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FEMINISMS IN A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE 2021

**Beyond the Ruins of  
Capitalism: Stolen  
Concepts, Deep Silences,  
Resurfaced Frictions**

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**14th Postgraduate Course  
Dubrovnik, IUC, May 24-28, 2021**

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FEMINISMS IN A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE 2021

# Beyond the Ruins of Capitalism: Stolen Concepts, Deep Silences, Resurfaced Frictions

Programme & Abstracts

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14th Postgraduate Course  
Dubrovnik, IUC, May 24-28, 2021

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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When in 2019 we chose the topic of our next feminist course “Beyond the Ruins of Capitalism”, following the book by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2015), we could not predict that this topic would be more relevant than ever before due to the multifold crisis caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. Given that, like most international gatherings, our IUC course could not be held in Dubrovnik this May, it will exceptionally be organized virtually via Zoom digital platform, in the same time slot (May, 24-28th). We are keeping the same analytical focus, but with a new sensitivity for the isolated, vulnerable and ‘plastic’ subjects many of us are becoming these days. On the other side, we do believe that the tectonic upheavals and the threat of emergency that has shaken up neoliberal states in all parts of the world, will give a new impetus to feminist agency and give strength to the thinking of radical change. However, a desire for radical thinking and radical social change was a common thread of all feminist seminars in Dubrovnik, which has been gathering activist women from Croatia and elsewhere in the world since 1999.

Before her death, feminist author and activist Kate Millett reflected upon her lifetime struggle with abject poverty as she was increasingly marginalized in the academy. Asking her readers, »who stole feminism?«, Millett voiced her anxieties that the feminist movement had been hijacked from within (1998). Her question continues to remain relevant today as we witness the growing oppression, silencing, and policing of those on the margins of academia (and beyond). The rise of attacks against 'gender ideology', particularly from the clerical edifice, demands a revisiting and rethinking of historical debates and contemporary engagements in feminist contributions across all disciplines. By highlighting poverty, urban deterioration, economic and ecological crises, the »ruins of capitalism« (Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, 2015) underscores the inability of capitalist society to protect its citizens and its cities. As national economic imperatives clash with the demands of globalized capital, we face the terrifying realities of late capitalism with the rise in viral pandemics, ecological destruction, warfare, or deindustrialization. Bearing witness to that, we would like to explore stolen concepts within feminist knowledge production, as well as the deep silences informed by the erasure of alternative genealogies of thought. By exploring the frictions in both traditions and epistemologies of feminist theory and engagement, can we reveal internal elements of epistemic violence as feminist fracture across identity and political lines?

The course intends to study such violence and, at the same time, to trace the elements of resistance and refusal of nihilism and self-destruction that seem to be haunting women everywhere, with an attention also to the postcolonial milieu, in terms of worldly migration, diasporic experience, disseminated exile and displacement. We would like to understand the imposed failures and, at the same time, to intersect the theories and practices of feminism engagement that value 'optimistic', affirmative, productive, theoretical, communal, and political new framings of life. In this sense, our focus will go to the counter-capitalist assemblages, the open-ended

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gatherings of potential herstories, the multiple and productive social and cultural rhythms that occur in the peripheries of capitalistic production, the forms of survival both in everyday contests or in forms of creative imagination, the feeling with the body and the senses, the changes within the specific circumstances of or with disturbed and contaminated human and non-human landscapes.

