# WGS 400: Women's Lives & Conditions in Central Europe: Focusing on Poland & the Czech Republic

Class Meets: Monday/Wednesday 12:40 – 2:20
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday/Thursday

## *Course Description*

The purpose of this class is to explore women's conditions and lives in Central Europe. This course will strive to develop an intersectional approach to analysis as well as be aware of the bias created by our own politics of location and relationship to the world. The relationship of the concept of feminism to socialism and communism will be developed and explored. This relationship will provide a basis for understanding women's current conditions in Central Europe. Poland and the Czech Republic will be used as the primary case studies for this class. The history and legacy of women in both of these countries will be explored in order to establish a basis for understanding their social and political history. This knowledge will be used as a tool of analysis to understand why the terms and concepts of western feminism have not always translated. The history and legacy of women in both countries, as well as their conditions once they became independent democracies after 1989, and the development of feminism and women's movements will be explored in order to gain a greater understanding of the different shapes women's lives take and the different sites for change in women's lives in Poland and the Czech Republic. Other countries, such as East Germany and Russia, will also be drawn upon. This course should facilitate an in-depth multilevel analysis and understanding of women's lives in Central Europe and the critical thinking skills that will be applicable for analysis of women's lives and conditions in different regions of the world.

## *Course Objectives*

Promote a classroom environment were everyone feels safe to learn and explore the content.
Understand the relationship of feminism to socialism.

Develop a set of critical thinking skills and tools to analyze women's conditions in different countries.
Develop a framework for viewing and understanding women's conditions in Central Europe.
Create a basis of understanding for how political concepts and ideas affect and influence individual's lives.

*More information on small group projects to follow.*

*Attendance* *50 points*

*27 times (o abs.) = 55 pts; 26 times (1 abs)=50 pts; 25 times (2 abs) = 42pts. 24 times (3abs)=34pts; 23times (4abs)=24 pts; 22 times (5abs)=16pts; 21 times (6abs)=6pts.*

*Anonymous Course Evaluations* *10 points*

## ***Attendance***

Attendance is a vital element to success in this class. It is important for students to attend class regularly and come to class prepared. Preparation means students have read the assigned reading, completed their postings for

Each student will be required to offers a 3-4-sentence response to a peer's posting on wise each week in addition to their posts. Reading everyone's weekly wise posting is encouraged, however, this assignment functions to ensure that students read at least one of their peers and actively thinks and engages with other classmates posting once a week. This should not take students more than 30 minutes to read and respond to a post.

**Concept Maps**

***Points: Each concept map will be worth 12 points. Total of 48 points for the semester.***

At the end of 4 of the 6 units, students will complete a concept map. The concept map will fill an 8 by 11-inch piece of paper. It will link together the concepts covered in the unit and within the class as a whole. The purpose of the concept map is to engage in an active learning practice instead of rote memorization. It will help students understand how concepts link and work together. Depending on the unit, these concepts maps may be completed in class. They are not intended to take the student more than 15-20 minutes.

**Take – Home Tests**

***Points: The total points for the test will be 100 points, divided between the tests depending on the number of questions on each test. Test will be handed out the Friday before they are due, questions will be addressed concerning the test the following Wednesday, and tests are due, hard copy, to my office by 5pm the Friday they are due unless otherwise arranged.***

Two take home tests will be administered during the course. These tests will require students to critically reflect on the material they have learned during the course. They will challenge the students to articulate the theories and perspective they have learned during the course as well as apply these theories and perspective to real life situations. The tests will require students to draw diagrams, concept maps, and write short answers. The goal of the tests will be for students to be able to apply and articulate the material they have learned during the course so they see and understand the applicability of the material to the world around them.

These tests should take no longer than an hour per questions to respond to. The tests may contain between 5-8 questions. This will require a commitment of at least five to eight hours from students. However, since these are take home tests the students should not have to invest additional study time if they have read the reading and been participating in class.

**Final Research Project**

***Points: Each research project 100 points.***

The final research project will be divided into mini- assignments along the way to ensure students stay on schedule and continually invest and work on the project. These projects will allow students to investigate a different international region, issue, or person. Students will have the option of looking into a particular issue or topic that interests them in a foreign country. Students will also have the option of studying a woman who interests them in one of the countries or regions covered in the course. Students will also have the option of research a non-profit organization and how it address issue in a particular country or region as well as how it functions. Further

information on possible topics and research areas will be provided around the 3rd week of class.

The course schedule for this semester is listed below. The readings listed need to be read by the date noted on the schedule. The schedule may change in response to the needs and interests of the class.

## ***Weekly Schedule***

### ***Introduction & Creating a Theoretical Perspective***

Syllabus, class policies, introductions

(W) Caren Kaplan, “The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Critical Practice” (Online)

Adrienne Rich, "Notes Towards a Politics of Location" (Online)

Learning Objective: You should begin to questions and examine the position and lens through which you examine the world. These readings should help create a basis of your own grounds for evaluations and allow you to see and expand upon these grounds.

