

WSTB10 Women, Power, Protest (Fall 2015).
Instructor: Dr. Anup Grewal, University of Toronto

These two assignments using the riseupfeministarchive.ca were part of a second year course in Women and Gender Studies called *Women, Power, Protest*. The course took a broad approach, examining different individual and collective actions and/or reflections on those actions that spoke to the theme of ‘women, power, protest.’ I was interested in having students think about the relationship among those terms in a complex manner, as well as recognizing ‘protest’ to be varied in form, content and medium. The goal was to have students develop a critical lens as well as a celebratory understanding of all forms of ‘women’s protest’.

Some sections we covered, included: Feminist Practices and Strategies; Transnational Feminist Praxis; Globalisation and Regimes of Labour; Feminism and Environmental Justice; Art of Protest; Pussy Riot and Riot Grrl; Reconfiguring publics in the 21st Century; From the Arab Spring to Black Lives Matter; Bodies in Resistance; and Challenging the Beauty Regime. We worked with historical and contemporary material from North America, South Asia, East Asia, Europe and the U.K.

The assignment on the publications section of the **Rise UP** archive offered students a concrete body of activist work, and a concrete form (print media) to study. The students enjoyed browsing through the archive and were interested in the historical perspective the magazines provided. They were often surprised that ‘women back then’ were discussing the issues they were. The group work presentations went very well, and students shared their sense of discovery of the different types of content and form expressed in the magazines. The written assignments were not as successful, mostly because the students were unable to structure their thoughts coherently, but also because of a basic lack of understanding of the type of material the magazines presented. It was not so obvious in the group presentations, but many students did not grasp the idea of a magazine, seeing it as an alien, rather ancient, form. I was surprised by this. There was also some confusion over terminology such as ‘articles’, ‘issues,’ ‘volumes,’ etc. I realised that much more preparatory work would be needed for students to really be able to engage with the archive in a sophisticated manner.

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Women Rise Up: Toronto/Canada Socialist and Radical Women's Magazine's Archive

PART I: Group Presentation (20%)

Assignment: Going through an archive publication on your own (during reading week), working together as a group, and presenting the results of your discussion to the class.

The *Women Rise Up* is a group of scholars and activists in Toronto who have started to digitize the magazine publications of the Toronto and Canadian feminist movement from the 1970s to the 1990s. The first set of magazines they have collected and digitized are of those self-identified as socialist or radical feminist. This archive is still being developed and is not publically available. We have been given special permission to have a sneak preview and to work with the archive. There are so far only five complete sets of publications (and their runs were not that long). Therefore, I will divide the class into 5 groups and assign each group one publication to go through and analyse. The goal of looking at these magazines is to develop a sense of the landscape of feminist politics and practice historically and geographically, by focusing on a set of Canadian (and mostly Toronto) publications

*I will ask that *each individual member* of the group go through and study the publication on their own first during reading break and then *come together as a group* in class on October 21 to have a discussion and prepare for a group presentation.

*I will ask you to consider the following 6 questions about your group's publication, and which you can use as a guide for how you present the publication to the rest of the class:

1. Does the publication present a specific vision of feminism and the goals of feminism? If so, how would you characterize this vision?
2. How is the publication a site of activism, organizing, community building or consciousness-raising? How would you characterize that activism (what issues, debates etc)? Who is the 'community' it is trying to reach? Any questions/problems about how this 'community' is projected?
3. Who are the editors and contributors? And who do you think are the intended audiences? How are these intended audiences projected and 'called forth' in the publication?
4. What forms of expression and types of work are published in the magazine (essays, letters, drawings, poems, announcements/advertisements, cartoons, journalism, commentaries, photography etc)? Is there a range of different styles and forms of expression? Is this range (or lack of) important for the type of feminist vision the publication projects? How does each type of expression project a certain idea of feminism (for example, think about the covers of your publication – any images? What kind? If not, what type of font, spacing, colour, etc?)
5. What type of issues does the content address? What understanding of the types of issues and debates around feminism, gender relations and systems does the content reveal? What does it reveal about the concerns of feminist activists in its particular time? What do you think about the content of the publication? What issues are relevant today and which might not be? Do you see any problems with the vision, idea of feminism or issues raised in this publication (what are they and why do you think they are problematic?) Can you connect the content of your publication to any of the other feminist histories and movements we have studied so far?
6. How do you see this publication as a historical document? What kind of lens into Canadian history might it provide? What kind of lens into Canadian or global feminist history might it provide?

PREPARING FOR THE GROUP DISCUSSION AND GROUP PRESENTATION

Individual Prep:

Individually, browse the publication and think about the questions above. Note down your own ideas and what you would like to discuss with your group. Also think about which issue # of the publication you would like to write about for your individual writing assignment and take more notes on that one.

Group discussion:

Each group will come together (and hopefully at least one of you will have a computer!), and discuss the findings and responses to the publication. You will come up with a way to present it to the class (see below). In preparation, think of illustrative content that you can use to give us a sense of the publication as a whole and what you wish to say about it.

Group presentations:

For your group presentation, I would like to see each member speak, with one person introducing the publication and giving us a general sense of what you discovered about it as a group, and then other group members taking up the questions above. You can use the projector to show images, or article titles or anything else from the publication (max 5 slides), but do not create any long text heavy slides. Your entire presentation can only be 10-15 minutes (I will stop you at 15 minutes!). We will have a 10- minute discussion with the whole class after each presentation.

Grading of presentations:

The group presentation is worth 20% of your final grade. I will be looking for evidence that you did indeed work together as a group and shared ideas and plans for the presentation. I will be looking to see that every member of the group takes a turn to speak during the time of the presentation and that each person's statement is linked to what the others spoke about. I will be assessing the group on how well they introduce the publication they worked with and how well they present what they address the questions above. Finally, I will be assessing the group on how they address questions from the audience.

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PART TWO: Women Rise Up Publications: Individual Write-Up Assignment (20%)

Length: 1,000-1,200 words

Due date:

Submission Instructions:

Please submit your paper online through the specified essay dropbox on the course blackboard site. Please put your name on the first page (there is no need for a separate title page), as well as the group number you worked with and the title of the publication. Please double-space and use a 12-point font (preferably Times New Roman). Please also number all your pages. Late papers will receive a 2% penalty per day for 5 days. After that the grade will be 0.

Assignment Instructions:

The goal of this assignment is for each individual group member to write a reflective essay on the publication they worked on for the group presentation. You may use the following questions as the basis of your critical reflection.

1. Does the publication present a specific vision of feminism and the goals of feminism? If so, how would you characterize this vision?
2. How is the publication a site of activism, organizing, community building or consciousness-raising? How would you characterize that activism (what issues, debates etc)? Who is the 'community' it is trying to reach?
3. What forms of expression and types of work are published in the magazine (essays, letters, drawings, poems, announcements/advertisements, cartoons, journalism, commentaries, photography etc)? Is there a range of different styles and forms of expression? Is this range (or lack of) important for the type of feminist vision the publication projects?
4. What type of issues does the content address? What understanding of the types of issues and debates around feminism, gender relations and systems does the content reveal? What does it reveal about the concerns of feminist activists in its particular time? What do you think about the content of the publication? What issues are relevant today and which might not be?
5. Do you see any problems with the vision, idea of feminism or issues raised in this publication (what are they and why do you think they are problematic?) Can you connect the content of your publication to any of the other feminist histories and movements we have studied so far?
6. How do you see this publication as a historical document? What kind of lens into Canadian history might it provide? What kind of lens into Canadian or global feminist history might it provide?

Do *not* answer each question one by one in a question-answer format. *Rather*, integrate your thoughts on the questions into your reflection as a whole, as you highlight what you find most interesting and significant about the publication you worked with. I expect this reflection to be in the style of a short, formal essay; in other words, please include a short introduction that highlights your general impression of the publication and what aspects you will discuss in the rest of the essay. In the body of the paper, develop each point with examples from the publication. End with a conclusion that reflects again on what you have presented in the essay. The best approach will be to focus on one of the issues (for example, v. 3, issue 9, December 1989) of the publication. Look at this issue closely and consider how it reflects the characteristics of the publication as a whole – as you discussed with your group. Use well-selected examples from this issue to illustrate your points. The most successful papers will also be able to bring in a reflection of the publication in light of the other group presentations (that means listening carefully to the presentations by the other groups).