Given the shorter and condensed online format of our seminar this year, we invite young scholars and doctoral students to apply with short proposals (200 words) by March 8, 2021. The format will be 15-minute presentations and roundtables. Proposals may consider some of the following issues:

- the ambivalent impact of early capitalism on female agency and thought
  - humanisms, abolitionism and liberalism vs. feminist project
  - the feminist critique of theology
  - the historical rise of the nation and the limits and/or capacities of ‘political sisterhood’
  - the ‘ruins of socialism’ vis-a-vis the ‘ruins of capitalism’
  - the notions of ‘peripheries’ and ‘alternative margins’ vs ‘centers’ of capitalistic productions
  - postcolonial theories of philosophical engagement with worldly displacement and global dissemination
  - the analysis of ‘friction’, meaning diverse and conflictual social interactions, ‘encounters of difference’
  - feminist theories of the Anthropocene and feminist political alliances around ecological complexity
  - collaborative co-living of different species
  - the feminist materialistic ideas of ‘latent commons’ and ‘third nature’ (Tsing).
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# COURSE PROGRAMME

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## Monday, 24 May

Joint keynote lecture with the course *Feminist Critical Analysis*

15.30–17.00      **Zillah EISENSTEIN** (Ithaca College, USA)  
“Radicalizing the Left with Feminisms in 2021”

## Wednesday, 26 May

16:00–17:00      **Silvana CAROTENUTO** (Uni “L’Orientale”, Naples, Italy)  
Introduction + Short self-presentation by all participants

17:00–17:15      *Break*

17:15–19:00      **Film 4Waters – Deep Implicancy (2018) by Denise FERREIRA DA SILVA and Arjuna NEUMAN** followed by discussion with **da Silva** (Uni British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada)  
Discussion will be moderated by Silvana Carotenuto and Nabila Tavolieri

## Thursday, 27 May

Moderator: ..... Sandra PRENDA, CWS Zagreb

10:00–11:00      **Biljana KAŠIĆ** (Uni Zadar & CWS, Zagreb, Croatia)  
“Feminism Revisited: How Did *Women: the Longest Revolution* Emerge? An Analysis of Juliet Mitchell’s Classic Work”

11:00–11:15      *Discussion*

11:15–12:00      **Brigita MILOŠ** (Uni Rijeka, Croatia)  
“Who Does What?: On Academic Capitalism and Gender”

12:00–12:15      *Discussion*

12:15–16:00      *Break*

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## Afternoon session

Moderator:.....Renata JAMBREŠIĆ KIRIN, IEF Zagreb

- 16:00–16:45     **Jasmina TUMBAS** (Uni Buffalo, USA)  
“I Am Jugoslovenka!': Feminist Performance Politics During & After Yugoslav Socialism”
- 16:45–17:00     *Discussion*
- 17:00– 17:45     **Emanuela MALTESE** (Charles University Prague, Czech Republic)  
“‘Who Are We Now?’ Transnational Feminist Crossings, *Rasanblaj*, and Rememberings”
- 17:45–18:00     *Discussion*

## Friday, 28 May

Moderator:.....Lada ČALE FELDMAN, Uni of Zagreb

- 10:15–11:00     **Annalisa PICCIRILLO** (Uni “L’Orientale”, Naples, Italy)  
“Thinking/Dancing With Water: For a Feminist Ecology of Relationalities”
- 11:00–11:20     **Nabila TAVOLIERI** (Uni “L’Orientale”, Naples, Italy)  
“Performing Radical Art to Create a New Co-relational ‘Human Being’”
- 10:20–11:40     *Discussion*
- 11:40–12:00     Break
- 12:00–12.20     **Mirela DAKIĆ** (Uni Zagreb, Croatia)  
“Is Literature a Stolen Concept of Feminist Theory?”
- 12:20–12.40     **Alex HENNIG** (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)  
“Impossible Collaboration: Reading Modernist Critiques of Gender in the Twenty-first Century”
- 12:40–13:00     *Discussion*
- 13:00–16:00     *Break*
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## Afternoon session

Moderator:.....Nadia JONES GAILANI, CEU

16:00–16:20     **Roshanak AMINI** (Weißensee Kunsthochschule Berlin, Germany)  
“Once Upon a Time: Stories of Women’s Everyday Resistance in Iran”

16:20–16:40     **Katarina PAVIČIĆ IVELJA** (Uni Rijeka, Croatia)  
“(Un)productive Solidarity: What Can we Learn From the Kurdish Women’s Freedom Movement?”

