

# History and theory of feminism

The term feminism can be used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism involves political and sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference, as well as a movement that advocates gender equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests. Although the terms "feminism" and "feminist" did not gain widespread use until the 1970s, they were already being used in the public parlance much earlier; for instance, Katherine Hepburn speaks of the "feminist movement" in the 1942 film *Woman of the Year*.

According to Maggie Humm and Rebecca Walker, the history of feminism can be divided into three waves. The first feminist wave was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second was in the 1960s and 1970s, and the third extends from the 1990s to the present. Feminist theory emerged from these feminist movements. It is manifest in a variety of disciplines such as feminist geography, feminist history and feminist literary criticism.

Feminism has altered predominant perspectives in a wide range of areas within Western society, ranging from culture to law. Feminist activists have campaigned for women's legal rights (rights of contract, property rights, voting rights); for women's right to bodily integrity and autonomy, for abortion rights, and for reproductive rights (including access to contraception and quality prenatal care); for protection of women and girls from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape; for workplace rights, including maternity leave and equal pay; against misogyny; and against other forms of gender-specific discrimination against women.

During much of its history, most feminist movements and theories had leaders who were predominantly middle-class white women from Western Europe and North America. However, at least since Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech to American feminists, women of other races have proposed alternative feminisms. This trend accelerated in the 1960s with the Civil Rights movement in the United States and the collapse of European colonialism in Africa, the Caribbean, parts of Latin America and Southeast Asia. Since that time, women in former European colonies and the Third World have proposed "Post-colonial" and "Third World" feminisms. Some Postcolonial Feminists,

such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, are critical of Western feminism for being ethnocentric. Black feminists, such as Angela Davis and Alice Walker, share this view.

## History

Simone de Beauvoir wrote that "the first time we see a woman take up her pen in defense of her sex" was Christine de Pizan who wrote *Epitre au Dieu d'Amour* (Epistle to the God of Love) in the 15th century. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and Modesta di Pozzo di Forzi worked in the 16th century. Marie Le Jars de Gournay, Anne Bradstreet and Francois Poullain de la Barre wrote during the 17th.

Feminists and scholars have divided the movement's history into three "waves". The first wave refers mainly to women's suffrage movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (mainly concerned with women's right to vote). The second wave refers to the ideas and actions associated with the women's liberation movement beginning in the 1960s (which campaigned for legal and social rights for women). The third wave refers to a continuation of, and a reaction to the perceived failures of, second-wave feminism, beginning in the 1990s.

## First wave

First-wave feminism refers to an extended period of feminist activity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the United Kingdom and the United States. Originally it focused on the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women and the opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women (and their children) by their husbands. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, activism focused primarily on gaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage. Yet, feminists such as Voltairine de Cleyre and Margaret Sanger were still active in campaigning for women's sexual, reproductive, and economic rights at this time. In 1854, Florence Nightingale established female nurses as adjuncts to the military.

In Britain the Suffragettes and, possibly more effectively, the Suffragists campaigned for the women's vote. In 1918 the Representation of the People Act 1918 was passed granting the vote to women over the age of 30 who owned houses. In 1928 this was extended to all women over twenty-one. In the United States, leaders of this movement included Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony,

who each campaigned for the abolition of slavery prior to championing women's right to vote; all were strongly influenced by Quaker thought. American first-wave feminism involved a wide range of women. Some, such as Frances Willard, belonged to conservative Christian groups such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Others, such as Matilda Joslyn Gage, were more radical, and expressed themselves within the National Woman Suffrage Association or individually. American first-wave feminism is considered to have ended with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1919), granting women the right to vote in all states.

The term first wave was coined retrospectively after the term second-wave feminism began to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as political inequalities.

## Second wave

Second-wave feminism refers to the period of activity in the early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s. The scholar Imelda Whelehan suggests that the second wave was a continuation of the earlier phase of feminism involving the suffragettes in the UK and USA. Second-wave feminism has continued to exist since that time and coexists with what is termed third-wave feminism. The scholar Estelle Freedman compares first and second-wave feminism saying that the first wave focused on rights such as suffrage, whereas the second wave was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as ending discrimination.

The feminist activist and author Carol Hanisch coined the slogan "The Personal is Political" which became synonymous with the second wave. Second-wave feminists saw women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures.

