

Teaching Activity: Gender in Western and Chinese Perspectives — Theoretical and Case Study Approach through the #MeToo Movement

Goal of the Activity

The goal of this activity is to help students critically compare Western and Chinese perspectives on gender equality by combining theoretical frameworks with empirical case studies.

Students will:

- Understand how feminist theories developed in different cultural contexts (Western and Chinese).
- Identify how these ideas shape social movements, particularly the #MeToo movement (**Xiong & Ristivojević – #MeToo in China (2021)**).
- Reflect on the interplay between global and local dimensions of gender discourse.

This activity fits within a broader course unit on **Gender, Power, and Society**, providing a comparative lens to examine transnational feminist thought and activism.

Prerequisites

Students should complete the following before class:

- **Readings:**
 - China File Conversation on the #MeToo Movement in China:
<https://www.chinafile.com/conversation/what-significance-of-chinas-metoo-movement>
- **Videos:**
 - Simone de Beauvoir – “*The Second Sex*” Explained
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byN71_NS0Ak&t=80s
 - He-Yin Zhen – “*On Feminism and Revolution*”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JstgekE4gIs>

Before this activity, students should already be familiar with basic concepts of feminism and gender equality, and they should know how to read short academic texts and participate in guided group discussions.

Pre-Class Activities

For Students:

- Watch the two assigned video lectures and complete a short formative online quiz (5–7 questions) assessing comprehension and reflection on main concepts.

- Read the paper on the #MeToo movement in China, taking notes on:
 - How activists framed the issue of gender equality.
 - How cultural and political context shaped the movement.

For Instructor:

- Prepare a quiz to identify key areas of misunderstanding.
- Prepare a short presentation (5–10 minutes) linking Beauvoir’s and He-Yin Zhen’s perspectives to the broader theoretical debates about equality, power, and autonomy.

In-Class Activities

Step 1: Opening Discussion (15 minutes)

- Students will take a quiz on the readings
- Instructor briefly revisits key concepts from Beauvoir and He-Yin Zhen and clarifies misunderstandings students may have had in the quiz activity.
- Class discussion: *“How do Western and Chinese feminist frameworks define equality and liberation differently?”*

Step 2: Group Work (30 minutes)

- Students are divided into small groups.
- Each group receives a short excerpt from the #MeToo paper (different actors, such as journalists, students, or policymakers).
- Discussion prompts:
 - How does the #MeToo movement reflect or challenge feminist theories discussed?
 - What are the similarities and differences between Western and Chinese feminist struggles?
 - How do censorship and digital activism affect gender movements in China?

Step 3: Group Presentations (20 minutes)

- Each group presents its findings in 5-minute summaries.
- Instructor facilitates connections across groups to highlight transnational dynamics and recurring themes (solidarity, censorship, cultural framing, etc.).

Post-Class Activities and Assessment

Activity:

- Students complete a short written reflection (250–300 words) reformulating one of the in-class discussion questions, integrating theoretical and empirical insights.

Assessment:

- **Formative:** Instructor provides brief written feedback on reflection papers, focusing on conceptual understanding and ability to connect theory and case.
- **Summative:** This reflection counts as participation credit or a short response assignment within the course’s ongoing assessment.

Materials

- PDF of the assigned reading on #MeToo in China (uploaded).
- YouTube video links:
 - [Simone de Beauvoir – The Second Sex](#)
 - [He-Yin Zhen – On Feminism and Revolution](#)
- PowerPoint slides (instructor’s theoretical overview).
- Quiz questions:

1. According to Xiong & Ristivojević (2021), what major obstacle did the #MeToo movement face in China?

- A. Lack of social media access
- B. Government censorship and control of online activism**
- C. Absence of educated women activists
- D. Widespread legal support for gender equality

2. How did #MeToo activists in China adapt their strategies under restrictive conditions?

- A. They moved their activism entirely offline
- B. They relied primarily on Western feminist organizations
- C. They used coded language and decentralized networks online**
- D. They focused on male allies to spread their message

3. Simone de Beauvoir’s statement that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” suggests that:

- A. Gender is socially constructed through experience and culture**
- B. Biological sex entirely determines gender identity
- C. Only Western societies have gender inequality
- D. Gender roles are natural and unchangeable

4. In “On Feminism and Revolution,” He-Yin Zhen argues that:

- A. Feminism can be achieved without social revolution
- B. Gender equality requires dismantling broader systems of economic and political oppression**
- C. Feminist movements should remain separate from class struggles
- D. Feminism is primarily a Western idea

5. How does the #MeToo movement in China illustrate the tension between global and local feminism?

- A. It shows that Western feminism easily replaces local movements
- B. It mirrors Western activism without change
- C. It rejects all global feminist discourse
- D. It demonstrates how global ideas are reinterpreted within specific cultural and political contexts**

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

1. Compare key ideas from Western and Chinese feminist thinkers.
2. Analyze how cultural and political contexts influence gender equality movements.
3. Apply feminist theory to a contemporary case study.
4. Reflect critically on transnational feminist solidarities and tensions.