16:40–17:00     *Discussion*

17:00–17:30     **Course evaluation (written form)**



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**ABSTRACTS**  
(Participants as listed in the Programme)

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**Special guest: Denise Ferreira da Silva, Ph.D.**

**Professor and Director of the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality  
and Social Justice at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver**

An academic and practicing artist, Dr. Denise Ferreira da Silva's work addresses the ethico-political challenges of the global present. She is the author of *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), *A Dívida Impagavel* (Oficina da Imagem Política and Living Commons, 2019), *Unpayable Debt* (Stenberg/MIT Press, forthcoming) and co-editor (with Paula Chakravartty) of *Race, Empire, and the Crisis of the Subprime* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). Her several articles have been published in leading interdisciplinary journals, such as *Social Text*, *Theory, Culture & Society*, *Social Identities*, *PhiloSOPHIA*, *Griffith Law Review*, *Theory & Event*, *The Black Scholar*, to name a few. Her artistic works includes the films *Serpent Rain* (2016) and *4Waters-Deep Implicancy* (2018), in collaboration with Arjuna Neuman; and the relational art practices *Poethical Readings and Sensing Salon*, in collaboration with Valentina Desideri.

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**Biljana Kašić, Ph.D.**

Centre for Women's Studies, Zagreb, Croatia

Full Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Zadar

**Feminism Revisited: How Did *Women: The Longest Revolution* Emerge?  
An Analysis of Juliet Mitchell's Classic Work**

What does the concept of the political as a radical, critical change mean today and how does it go with the struggle against women's oppression? Additionally, what is the role of 'speaking the unspoken' and through which corners of our contemporaneity does it arise, and in which ways could revolutionary theory be of relevance for fighting for freedom in a time where 'the revenge of capitalism's ruling class' generates extreme inequalities by governing, exploiting and colonizing human capital, namely humans, including the state of the Left, are but some of the questions seeking articulation once more.

Taking the text *Women: the Longest Revolution* (1966) written by Juliet Mitchell, one of the most influential figures of second-wave feminism and psychoanalytic theory, as a stimulating departure for feminist positioning today, I would like to elaborate further on the theoretical questions she posed, their relevance and their ambiguities. On the one hand, this text provided the clearest and sharpest account of women's position in the mid-1960s at the crossroads of socialist vs radical feminism in light of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), while on the other hand, it moved beyond their general assumptions offering instead in conjunction with a psychoanalytic lens and Marxist ideas a new visionary project of women's emancipation.

In order to revisit Juliet Mitchell's idea of "woman's estate," its materialist analysis and links to S. de Beauvoir and L. Althusser's thoughts on ideology, patriarchy and sexism as well as to Marxist insights into the dominant mode of production, I will endeavour to take into account the critical perspective of two contemporary thinkers, W. Brown and G. Ch. Spivak.

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**Brigita Miloš, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor at the Department of Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka

**Who Does What?: On Academic Capitalism and Gender**

The proposed presentation revolves around reflecting the notion of merit in the lens of the two ongoing processes within academia. Starting from the definition of academic capitalism as “the shift towards managerial authority, accountability to economic productivity standards, and quantitative performance auditing” (Ferree and Zippel, 2015), the presentation will propose an account on academic gender mainstreaming as an endeavour with ambivalent consequences, and especially so for genders regularly underrepresented on the major academic achievement scale. The main argument employs the notion of merit as a vital characteristic of an individual successful academic career and as a claimed prerequisite of broadly understood academic performance. The gender-blind perception of academic merit overlooks the “gender regime” (Connell, 2006) in academia, as in any other workplace circumstances that deeply contours the entire setting. What is imagined as a corrective treatment for such an overseeing, hardly reaches the causes of what it seeks to resolve. Moreover, the process of gender mainstreaming poses new and challenging questions regarding the current functioning of academic systems. One of the most fundamental mainstreaming processes is how the notion of equality/equity function “in an environment where competition policy prevailed, in-equality, not equality, was the *raison d’être*” (Thornton, 2013).