## Simone de Beauvoir and The Second Sex

The French author and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir wrote novels; monographs on philosophy, politics, and social issues; essays; biographies; and an autobiography. She is now best known for her metaphysical novels, including *She Came to Stay* and *The Mandarins*, and for her treatise *The Second Sex*, a detailed analysis of women's oppression and a foundational tract of contemporary feminism. Written in 1949, its

English translation was published in 1953. It sets out a feminist existentialism which prescribes a moral revolution. As an existentialist, she accepted Jean-Paul Sartre's precept existence precedes essence; hence "one is not born a woman, but becomes one." Her analysis focuses on the social construction of Woman as the Other. This de Beauvoir identifies as fundamental to women's oppression. She argues women have historically been considered deviant and abnormal and contends that even Mary Wollstonecraft considered men to be the ideal toward which women should aspire. De Beauvoir argues that for feminism to move forward, this attitude must be set aside.

## The Feminine Mystique

Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) criticized the idea that women could only find fulfillment through childrearing and homemaking. According to Friedan's obituary in the *The New York Times*, *The Feminine Mystique* "ignited the contemporary women's movement in 1963 and as a result permanently transformed the social fabric of the United States and countries around the world" and "is widely regarded as one of the most influential nonfiction books of the 20th century." In the book Friedan hypothesizes that women are victims of a false belief system that requires them to find identity and meaning in their lives through their husbands and children. Such a system causes women to completely lose their identity in that of their family. Friedan specifically locates this system among post-World War II middle-class suburban communities. At the same time, America's post-war economic boom had led to the development of new technologies that were supposed to make household work less difficult, but that often had the result of making women's work less meaningful and valuable.

## Women's Liberation in the USA

The phrase "Women's Liberation" was first used in the United States in 1964 and first appeared in print in 1966. By 1968, although the term Women's Liberation Front appeared in the magazine *Ramparts*, it was starting to refer to the whole women's movement. Bra-burning also became associated with the movement, though the actual prevalence of bra-burning is debatable. One of the most vocal critics of the women's liberation movement has been the African American feminist and intellectual Gloria Jean Watkins (who uses the pseudonym "bell hooks") who argues that this movement glossed over race and class and thus failed to address "the issues that divided women."

She highlighted the lack of minority voices in the women's movement in her book *Feminist theory from margin to center* (1984).

## Third wave

Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s, arising as a response to perceived failures of the second wave and also as a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. Third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which (according to them) over-emphasize the experiences of upper middle-class white women.

A post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality is central to much of the third wave's ideology. Third-wave feminists often focus on "micro-politics" and challenge the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females. The third wave has its origins in the mid-1980s. Feminist leaders rooted in the second wave like Gloria Anzaldua, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other black feminists, sought to negotiate a space within feminist thought for consideration of race-related subjectivities.

Third-wave feminism also contains internal debates between difference feminists such as the psychologist Carol Gilligan (who believes that there are important differences between the sexes) and those who believe that there are no inherent differences between the sexes and contend that gender roles are due to social conditioning.

## Post-feminism

Post-feminism describes a range of viewpoints reacting to feminism. While not being "anti-feminist," post-feminists believe that women have achieved second wave goals while being critical of third wave feminist goals. The term was first used in the 1980s to describe a backlash against second-wave feminism. It is now a label for a wide range of theories that take critical approaches to previous feminist discourses and includes challenges to the second wave's ideas. Other post-feminists say that feminism is no longer relevant to today's society. Amelia Jones wrote that the post-feminist texts which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s portrayed second-wave feminism as a monolithic entity and criticized it using generalizations.

One of the earliest uses of the term was in Susan Bolotin's 1982 article "Voices of the Post-Feminist Generation," published in *New York Times Magazine*. This article was based on a number of interviews with women who largely agreed with the goals of feminism, but did not identify as feminists.

Some contemporary feminists, such as Katha Pollitt or Nadine Strossen, consider feminism to hold simply that "women are people". Views that separate the sexes rather than unite them are considered by these writers to be sexist rather than feminist.'

In her book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, Susan Faludi argues that a backlash against second wave feminism in the 1980s has successfully re-defined feminism through its terms. She argues that it constructed the women's liberation movement as the source of many of the problems alleged to be plaguing women in the late 1980s. She also argues that many of these problems are illusory, constructed by the media without reliable evidence. According to her, this type of backlash is a historical trend, recurring when it appears that women have made substantial gains in their efforts to obtain equal rights.

Angela McRobbie argues that adding the prefix post to feminism undermines the strides that feminism has made in achieving equality for everyone, including women. Post-feminism gives the impression that equality has been achieved and that feminists can now focus on something else entirely. McRobbie believes that post-feminism is most clearly seen on so-called feminist media products, such as *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Sex and the City*, and *Ally McBeal*. Female characters like Bridget Jones and Carrie Bradshaw claim to be liberated and clearly enjoy their sexuality, but what they are constantly searching for is the one man who will make everything worthwhile.

