Women’s Political Identity in Making:
European Union and Gender Discourses
Warsaw, Poland
Summer 2006

Professor Joanna Regulska
Department of Women’s and Gender Studies
Rutgers University

The debates on “eastern” enlargement re-opened the post 1989 deliberations on gains and losses of the transition from communism to liberal democracy, market economy and western capitalism. The question of what specifically, will the “united” Europe bring or take away from countries in central and eastern Europe returned forcefully. Evoking “transition” discussions on the social, political, cultural and economic dimensions of transformations of central and eastern Europe after 1989, one is reminded of frequent claims by feminist scholars that women were not only marginalized in transformation discourse but that they also have been affected by the changes most severely. The recently completed eastern enlargement process echoed equally assertively lack of engagement with women’s concerns. Gender dimension, if and when included, was treated purely instrumentally by candidates’ countries. The EU institutional rhetoric on equal opportunities and equal treatment, while with long history, also wasn’t always ready to challenge states of incoming members.

Since 1957, when Article 119 was accepted as a part of the Treaty of Rome, the European Union commitment to women of member-states resulted in design and implementation of numerous gender related legislation, projects, lobbying, networking, training and other gender sensitive activities. These efforts focused, for example, on professional training, reconciliation of family and work responsibilities, questions of equality and equal treatment or provided support and benefits to lone mothers. As a result many of the EU members had to rethink and redefine their approaches and policies towards gender roles. The eastern enlargement of the EU forced new members’ states to accept many of the EU gender priorities, standards, and policies. Yet, despite EU concerns with gender equality as far as “old” member-states were concerned, the politics of gender was clearly marginalized and rather limited in the EU’s economically and politically charged debates on enlargement. In fact, gender neither played the determining and defining role in the current “eastern” enlargement, nor has it been situated as an important lens for the previous waves of the EU expansions. The question which obviously emerges now is what impact will enlargement have on women of the new member-states countries: how the EU commitment to gender equality will be concretely translated in the local context of Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary or any other new member-states? As the impacts of the EU enlargement are not limited only to the EU members, one may also want to explore how changes within the EU affect gender roles and gender policy-making in Georgia or Ukraine.
This seminar will explore these issues by looking at the ongoing debates on agency, power, presence and activities of women in politics at the supranational level and their activisms nationally, locally and transnationally. We will look specifically at the EU and its women-centered policies that have been developed over the last several decades and we will examine how these policies will or will not alter gender discourses in the new member states and beyond.

Requirements:

Requirements for this course include both the class participation (20%) and the final written assignment (80%). By participation, I mean, that you will come to class well prepared (you have thoroughly and thoughtfully read the assigned material), you will be ready to participate in the class discussion and twice you will facilitate such discussions. During each class, two students will be asked to facilitate class discussions and most likely each student will be at least twice discussion leader (depending on the class size this number may change).

By facilitation I mean that you will prepare in advance questions and points of interest that the entire class may want to discuss and that during the class you will lead the discussion, synthesize and respond to the reactions of others, and offer your own points of view. *I will ask that you do not provide long summaries of the readings as all students are expected to do readings in advance for each class.* In addition, after each of the two classes when you will be one of the lead discussant, you will be asked to prepare short reaction paper (2-3 pages). These reaction papers will be distributed to the rest of the class (I will create class email list), so all of you can have a written summary of class discussions and of your own thoughts. During the first class I will pass the sing-up sheet and each of you will be able to choose topics that are of greatest interest to you for both class discussion and reaction papers.

When preparing for the class (when preparing your reaction papers or as a discussion leader or just reading class assignments) you may try to focus on some of the following questions:

- What is the theoretical framework of this work? On what body of theory does the author build his/her arguments, what basic ideas does she/he use to frame/interpret the work?
- Who is the audience implicit and/or assumed?
- Are authors sensitive to differences between countries and are they taking into the account local circumstances?
- What topics/themes are being omitted and possibly why this is the case?
- What are the problems that women face? Are these problems unique to this particular group or are they more universal? Does this lead to the creation of new categorization of unified notion of women?
- How is diversity conceptualized? What is included and what remains excluded? Does this conceptualization apply to some women (selected groups), if yes to which?
• How social, cultural, economic and political circumstances can simultaneously open new opportunities and eliminate or minimize them? What influences the degree to which women can access/hold/exercise their power?
• What role different political actors do play - those who aim to advance women’s rights as well as those who remain neutral or do aim to weaken these rights?
• How new forms of governance (beyond nation-state) impact women’s rights framework? How these implications become visible and under what conditions, where?