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**Jasmina Tumbas, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art History & Performance Studies,  
Department of Global Gender and Sexuality Studies, University at Buffalo

**“I Am Jugoslovenka!”: Feminist Performance Politics During  
& After Yugoslav Socialism**

My presentation presents part of my new book, *“I Am Jugoslovenka!” Feminist Performance Politics During & After Yugoslav Socialism* (currently under review), which reveals feminist and queer libidinal and sexualized elements of Yugoslav popular culture as central to the socialist project (1945–1992) through my invocation of the figure Jugoslovenka (Yugoslav woman) as a site of resistance in art and culture. Contrary to other histories of “the East” in Europe, this book offers a starkly divergent narrative of socialism: one that shows a vibrant feminist movement that centered around questions of gender and sexuality in the arts, along with a radical leftist politics of queer and trans resistance in the 1980s and 1990s that shaped anti-war, anti-nationalist, and anti-capitalist movements from the 1990s until today. The talk will engage some of the examples I discuss in detail in the book.

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**Emanuela Maltese, Ph.D.**

Ph.D. in Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World  
(Charles University Prague, Czech Republic)

currently: doctoral student at the Univerzita Karlova Prague

**“Who are we now?” Transnational Feminist Crossings, *Rasanblaj*, and Rememberings**

“Who are we now as women of color twenty years later? Have we lived differently? Loved differently? (...) Why do we need to remember?” With this set of questions, Trinidadian-born author, lesbian feminist, priestess, and poet M. Jacqui Alexander introduced her seminal *Pedagogies of Crossing* sixteen years ago, trying to interrogate colonialism, political economy, and racial and gender formations through a transnational perspective. Today, “almost twenty years later,” the same question resonates as an urging to (continue to) re-member our lives (yet) otherwise, and look for life in the “ruin that has become our collective home.” (Anna Tsing)

My presentation will delve into the evolution and legacy of transnational feminism from and with Alexander’s remembering in *Pedagogies* to and with Haitian *rasanblaj*, or the practice of gathering and assembling (as proposed by anthropologist Gina Ulysse) with a focus on the spiritual dimension, and the “we/them” as mode of addressing our presents/futures, and staying with the pandemic. In particular, through a contrapuntal and fugitive reading of *The Whale Fall* (2021), a video piece by African-American performer Mayfield Brooks, I will try to foreground the incredible resistance coming from the Crossing (the Middle Passage) and the Ocean with its ancestors and “them,” undrowned creatures, who can teach us the touch of love out of death, carcasses and ruins.

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**Annalisa Piccirillo, Ph.D.**

Post-doc Research Fellow at the Department of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Naples “L’Orientale” and co-organizer of the activities of the Centre for Postcolonial and Gender Studies

**Thinking/Dancing With Water: For a Feminist Ecology of Relationalities**

*Water permeates our bodies, but our bodies also permeate the vast and intricate choreography of water that comprises our greater world.*

Astrida Neimanis

In *Bodies of Water* (2017), Astrida Neimanis offers a new critical approach for feminist political alliances around ecological complexity. If water is the element that, more than any other, interconnects human beings with the world around them – from the oceans that surround us, to the water that constitutes our bodies – is it possible, then, to explore new modes for understanding our corporealities as ‘bodies of water’ being part of a more connected existence to other species and subjects? What does it mean thinking/choreographing ‘with’ water?

With these questions in mind, I would like to consider the cultural, corporeal and political implications developed by Neimanis, and extend these to the choreographic transnational perspective. In this sense, I will investigate the hydrofeminist logic that some contemporary dance practitioners adopt for choreographing ways of being in relation – in ‘contact’ through and across difference – with the environment, with each other and with different species.