## French feminism

French feminism refers to a branch of feminist thought from a group of feminists in France from the 1970s to the 1990s. French feminism, compared to Anglophone feminism, is distinguished by an approach which is more philosophical and literary. Its writings tend to be effusive and metaphorical, being less concerned with political doctrine and generally focused on theories of "the body." The term includes writers who are not French, but who have worked substantially in France and the French tradition such as Julia Kristeva and Bracha Ettinger.

In the 1970s French feminists approached feminism with the concept of *écriture féminine*, which translates as female, or feminine writing. Helene Cixous argues that writing and philosophy are phallogentric and along with other French feminists such as Luce Irigaray emphasizes "writing from the body" as a subversive exercise. The work of the feminist psychoanalyst and philosopher, Julia Kristeva, has influenced feminist theory in general and feminist literary criticism in particular. From the 1980s onwards the work of artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger has influenced literary criticism, art history and film theory. However, as the scholar Elizabeth Wright pointed out, "none of these French feminists align themselves with the feminist movement as it appeared in the Anglophone world."

## Theoretical schools

Feminist theory is an extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields. It encompasses work in a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, economics, women's studies, literary criticism, art history, psychoanalysis and philosophy. Feminist theory aims to understand gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. While providing a critique of these social and political relations, much of feminist theory focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interests. Themes explored in feminist theory include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression and patriarchy.

The American literary critic and feminist Elaine Showalter describes the phased development of feminist theory. The first she calls "feminist critique," in which the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind literary phenomena. The second Showalter calls "gynocriticism," in which the "woman is producer of textual meaning" including "the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career and literary history." The last phase she calls "gender theory," in which the "ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system" are explored. The scholar Toril Moi criticized this model, seeing it as an essentialist and deterministic model for female subjectivity that fails to account for the situation of women outside the West.



## Movements and ideologies

Several submovements of feminist ideology have developed over the years; some of the major subtypes are listed below. These movements often overlap, and some feminists identify themselves with several types of feminist thought.

### Anarcha

Anarcha-feminism (also called anarchist feminism and anarcho-feminism) combines anarchism with feminism. It generally views patriarchy as a manifestation of involuntary hierarchy. Anarcha-feminists believe that the struggle against patriarchy is an essential part of class struggle, and the anarchist struggle against the State. In essence, the philosophy sees anarchist struggle as a necessary component of feminist struggle and vice-versa. As L. Susan Brown puts it, "as anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist".

Important historic anarcha-feminists include Emma Goldman, Federica Montseny, Voltairine de Cleyre and Lucy Parsons. In the Spanish Civil War, an anarcha-feminist group, Mujeres Libres ("Free Women") linked to the Federacion Anarquista Iberica, organized to defend both anarchist and feminist ideas.

Contemporary anarcha-feminist writers/theorists include Germaine Greer, L. Susan Brown and the eco-feminist Starhawk. Contemporary anarcha-feminist groups include Bolivia's Mujeres Creando, Radical Cheerleaders, the Spanish anarcha-feminist squat La Eskalera Karakola, and the annual La Rivolta! conference in Boston.

### Socialist and Marxist

Socialist feminism connects the oppression of women to Marxist ideas about exploitation, oppression and labor. Socialist feminists think unequal standing in both the workplace and the domestic sphere holds women down.[59] Socialist feminists see prostitution, domestic work, childcare and marriage as ways in which women are exploited by a patriarchal system that devalues women and the substantial work they do. Socialist feminists focus their energies on broad change that affects society as a whole, rather than on an individual basis. They see the need to work alongside not just men, but all other groups, as they see the oppression of women as a part of a larger pattern that affects everyone involved in the capitalist system.



Marx felt when class oppression was overcome, gender oppression would vanish as well. According to some socialist feminists, this view of gender oppression as a subclass of class oppression is naive and much of the work of socialist feminists has gone towards separating gender phenomena from class phenomena. Some contributors to socialist feminism have criticized these traditional Marxist ideas for being largely silent on gender oppression except to subsume it underneath broader class oppression. Other socialist feminists, many of whom belong to Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist Party, two long-lived American organizations, point to the classic Marxist writings of Frederick Engels and August Bebel as a powerful explanation of the link between gender oppression and class exploitation.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century both Clara Zetkin and Eleanor Marx were against the demonization of men and supported a proletarian revolution that would overcome as many male-female inequalities as possible. As their movement already had the most radical demands of women's equality, most Marxist leaders, including Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai, counterposed Marxism against feminism, rather than trying to combine them.

