

PSC 425 Discussion Questions

The F Word

1. What constitutes a women's movement?
2. In what ways do GS feminisms differ from those in the GN?
3. If "feminism may be seen as a luxury when the majority of the people are hungry," then how and why do feminist (or women's) movements emerge in many developing countries?
4. Why do many women's movements around the world avoid the feminist label?
5. Is the latest call to 'rebrand' the feminist movement the answer?
6. What is the biggest threat to feminism today? Why does she argue that men also have to be on board?

Economics, Labor, & Politics

1. What common issues do women candidates face in politics?
2. What common issues do women face in the workforce?
3. Women face very similar barriers regarding the workforce and political participation. What factors hinder women's participation in these sectors? Think in terms of political, economic, social factors, norms, and institutions.
4. What improvements and changes have helped women have better access to the political and economic sectors?

Development & Microfinance (MFI)

1. What challenges do poor people face that prevent them access to formal sector banking institutions?
2. How can Saudi Arabia benefit from women being able to drive? What barriers stand in the way realizing these benefits? Why does this matter beyond Saudi Arabia?
3. What promotes development advances? What are the persistent challenges?
4. What is the objective of microfinance and microfinance institutions (MFIs)?
5. How does microfinance work?
6. What are the pros of microfinance?
7. What are the cons of microfinance?
8. How can MFI promote development?
9. In what ways does MFI potentially undermine and/or forestall development?

Prostitution

Three main options for women in Thailand are handicrafts, prostitution, and factory work.

1. What are the pros and cons of each choice?
2. Under what conditions do women work in each of the sectors?
3. What global factors influenced why these are prime choices for women in Thailand?
4. What is the Thai government's official policy on prostitution? Is this a more realistic reflection on this activity?

Pornography Pt I

1. What is the ancient Roman's social view on sexually explicit artifacts? Why is this view the accepted social norm?
2. What is Victorian England's relationship to ancient Rome and Greece?
3. What is Victorian England's social view on sexually explicit artifacts?
4. How and why does this view contrast to that of ancient Rome and Greece?
5. What is the justification for the introduction of the term 'pornography' to the lexicon?
6. Why was the term redefined within 5 years to include 'licentious,' meaning lacking legal or moral restraint?
7. What distinction is made between the public and private?
8. What factors and vehicles helped to introduce and disseminate pornography?
9. Why was there a push in the US to regulate sexually explicit materials?
10. How is privatizing the sexual experience (with the advent of peep show booths, home videos, and continuing today with Internet access) very much in contrast with the ancient Roman public access to sexually explicit artifacts?
11. How different might the situation be regarding pornography if the Victorians didn't legalize the concept?

Pornography Pt II

1. In "A Cruel Edge," Jensen indicates that "men spend \$10 B on porn a year and that 11,000 new films are made every year. In those films, women are not people." What does he mean by this statement?
2. Why are women described as "three holes and two hands"?
3. What impact does pornography have on how men view and interact with women in the real world?
4. How has the pornography industry in the US gained political and legal power?
5. What is ATM and why is it in demand?
6. Why is it so difficult to accurately determine pornography profits?
7. Why is pornography difficult for most people to discuss in a public forum?
8. Is it possible to indulge in pornography and not oppress women?
9. Much of the material focused on the US. When discussing global women's issues, does it matter that the materials are US-centric?

Beauty & Culture

1. What influences set the norm for how a society perceives the idea/ideal of beauty?
2. What problems do we run into regarding culture?
3. What has influenced beauty norms in Africa, Brazil, and India?
4. How do the media, entertainment, business, and fashion industries promote (dictate?) ideas of beauty?
5. Why are eating disorders mostly a western phenomenon?

Women as Objects Pt I

1. How do dowries differ in different societies? What was traditionally the purpose of a dowry? How do dowries differ from bride price?
2. What factors influence son-preference? What hurdles do countries have to overcome to end son-preference?
3. What reasons are given to justify violent acts against women regarding dowries/bride price, honor killings, sex-selective abortions, and sexual harassment/assault? Think in terms of economic, social, and political factors.
4. What are the positive and negative effects of enacting government policies to ban dowries/bride price, honor killings, sex-selective abortions, and sexual harassment/assault?

Women as Objects Pt II

1. What reasons are given to justify violent acts against women regarding marriage and sexual identity? Think in terms of economic, social, and political factors.
2. What are the positive and negative effects of enacting government policies to promote women's rights in marrying/marriage and sexual orientation?
3. How does non-heterosexuality vary across cultures?
4. Why do governments adopt anti-gay laws?
5. Why do people and societies feel threatened by non-heterosexuality?
6. Why is non-heterosexuality a global gender issue?

Reproductive Health & Rights Pt I

1. What are the primary factors that control women's reproductive choice and health?
2. What are the consequences of limiting women's reproductive choice?
3. What factors impact the effectiveness of contraceptive methods?
4. What barriers hinder women's access to abortions?
5. What reasons are given for granting access to abortions?
6. Why are reproductive health and control transnational issues?

Reproductive Health & Rights Pt II

1. What is FGC?
2. What commonalities are there between places in the world where it is most commonly practiced?
3. What are the consequences of practicing FGC?
4. What rationale is given for FGC?
5. Why should we care?
6. How is breast-ironing a similar issue?
7. What is MHM?
8. What are the consequences of inaccessibility to MHM?
9. What is the rationale for exclusion during menstruation?
10. How are views about MHM changing? What support is there for MHM?
11. Why should we care?

World Religions

1. In what way do the five major world religions support or undermine women's status and power, in terms of their texts, rituals, leadership structure/positions, deity/deities, and religious laws? (You should be able to discuss each of these for each of the five religions- we will spend class time focusing on these)
2. For each of the five world religions, in what ways have women challenged those religious norms? What do they use to support their arguments?
3. How is religion a Catch-22 for women? Is it possible for a woman to be a religious adherent without reinforcing religious norms that subordinate women?