Water is also a ‘planetary archive’ and a retainer of/for? memory. I’ll finally refer to the tragic memories currently retained by the Mediterranean’s waters – with its dramatic images of migrant bodies floating in the sea – only to prove the urgency to perform the ‘sustainability’ of alternative corporeal memories for practices of co-existence and of hospitality.

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**Mirela Dakić**

PhD student, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb

### **Is Literature a Stolen Concept of Feminist Theory?**

In the framework of the seminar, we will consider the possibilities of understanding literature as the stolen concept of feminist theory. The paper will polemicize with the hypothesis stated in a comprehensive overview of contemporary feminist theory offered by Toril Moi (2008), the author of the first Anglophone introduction to feminist literary theory, who more than two decades after its publication claims that literature and aesthetics had become marginal topics in feminist theory since the 1990s onwards, compared to their central place in the field during the last couple of decades, primary in the Anglo-American and French intellectual and academic milieu. While many classics of feminist criticism are since then published in new editions, containing commentaries on the current feminist scene, the question is in which measure do researches and approaches in the literary studies inspired by feminist criticism now offer a subsequent view of their theoretical, critical and conceptual background, along or despite the divisions like Anglo-American – French, humanist – post-structuralist, metaphysical – political, sociological – poetic (Eagleton 2005)? We will regard the potential causes for the assumption of the disappearance of literature from the feminist horizon, as well as the potentials of blurred margins between feminist theory and literary studies for the actual broader questions and concerns of feminist theory.

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**Alex Hennig**

MA student at Freie Universität Berlin (English Studies; Thesis working title: "Agricultural Modernism: Production, Consumption, Collection")

**Impossible Collaboration: Reading Modernist Critiques of Gender in the Twenty-first Century**

A lot has been said on what Djuna Barnes and Mina Loy are or are not: while neither became feminist icons during their lifetime, scholarship has actively engaged in a corrective to reconsider their individual values within twentieth-century feminist "herstories." Meanwhile, both remain controversial figures within feminism: Barnes's disavowal of her incorporation into queer, lesbian or feminist endeavours is infamously documented, while Loy's oeuvre incorporates aspects regularly denoted as "problematic."

My proposed paper approaches Barnes's and Loy's critiques of gender under the notion of collaboration: I read Loy's play "Rosa," penned under the pseudonym "Bjuna Darnes," and Barnes's *Ladies Almanack*, in which Loy appears as "Patience Scalpel," in dialogue with each other and as instances of producing critiques of gender and sexuality as collaborative practice. Ultimately, my argument points to a broader issue within our methodologies of reading and understanding texts. Specifically, I want to highlight how our access to texts—whether as researchers in the field of "literature" or as consumers of the publishing industry—dates back to an idea of authorship as derived from (male) "genius" and erases the possibility of collaboration structurally.

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## **Nabila Tavolieri**

**Master's Degree in "Languages and Intercultural Communication in the Euromediterranean Area" (Thesis: Black and radical thought praxis: Sylvia Wynter, Denise Ferreira da Silva, and art experiments; University of Naples L'Orientale)**

### **Black Studies, Women Philosophies, and Contemporary Art: The Invention of 'Co-Relational Humanity'**

In my degree thesis entitled "Radical Thought and Praxis: Sylvia Wynter, Denise Ferreira da Silva, and the Experimentations of Black Art," I analysed the radicality of the cultural philosophies of two black female scholars, then creating a connection with the aesthetic practices of some black women artists, within the Black Studies framework. Considering the main subject of my thesis, I would like to give my contribution in the area of 'postcolonial theories of philosophical engagement with worldly displacement and global dissemination', focusing on some themes that I hope will prove relevant to the call of the course.