In terms of the final written assignment, you will have certain degree of flexibility in choosing the topic. You may want to investigate one aspect of the EU gender-centered policy or you may want to look more specifically at the implications for women of the enlarged European Union, you may also want to address your chosen topic within the context of one specific country. Your paper can be theoretical in nature (e.g. explore the ongoing shift from nation-state to supranational level and its implications for role of state in advancing women’s rights or gender sensitive policies) and/or you can attempt to show how feminist practices have challenged theoretical debates and how, in turn, theory has molded the EU practices.

The two page outline of the final paper with selected bibliography (1 page) will be due by September 1. The final paper (pp. 15-20) will be due at the end of the semester.

Final grade will be based on:

Class participation 20%
Final written paper 80%

Contact Information:

You can contact me via email at:
My regular address - regulska@rci.rutgers.edu or in emergency - jreg@frdl.org.pl (only during July 11-22, when writing to this address please add in the subject: For Joanna).

Class Schedule and Readings

1. Introduction (July 11)

Europe, belonging and European identity: Who are we? Where do we belong? What shapes our identit(ies)?

2. Power: How we understand it and how we use it? (July 12)


Other Suggested Readings:


Sandoval, Chela. 2000. Methodology of the Oppressed, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. 66-78.9

3. Defining, Producing and Enacting Agency (July 13)

Add one piece
McNay L. 2000. Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory. Chapter 1 and 5.

Other Suggested Readings:


4. Gender and Citizenship (July 14)


Other Suggested Readings:


5. Women’s Movement within the EU and across Europe (July 15)

“Women’s Movement: Citizenship, Migration and Processes of European Integration”, Val Balding, Catherine Euler, Jana Hamer, Debbie Wigglesworth, in Women in the European Union, Pilar Ballarin, University of Granada (Spain), Catherine Euler, Leeds Metropolitan University (Great Britain) Nicky Le Feuvre, University of Toulouse-Le Mirail (France), Eeva Raevaara, University of Helsinki (Finland) http://www.helsinki.fi/science/xantippa/wee/wee24.html


Other suggested readings:

Trafficking in Women from Central and Eastern Europe, www.belgium.iom.int/STOPConference/Conference%20Papers/Trafficking%20in%20Women%20from%20Central%20and%20... -


6. EU Institutions and EU equality policies (July 18)

Gender, EU Institutions and Bodies (http://europa.eu.int/institutions/index_en.htm); (http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/links_en.html?eu)


Other Suggested Readings:


www.womenlobby.org “Gender Equality and legislation: European Legislation on Equality of women and Men”.  

“Gender Equality: Gender Mainstreaming”,  
(http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/gms_en.html#meta)


7. EU Eastern Enlargement and the Impact on Women (within and outside the EU borders) (July 19)

www.womenlobby.org “Women and the enlargement of the European Union”  


Other suggested readings:

8. Role of NGOs in Advancing Women’s Concerns (July 20)


Others Suggested Readings:


9. Visit to the Federation of Women and Family Planning (July 21)

Visit some of the following websites of women’s NGOs engaged in European women’s movement:

www.neww.org
www.womenlobby.org
http://www.eurosur.org/wide/

and find out at least two websites of women’s NGOs in your country that are also engaged in the European women’s movement.

This class will take place at

10. Women’s Rights in the Enlarged Europe (July 22)


Other Suggested Readings:

Anna Rotkirch, 1997. “Women's agency and the sexual revolution in Russia”. Paper presented at the research seminar on Women's Active Citizenship University of Joensuu, Dept of Social Policy and Philosophy, University of Helsinki (anna.rotkirch@helsinki.fi)
http://www.valt.helsinki.fi/staff/rotkirch/agency.html


NEWW Polska. “Women and European Union: Women from the 10 Candidate Countries about the EU – an overview of attitudes and opinions”.
