

IATL Academic Fellowship Interim Report Feminist Dissent Theory, Practice and Resistance

Aims of the project

The module Feminist Dissent: Theory, Practice and Resistance is designed as a direct intervention into and contribution towards deepening our understanding around two key issues of our time—a worldwide proliferation of fundamentalist religious movements and the global rise of conservative and racist populist movements in the context of the ongoing crises of capitalism and resources.

[Feminist Dissent](#) draws its inspiration from the journal that is based at Warwick. Learners will have the opportunity to be taught by an international collective of feminist activists, academics, and writers who are committed not just to writing about justice but also fighting for it.

The module aims to bridge the divide between real lived experiences, activists, and academic theoretical thinking, in order to create a different kind of critique and analyses that is absent from academic and popular discourse at the moment. We hope to encourage learners to uncover new ways of looking at the intersection between gender, racism and fundamentalism, and to underscore the importance of dissent as a crucial feminist strategy.

What we have done so far?

We have organised three seminars to pilot the viability of the format and technology. We opened two of these events up to a global audience who were able to send in their questions and comments to participate in the discussions remotely. This provided an opportunity for our students to not just learn from the seminar leader, and those in the classroom, but from a global community.

Seminar 1: Racism, Feminism and the Politics of Fundamentalism in Britain (Wednesday 5 December 2018)

Seminar Tutor: Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters

Pragna Patel is a founding member of the Southall Black Sisters (SBS), a non-profit service and campaigning organisation for black and ethnic minority women, with a focus on domestic violence, immigration, religious fundamentalism and racism. In 2011, the Guardian named her among the Top 100 Women: Activists and Campaigners. This seminar focused on the politics of feminism, racism and religious fundamentalism in Britain.



Seminar 2: Everyday Bordering: Gender, Race and Migration in an Intersectional Perspective (Wednesday 8 May 2019)
Seminar Tutor: Professor Nira Yuval-Davis

Nira Yuval-Davis is Professor Emeritus, Honorary Director of the Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB) at the University of East London. She has been the President of the Research Committee 05 (on Racism, Nationalism, Indigeneity and Ethnic Relations) of the International Sociological Association, founder member of Women Against Fundamentalism and the international research network on Women in Militarized Conflict Zones and has acted as a consultant for various UN and human rights organisations. Nira Yuval-Davis has won the 2018 International Sociological Association Distinguished Award for Excellence in Research and Practice.

This seminar explored contemporary bordering and the ways in which borders have moved from the margins into the centre of everyday lives. Connecting everyday bordering to the neo-liberal globalisation's double crisis of governability and governmentality, the seminar links everyday bordering to the rise of the autochthonic right and to the transformation of citizenship duties, transforming citizens to unpaid untrained borderguards. It also examines the spread of grey zones and limbo spaces in and outside the borders and the ways more and more people embody borders instead of crossing them.

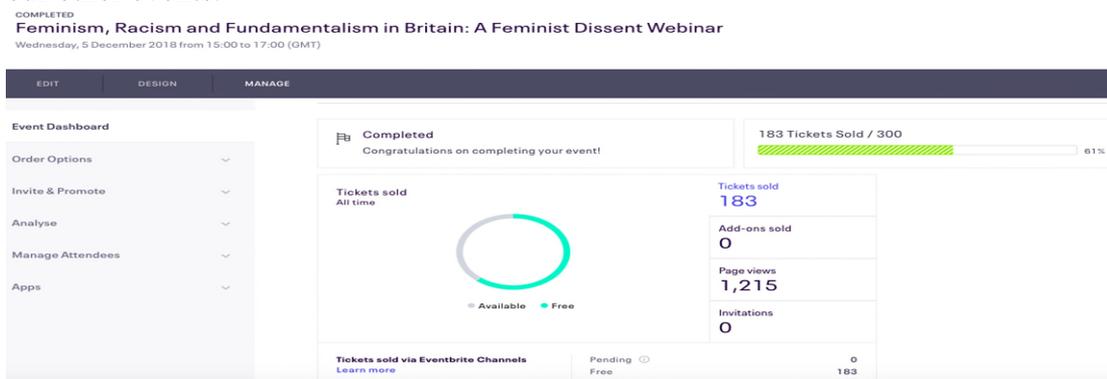
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Everyday Bordering: Gender, Race and Migration in an Intersectional Perspective