Focussing on 'western epistemology', which reiterates anthropocentrism, capitalism, and racism, the claim of my intervention is that Wynter and Da Silva's critiques urge for the confrontation with the ruins of Capitalism as the radical deconstruction and reconstruction of what it means to be 'human'. According to their critical and political positions, humanity should be theorized anew by abandoning the appeal to the universal notion of reason, questioning the ontological basis of the modern white subject. Every human being would thus become a single supra-temporal and supra-spatial manifestation of all humanity, a 'co-relational' subject.

The area where I imagine that such critique is already taking place is the arena of black female art, the creative space for a series of radical praxes that overturn the colonial and post-colonial dynamics, assigning to the black subaltern the power to determine the reality, the body and the self, using the power of the creativity and imagination. For this reason, I will finish my intervention with a series of visual poetics that embody the radicality of black feminist thinking.

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**Roshanak Amini**

Masters in Arts-Raumstrategien, Weißensee Kunsthochschule, Berlin/Germany

### **Once Upon a Time: Stories of Women's Everyday Resistance in Iran**

In Iran, the body, especially the female body, is often rendered without expression and only vehicular. Resistance in such a totalitarian state takes unique forms. Women in Iran have been carving out spaces of their own, shifting norms for what is acceptable behavior for women in public. Boundaries are constantly pushed and the lines that divide the private and public have become blurred. In April of 2019 I embarked on my MA field research in Tehran for five weeks. During this time, I collected and archived over 30 stories of everyday resistance and solidarity amongst the women. These instances and interactions which I documented consist of creative techniques of resistance devised and employed by the women in Iran, for and within its oppressive system., During my presentation, we will explore through different methods the techniques of women's everyday resistance. As Lola, a member or Precarious Workers Brigade said in the book *The Force of Listening*: "In a way a story empowers another story, if somebody says something that somebody else would not say because of fear of exposure, he or she will feel subsequently empowered to say more and share his/her own story." So let me tell you a story...

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**Katarina Pavičić-Ivelja**

PhD student, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Rijeka, Croatia

### **(Un)productive Solidarity: What Can we Learn From the Kurdish Women's Freedom Movement?**

Due to the significant military contributions of Rojava's Women's Protection Units (YPJ) in the war against ISIS, the ideology behind this remarkable entity seems to have started spreading far outside the borders of Syria. Even though said ideology did not originate strictly within the YPJ and has, in similar forms, long been present in, not only Rojava (west/Syrian Kurdistan), but also in Bakur (north/Turkish Kurdistan), Başur (south/Iraqi Kurdistan) and Rojhelat (east/Iranian Kurdistan), the ongoing Syrian war has sparked the most intense wave of internationalisation the Kurdish women's movement has seen to date. Despite some of its specificities with regards to Kurdish women in the context of the liberation struggle, the ideology in question has shown a great degree of applicability regardless of ones' ethnic or national origins. The aforementioned has consequently caused numerous women's movements around the world to adopt this model (to a greater or lesser degree, depending on specific cases) and express various modes of solidarity with the Kurdish women's liberation struggle. However, in numerous Western countries, expressions of solidarity often seem more like attempts at becoming 'the voice of the voiceless' instead of amplifying the voices of those with whom solidarity is expressed. Such behaviour often manifests through the 'western gaze', subjecting the Kurdish movement and its principles of women's liberation – which are at their core anticapitalist, antipatriarchal, anticolonial and antihyperindividualist – to the evaluation criteria imposed by Western neoliberal democracies which possess exactly the opposite characteristics. The evaluation of anti-system ideologies within the system's framework often leads to judging non-western ideologies such as that behind the Kurdish women's movement as perpetually inferior, thus inhibits effective solidarity and internationalization. This work aims to further analyze the phenomenon of the western gaze in the context of internationalizing the women's liberation struggle and propose effective modes of solidarity that would result in putting western and non-western women's movements on equal footing, making yet another step towards creating an international, unified women's liberation movement.

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**Barbara Ravbar**

**The Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb**

Ravbar will audit only (she is planning to apply for a PhD program).

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## List of participants with mail contacts

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