Central European University, Department of Gender Studies

**The Uses of Comparative and Integrative Perspectives for Women’s and Gender Studies**
*A 2 credit Ph.D. course in Comparative Gender Studies*

Instructor: Susan Zimmermann
**Autumn term 2015**

*Location:* TBA
*Schedule:* Tuesdays, 3.30 p.m. – 5.10 p.m.

**Please prepare for unit 1 by:**
1. Reading the syllabus
2. Reading and preparing the texts indicated for the first unit.

**Syllabus**

**Description:**
This course, through the lens of comparative and integrative studies, aims to explore and critically discuss de-colonizing perspectives on gender and in gender studies around the world. These perspectives emerge from a dual process of transforming knowledge production. De-colonizing approaches to knowledge production simultaneously aim to de-universalize knowledge and theory with an unacknowledged focus on privileged world-regions and social strata, and to de-provincialize knowledge and theory related to dominated world regions and social strata which as a rule is deemed “particular”. In addition, these perspectives build on a critical reflection of how these two processes relate to each other.

In this way the course seeks to move beyond analytical fragmentation resulting from the construction and deconstruction of difference and diversity especially in Cultural, Gender, and Post-Colonial Studies and at the same time avoid a move backwards, i.e. towards non-negotiated (and therefore, in view of the interests, identities, and representation of many social groups, repressive or exclusive) universalisms. The course introduces scholarly perspectives with a potential to develop comprehensive understandings and analyses of change in social and symbolic fields without reverting to teleological leanings, and with the capacity to integrate our understandings of processes and moments of homogenization and differentiation characterizing related developments. One basic assumption framing the course is that we now live (and have lived for centuries) in a world of unequally entangled and shared history and development – a world in which gender was and is inevitably entan-
gled with other social and symbolic phenomena and constructions, a world in which change in the social and the symbolic order is inevitably interwoven, a world in which local, regional, and national “stories” are part of the global and can be understood only in a global perspective.

The course focuses on the construction, problems, possibilities, and “points of juncture” between major “schools” of comparative and integrative thinking in the humanities and social sciences and selected relevant and promising themes in Women’s and Gender Studies. The seminar group will work with some of the foundational texts introducing de-colonizing integrative, relational, and comparative perspectives into the social sciences and the humanities and will bring these texts into dialogue with some of the most sharply formulated writing in Gender Studies.

The first part of the course is devoted to the introduction and critical debate of theoretical, epistemological, and methodological perspectives on comparison and integration and the implications of these perspectives for current developments in the humanities and social sciences, including Gender Studies. The focus here is on theoretical and methodological literature and debate related to this theme.

The second and more extensive part of the course focuses on a critical examination of major trends and approaches as well as important themes and fields in comparative and integrative research in Gender Studies. In this part, in each unit we will first learn about and examine research examples of critical importance. We will then ‘go back’ to more theoretical and general writings related to the approaches and fields exemplified through these research examples. Finally, we will use what we have learned here for developing our wider perspectives on the integrative and comparative perspectives in the humanities and social sciences built in the first part of the course.

**Learning goals and outcomes:**

The aim of this course is to develop students’ interest and insights into perspectives and approaches in the social sciences and humanities which have the potential for meeting the scholarly demands described above, and their ability to critically relate to current debate and scholarly development in relevant research areas. At the end of this course, students should have gained differentiated and in depth knowledge about a variety of related scholarly perspectives; and they should be able to relate to these perspectives in an independent, critical, and productive manner in discussion and in their own writing.

Students are also invited early in the term to define, in writing, supplementary learning goals which they set for themselves, and to review their progress towards these learning goals at the end of the term.

The comparative and integrative component of our Ph.D. Program seeks to contribute to reshaping the relationship between the social and the academic world by explicitly reflecting social and political leanings and implications of scholarship in all
disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and by translating the critical attitudes of Gender Studies as related to hierarchy, injustice, and inequality in culture and the social world into a new type of high quality scholarship.

Independent, in-depth, and productive engagement with the readings (as supported by the instructor’s lectures) and the evaluation of the process of developing the seminar paper, as well as assessment of the final paper itself serve as key elements in measuring how students have achieved the learning goals of this class.

**Format and assignments:**

Students are required to engage (orally and in writing) in critical debate of the (short) lectures and the required reading. In addition, they will develop critical readings of their own field of studies through the lens of comparative and integrative approaches and will present their related ideas for discussion in class.

Reading and discussion of all reading is of pivotal importance for this course. Students are therefore required to carefully prepare for class by engaging, on different levels, with the required reading.

Early in the term students shall propose in writing (1 – 2 pages) a topic and an outline of their seminar paper. The paper must involve a comparative and/or integrative perspective and an analysis of primary material. Peer discussion in class of all proposals by all participants serves as a means to assess the understanding of “integrative and comparative perspectives” students have achieved after the introductory part of the course. Students will receive feedback on their seminar paper.

Participation in all class sessions is mandatory.

**Assessment:**

Development (draft paper proposal; discussion of all draft paper proposals; final paper proposal; final version of the seminar paper [20 – 25 pages, double-spaced]): 50%.

Written and oral summaries and discussion of the weekly required reading based on problem-oriented perspectives on the reading (and when appropriate with a focus on its relation to the theme of the student’s Ph.D. project), and related questions: 50%.

**Deadlines:**

Draft seminar paper proposal: Tuesday, 3 November 2015, submission of paper copy in class, and e-copy to all participants.

Final seminar paper proposal: Tuesday, 17 November 2015, submission of paper copy in class.

Final seminar paper: Friday, 8 January 2016, e-copy and paper copy.
Topics and required reading

Week 1 – Tuesday 22 September:
General Introduction
Required reading:
… and lecture component preparing for Week 2

I. Comparative and integrative perspectives in the Humanities and the Social Sciences

Week 2 – Tuesday 29 September:
Why integration – which integration?
Required reading:
… and lecture component preparing for Week 4

No class on Tuesday, 6 October!

Week 4 – Tuesday 13 October:
Why comparison – which comparison – doing comparison, part I
Required reading:
Diego Olstein, Thinking History Globally, Palgrave Macmillan 2015, chs 2 to 5.
… and lecture component preparing for Week 5

Week 5 – 20 October:
Why comparison – which comparison – doing comparison, part II
Required reading:
… and lecture component preparing for Week 6
Week 6 – Tuesday, 27 October:

**Doing integration**

Required reading:


... and lecture component preparing for Week 7

II. Key issues in integrative and comparative Gender Studies

Week 7 – Tuesday, 3 November

Draft seminar paper proposal due!

Entangled categories: gender, class, “race,” and place in the dynamics of social conflict

Required reading:


... and lecture component preparing for Week 9

Week 8 – Tuesday, 10 November

Group discussion of draft seminar paper proposals

Week 9 – Tuesday, 17 November

**Labor, paid and unpaid, global and local**

Required reading:


... and lecture component preparing for Week 10

Week 10 – Tuesday, 24 November:

**Which women - which struggle - which change?**

Required reading:


... and lecture component preparing for Week 11
Week 11 – Tuesday, 1 December:
Reproduction into Rights?
… and lecture component preparing for Week 12

Week 12 – Tuesday, 8 December:
Human rights: global interventionism and struggles for emancipation
Required reading: