucially intervened in the theories and practices of mainstream western liberal feminisms. They have not only unmasked the universalist assumptions of global sisterhood by pointing at the effects of race, class, religion and sexuality on gendered identities, experiences and struggles, but have also explored the various realms of colonial complicity within white feminist thought. This session approaches decolonial feminisms from a relational perspective and offers students the opportunity to develop a critical vocabulary to analyze the variety of approaches and concepts within decolonial feminisms. The session discusses and traces prominent concepts such as triple oppression, intersectionality, borderlands and gendered orientalism by using a variety of sources, from scholarly articles to archival material, literary and visual formats as well as musical productions.

Mandatory Readings:

Additional Literature:

7 August, 9:00-12:30
Session 3: Transnational Feminist Solidarity in Times of Femonationalism and Carceral Feminism 
Vanessa Thompson

Within the current crisis of neoliberal globalization, one can observe a dangerous liaison between right wing populism as well as racism and demands for women’s and LGBT*Q rights and security. The representations and characterizations of racialized and migrant masculinities as foundationally sexist, homo- and queerphobic and dangerous, the active mobilization of the criminal justice system, expansion of police and mass incarceration, necropolitical migration regimes, as well as military interventions in the name of gender equality are some of the most flagrant examples. In this session, we will historicize and discuss the current articulations of these liaisons by drawing on concepts such as femonationalism (Sara R. Farris) and carceral feminism (Angela Y. Davis, Beth E. Richie). We will further engage with the (im)possibilities of transnational feminist solidarities that challenge the current conjunctures by drawing on current political events and practical examples.

Mandatory Readings:

Additional Literature:
Session 4: Orientalism Revisited from an Intersectional Perspective

Helma Lutz

In his work Orientalism (1978), the Palestinian-Egyptian-American literary scholar and pioneer of post-colonialism, Edward Said, describes how during the 18th and 19th centuries ‘the Orient’ and its peoples became the subject of Western knowledge production. ‘Oriental’ studies leaned heavily on the work of missionaries, merchants, anthropologists and adventurers (most of them men) and their accounts of their ‘authentic’ travel observations. Landscape descriptions and narratives, reinforced by painting and photography produced a specific vocabulary about the Orient. Based on literary and Foucault-ian discourse analysis, Said demonstrates how imaginations and projections operated in constructing the Orient as counter image of ‘Europe’ portrayed as a cultural and religiously homogeneous continent. Said’s work has been widely embraced, but also criticized for omitting dimensions of intersectionality. In this session, we will deal with some original texts and draw a bow to the use of Orientalism in Anti-Muslim Racism in contemporary writings and campaigns.

Readings (excerpts – mandatory readings in bold):
Abu-Lughod, Lila (2013): „Do Muslim Women need saving?“ („Do Muslim Women (Still) need Saving?” (pp. 27-53)
Yegenoglu, Meyda (2012): "Islam, Migrancy, and Hospitality in Europe" (Muslim Women, the headscarf issue and the feminist argument, pp. 124-151)

Week 2

12 August, 9:00-12:30

Session 5: Experiences in Decolonizing the Curriculum. Working Group on Feminist De/Colonizations at Frankfurt University Social Science

During the last years and through a cooperative and deliberative process between students and professors in the Social Sciences at Frankfurt University, we developed a project with the aim of consequently anchoring and imbedding feminist solidary and decolonial perspectives in the Social Sciences. The general marginalization of such perspectives in German academia and the impulses brought by various guest speakers, both activists and academics from the Global South, encouraged students to not only command for inclusion of marginalized perspectives in the curricula, but also for solidary classroom practices and politics. In cooperation with Prof. Uta Ruppert and her South-South department, we, a group of students from different subjects and backgrounds, founded the working group “Decolonizing the Curriculum”.

This working group, whose efforts over the past semester we want to present in this session, is dealing with and discussing the current teaching in the Social Science at the Goethe University. It is working on establishing guidelines on the classroom as a decolonial, feminist and solidary space for all students and is therefore reflecting on racist, sexist and colonial power structures in knowledge-production and -economy, some of which are very present in the classes and spaces of the University. Theses
perspectives, questioning the very institution we all are part of, is currently no part of German academic curricula.

Over the past semester, we experienced very different reactions to and outcomes of the involvement of the group in classes. The naming and out-calling of privileges and hierarchies within the classroom have caused tensions and discussion and thereby started a discourse that has long been necessary. We want to show how interwoven the knowledge-production, the academia, and the classroom are with colonial (and other) power structures and how important it therefore is to call out, criticize and possibly overcome these to achieve a “Decolonial Classroom”. As we are a collective of students, we imagine the session to be a forum for the exchange of experiences with de/colonial curricula and classrooms, rather than a lecture. Nevertheless, we want to give you an overview over the work we have done and plan on doing and give you some impulses on feminist and decolonial epistemologies and methods.

Mandatory Readings:

13 August, 9:00-12:30

Session 6: Decolonization, Feminism and Cultural Politics I
Onur Suzan Nobrega

Sessions 6 and 7 engage with Germany’s current debates and political struggles with regards to its colonial legacies, decolonization and feminism in cultural politics. We examine the role and recent works of academics, artists and activists of color in changing Germany’s cultural landscape. The course consists of theoretical readings in the sociology of culture, critical race studies and postcolonial studies, which support the students in developing an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to investigate the relationship between decolonization, feminism and cultural politics. Alongside the theoretical texts, the course also draws on an archive of artistic works and media examples in session 6 and the students have the opportunity to engage with museum workers in two selected museums in Frankfurt in session 7. The active participation in session 7 requires that all students have read all texts for session 6 and 7 in advance, so that they can prepare three questions each for session 7 at the end of session 6, that can be addressed during the Q&A with the museum workers we will meet during our visit at the Historical Museum and Museum für Angewandte Kunst (see below, session 7).

