Feminist Fronts: Invention of Gendered Traditions of War

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Abstract:

The proposed project Feminist Fronts is an examination of critical geopolitics through a feminist lens. Normative geopolitical discourse often ignores the radical politics that is enacted on multiple fronts such as the body, home and community. To this end Feminist Fronts examines policy through a cultural lens by way of the discourses of the Cold War, the War on Terror and The New Military. The research, which is underway, utilizes a range of oral histories, visual and archival sources, including government documents and evidence from popular culture. My position as Department Head of Women’s Studies was accompanied with a research fund, which allowed me to do extensive data collection over the last three years. To this end, all field and archival research will be completed by August 2007 and I expect the book to be completed during the sabbatical year.

As a geographer I have had a long-standing interest in how national landscapes perpetuate gender stereotyping in order to sustain war. As a result, feminists now argue that the landscape not only reflects certain moral codes but also performs as medium to sustain socially constructed gender stereotyping. I am interested in the moral systems, which are created by encoding a landscape with conventional signs of such things as group membership and social status. In this sense morality is “located” in practices that implement commonly shared understandings about who gets to do what. To this end, this project is interested in identifying a gendered “sustainability” which helps facilitate terms just as “just wars” and “patriotism”. The proposed book, Feminist Fronts, will examine how individual women and men were/are viewed as ethical or deviant as their actions were interpreted by way of adaptation or transgression of a sustained national moral landscape.