Seminar 3: Scholarship and Activism in Practice: A Feminist Dissent Lunch Workshop (Wednesday 5 June 2019)
Seminar Tutors: Dr Rashmi Varma and Dr Roxanne Bibizadeh

In this seminar we invited students who had participated in the earlier seminars or those interested in the module to be a part of the innovative design of our new interdisciplinary module. We encouraged the students to reflect and creatively respond to the following questions:

1. How can we create social impact and change through education?
2. What topics do you feel are missing from your current curricula?
3. How can we encourage discussion and debate both within the classroom and beyond Warwick?

We received an excellent response to our events. Within hours of advertising our first session 55 Warwick students signed up to participate in our first session. We had over 1200 eventbrite page views and 183 people external to Warwick signed up to eventbrite to join in live. On the day we had international activists join in with our first session, including activists from London and Nigeria (to name but a few) who sent in comments and questions live. We received similarly encouraging responses to our other events.



Recordings of the first two events have been edited and can be found here:
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/funding/fundedprojects/fellowships/bibizadeh-2/previousevents/

Key Emerging Ideas and Challenges

Feedback

In the first session we utilised Moodle to obtain feedback, and as an incentive to complete the short survey we offered a certificate for participation. Unfortunately, despite requests students did not complete the survey. In the second session we therefore opted for paper questionnaires that we circulated at the end of the session.

Some of the feedback we received includes:

“It was great to have the opportunity to listen to Nira Yuval-Davis who is one of the legendary academics for my generation.”

“I’ve been to the first feminist dissent seminar and would love to join future sessions”

“Nice to have varying perspectives from people all over the world. Really nice way to connect and learn.”

“Would have been very interested in the module if I wasn’t leaving this year!”

“Nira’s content was very fascinating and useful”

A few reported:

“Better sound/camera quality of course but still very enjoyable”

“Perhaps do online question submissions to avoid microphone issues”

“Audio was good but I think visually seeing the speaker would be better”

Technology

When we first began the project it was uncertain whether we would need to allocate funds to the purchase of the software Blackboard Collaborate to enable us to run webinars for a global live audience to participate remotely. After many meetings with the Academic Technology Team IT services decided to purchase the necessary software license so that this technology would be available to all members of staff on campus. Our module was to be a pilot for IT services support of this software. We did encounter some difficulties during our pilot webinars. In the first session some remote participants reported that the sound or video was not always clear, we are not sure whether there was a problem with the software or server in Warwick, or if this related to personal connection issues of the participants. In the second session, after many test sessions we could not get both the audio and visual working. We had to run the session with just audio. We intend to arrange further meetings with the Academic Technology team to discuss these issues and how best to proceed to avoid such issues in the future.

GDPR

I have been in discussions with the academic technology team, and in particular Amber Thomas to discuss concerns raised regarding GDPR. We discussed the format and delivery and how we might best enable remote participants to participate. One idea we arrived at was to ask external participants to apply online. Once accepted we could grant them temporary IT accounts that would enable them access to Moodle, where resources for the module would be stored, and they would also have the opportunity to continue discussion outside of the taught hours with all participants

both internal and external to Warwick. Additionally, we discussed whether we would record and live stream the first half of the taught session, and the discussion and activities after with Warwick students would not be streamed to ensure Warwick students felt comfortable to freely discuss the topics covered. Sharing the recordings globally online after was also discussed. We continue to discuss and research these options and we are in the process of creating an online application form.