Kolmar and Bartkowski, “Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender” 49-50 (FT)

Kimberle Crenshaw, “Intersectionality and Identity Politics” 533-42 (FT)

Choa, "Women & Socialism" 19-25 Women Under Communism (Online)

Heidi Hartman, The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union" 1-43 (Online)

Learning Objective: Develop a critical understanding of how socialism and Marxism shaped women's lives. Explore the complexity of the relationship of feminism to Marxism, and how these concepts worked against and with one another.

(M) Choa, "Women's Employment & the Disruption of Family Relationships (57-63) (On-line)

Learning Objective: Understand how the policies of socialist views of women were played out in individual women's lives in Central Europe in terms of their work and family relationships. Develop a greater understanding of the context of these women's lives and the legacy these women now share.

***Historical and Cultural Examination of Czech Women's Lives***

Petra Hanakova, "The Viscitudes of Czech Feminism"
1-5 (On-line)

Murray Weidenbaum, "An American Look at the Czech Republic: An economic outlook" 735-738 (Online)

Czech Republic: Survey on the Status of Women p. 1-4
Women's International Network News Autumn 2000 (Online)

***Research Proposal due at 5pm, hardcopy, to my office.***

Feminism in the Czech Republic: Post- Communism and Beyond
By: N.H. Lohrbeer p. 1-23

Feminism in the Czech Republic: Post- Communism and Beyond
By: N.H. Lohrbeer p. 23-53

Learning Objective: Wednesday will serve as an introduction into the social and political background of the Czech Republic. Monday and Wednesday will serve to

introduce more specifically women's historical conditions and activism in the Czech Republic.

### *Historical & Cultural Perspective of Polish Women's Lives*

Malgorzoata Fidelis, "Participation in the Creative Work of the Nation: Polish Women Intellectuals in the Cultural Construction of Female Gender Roles, 1864-1890" p. 108-125 (Online)

Anna Zarnowska, "Women's Political Participation in Inter-war Poland: Opportunities and Limitations" p. 57-65 (Online)

"Polish Women in the 90's" Sections 1-9.
http://temida.free.ngo.pl/rapcont.htm

Pawel Zalecki, "Religious Revival in Poland. New Religious Movements and the Roman Catholic Church" p. 66-80 (Pink, Purple, Green)

Learning Objective: Develop an understanding of women's historical and social conditions in Poland in order to foster an understanding the history of Polish women and the legacy Polish women have to draw on when they become a democracy again.

### *Feminism: Does it translate?*

"An Allergy to Feminism: Women's Movements Before and After 1989 " 182-215 (Cinderella Goes to Market) (Online)

Steven Saxonberg, "In the Shadow of Amicable Gender Relations? The Czech Republic" p. 33-46 (Pink, Purple, Green)

Jirina Sikolva, "Why Western Feminism Isn't Working in the Czech Republic" p. 1-7 (Online)

Marianne A Ferber & Phyllis Hutton Raabe, "Women in the Czech Republic: Feminism, Czech Style" p. 407-424 (Online)

***Test Due by 5pm to Office***

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "American Feminism and Pedagogy: The Case of Poland" p. 36-40 (Online)

Beth Holmgren, “Bug Inspectors and Beauty Queens: The Problems of Translating” 15-31 (Online)

citizenship in ‘transition’ in Poland” p. 57-65 (Online)

Ewa, Hauser, “Traditions of Patriotism, Questions of Gender: The Case of Poland” p. 78-104 (Post-Communism and the Body Politic)

Katja M. Guenther, “A Bastion of Sanity in a Crazy World”: A Local Feminist Movement and the Reconstitution of Scale, Space, and Place in an Eastern German City” p. 551-575 (Online)

Eva Kavkova, “The doom of Czech women’s organizing – accident or conspiracy?” p. 1 – 3 (Online)

Learning Objective: Understand and explore the evolution and social situations of women’s organizations in Central Europe post 1989. Take into consideration the social, cultural, and political history of this region as a tool of analysis for understanding the current state of women’s organizations and movements

Silke Roth, “Sisterhood and Solidarity? Women’s Organizations in the Expanded European Union” p. 460- 487 (Online)

***Test Due to Office by 5pm***

Learning Objective: Local and global communities are connected more today than ever before. It is important to understand the relationship of organizations such as the European Union and the United Nations to women’s conditions in individual countries. Consider how the European Union and the United Nations has both positive and negative affects on women’s lives in Central Europe.

Shana Penn, “Women’s Movements On-Line: The New Post-Socialist Revolution” p. 125-143 (Online)

Myra Marx Ferree and Tetyana Pudrovska, “Transnational Feminist NGOs on the Web: Networks and Identities in the Global North and South” p. 247- 274 (Online)

Myra Marx Ferre, “Globalization and Feminism: Opportunities and Obstacles for Activism in the Global Arena” p. 3-23 (Online)

Learning Objective: Explore the influence technology has had on women’s movements and non-profit organizations and the social inequality inherent in these systems. Think critically on the global relationship of feminism and the local conditions of women in Central Europe.

***Final Research Presentations***

***Final Projects due, 5pm hardcopy, to my office (50pts).***
***Course Evaluations due 5pm (10pts).***