Mandatory Readings:
Key academic texts on decolonization, race, feminism and cultural politics

Key text for a general introduction to the sociology of art:
In this session we visit two museums: the **Historical Museum Frankfurt** and the **Museum für Angewandte Kunst**, where we meet experts in the field to discuss the cultural politics of decolonization and feminism in the museum sphere. Our first stop is the Historical Museum, where we talk with the museum’s diversity manager Ismahan Wayah about the traces of Black presence in the museum and the portrayal of Black people in oil paintings from the 16th to the 18th century. Who are the figures represented in three selected paintings of the collection? How are they placed in the context of early modern history? We further discuss from an intersectional perspective what the curatorial and political challenges are with regards to of decolonization and diversity in the museum regarding the representation of the history of migration and representation, what are the challenges of developing an intersectional curatorial and political practice in the Historical Museum?

The next stop is the **Museum für Angewandte Kunst**, where we visit the exhibition “Contemporary Muslim Fashion” and discuss with curator Dr. Mahret Kupka the role of the museum with regards to the representation of gendered and racialized Muslim bodies and contemporary Muslim fashion and recent political debates and controversies relating to the exhibition opening that are contextualized in wider debates about Anti-Muslim racism and white feminist interventions in Muslim feminist discourses.

**Mandatory Readings:**

For the Q&A with the diversity manager of the Historical Museum Frankfurt read:

For the exhibition “Contemporary Muslim Fashion” and Q&A with the curator of the Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt read:
- [https://en.qantara.de/content/contemporary-muslim-fashion-exhibition-muslim-fashion—a-material-controversy](https://en.qantara.de/content/contemporary-muslim-fashion-exhibition-muslim-fashion—a-material-controversy) (accessed: June 18, 2019).

**Additional Readings:**

Regarding the debate about the restitution of colonial artefacts:


Storm, S. (2019): “Colonial art restitution: ‘The desire is not to wipe museums clean’”, Available from:

**15 August, 9:00-12:30**

**Session 8: Evaluation/Exam**

*Onur Suzan Nobrega & Marianne Schmidbaur*

- Participants’ presentations related to the topics of the sessions. Possible formats include poster, oral presentation, interview, etc. and will be discussed in detail during the sessions
- Submission of response papers which reflect on the learning process during the summer school connected to the general topic and own subjective experience.
Possible subjects could be unanswered questions from the sessions, future study interests relating to the topic, etc. The paper should be about 3 pages (900 words).

- Feedback

**Lecturers**

**Prof. Helma Lutz**, Website

Helma Lutz is Professor of Sociology with a focus on Women’s and Gender Studies at the Department of Social Sciences at the Goethe University Frankfurt. Her main research topics include: Gender and Care, Transnational Migration, Intersectionality, Racism and Ethnicity as well as Qualitative and Biographical research methods. Since 2015, she is the acting director of the Cornelia Goethe Center for Women’s and Gender Studies.

**Dr. Onur Suzan Nobrega**, Website

Onur Suzan Nobrega is lecturer at the Institute of Sociology, Focus Culture and Migration at Goethe-University Frankfurt. She gained her PhD from Goldsmiths, University of London in Media and Communications with a thesis entitled »Postmigrant Theatre and Cultural Diversity in the Arts: Race, Precarity and Artistic Labour in Berlin«. Since 2008 Dr. Nobrega’s work has been internationally and transdisciplinary located in the fields of Sociology, Media, Film and Cultural Studies. Previously to and alongside academia, she has worked as journalist (die taz), tour manager for the Black German music project Brothers Keepers, curator for the postmigrant theatre Ballhaus Naunynstrasse Berlin and as project partner, organizer and lecturer for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Kunsthalle Mannheim’s Community College.

**Dr. Marianne Schmidbaur**, Website

Marianne Schmidbaur is Scientific Manager of the Cornelia Goethe Center for Women’s and Gender Studies at the Goethe University Frankfurt. Her teaching and research interests include Gender Studies, women’s* movements, higher education/professionalization, and social policy/care, which was the subject of her PhD obtained in 2001.

**Dr. des. Vanessa Thompson**, Website

Vanessa Eileen Thompson is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Institute of Sociology at Goethe-University Frankfurt. She was previously a distinguished guest lecturer in Gender and Queer Studies at the University of Cologne, Germany and a fellow at the Department of Black Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Her research and teaching are focused on black studies, critical race and racism studies, post- and decolonial feminist theories and methodologies, gender and queer studies, critical criminology and security studies, and social movement theories.
**General Information**

**Seminar room:**
Seminar Building - SH 1.102 (accessible from 8 am to 8 pm every day)

**Duration of the seminars:**
28 hours (8*3.5 hours)

**Attendance:**
Participants have to attend at least 80 % of the classes.

**Evaluation/Exam:**
The exam will comprise a *presentation* and a short *response paper*. The *presentation* will relate to the topics of the sessions. Possible formats include poster, oral presentation, interview, etc. and will be discussed in detail during the sessions. The *response paper* will provide the space to reflect on the learning process during the summer school and connect the general topic to your own subjective experience. Possible subjects could be unanswered questions from the sessions, future study interests relating to the topic, etc. The paper should be about 3 pages (900 words).

Assessment and award of credit points will be on a pass/fail basis, no grades will be given.

**Credit Points:**
The participants will receive 4 CPs (corresponding to the morning lectures from 9am to 12.30pm and additional home learning).