## Radical

Radical feminism considers the male controlled capitalist hierarchy, which it describes as sexist, as the defining feature of women's oppression. Radical feminists believe that women can free themselves only when they have done away with what they consider an inherently oppressive and dominating patriarchal system. Radical feminists feel that there is a male-based authority and power structure and that it is responsible for oppression and inequality, and that as long as the system and its values are in place, society will not be able to be reformed in any significant way. Some radical feminists see no alternatives other than the total uprooting and reconstruction of society in order to achieve their goals.

Over time a number of sub-types of Radical feminism have emerged, such as Cultural feminism, Separatist feminism and Anti-pornography feminism. Cultural feminism is the ideology of a "female nature" or "female essence" that attempts to revalidate what they consider undervalued female attributes. It emphasizes the difference between women and men but considers that difference to be psychological, and to be culturally constructed rather than biologically innate. Its critics assert that because it is based on

an essentialist view of the differences between women and men and advocates independence and institution building, it has led feminists to retreat from politics to “life-style” Once such critic, Alice Echols (a feminist historian and cultural theorist), credits Redstockings member Brooke Williams with introducing the term cultural feminism in 1975 to describe the depoliticisation of radical feminism.

Separatist feminism is a form of radical feminism that does not support heterosexual relationships. Its proponents argue that the sexual disparities between men and women are unresolvable. Separatist feminists generally do not feel that men can make positive contributions to the feminist movement and that even well-intentioned men replicate patriarchal dynamics. Author Marilyn Frye describes separatist feminism as "separation of various sorts or modes from men and from institutions, relationships, roles and activities that are male-defined, male-dominated, and operating for the benefit of males and the maintenance of male privilege – this separation being initiated or maintained, at will, by women".

## Liberal

Liberal feminism asserts the equality of men and women through political and legal reform. It is an individualistic form of feminism, which focuses on women’s ability to show and maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. Liberal feminism uses the personal interactions between men and women as the place from which to transform society. According to liberal feminists, all women are capable of asserting their ability to achieve equality, therefore it is possible for change to happen without altering the structure of society. Issues important to liberal feminists include reproductive and abortion rights, sexual harassment, voting, education, "equal pay for equal work", affordable childcare, affordable health care, and bringing to light the frequency of sexual and domestic violence against women.

## Black

Black feminism argues that sexism, class oppression, and racism are inextricably bound together. Forms of feminism that strive to overcome sexism and class oppression but ignore race can discriminate against many people, including women, through racial bias. The Combahee River Collective argued in 1974 that the liberation of black women entails freedom for all people, since it would require the end of racism, sexism, and class oppression. One of the theories that evolved out of this movement was Alice

Walker's Womanism. It emerged after the early feminist movements that were led specifically by white women who advocated social changes such as woman's suffrage. These movements were largely white middle-class movements and had generally ignored oppression based on racism and classism. Alice Walker and other Womanists pointed out that black women experienced a different and more intense kind of oppression from that of white women.

Angela Davis was one of the first people who articulated an argument centered around the intersection of race, gender, and class in her book, *Women, Race, and Class*. Kimberle Crenshaw, a prominent feminist law theorist, gave the idea the name Intersectionality while discussing identity politics in her essay, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color".

## Postcolonial and third-world

Postcolonial feminists argue that oppression relating to the colonial experience, particularly racial, class, and ethnic oppression, has marginalized women in postcolonial societies. They challenge the assumption that gender oppression is the primary force of patriarchy. Postcolonial feminists object to portrayals of women of non-Western societies as passive and voiceless victims and the portrayal of Western women as modern, educated and empowered.

Postcolonial feminism emerged from the gendered history of colonialism: colonial powers often imposed Western norms on colonized regions. In the 1940s and 1950s, after the formation of the United Nations, former colonies were monitored by the West for what was considered "social progress". The status of women in the developing world has been monitored by organizations such as the United Nations and as a result traditional practices and roles taken up by women—sometimes seen as distasteful by Western standards—could be considered a form of rebellion against colonial oppression. Postcolonial feminists today struggle to fight gender oppression within their own cultural models of society rather than through those imposed by the Western colonizers.

Postcolonial feminism is critical of Western forms of feminism, notably radical feminism and liberal feminism and their universalization of female experience. Postcolonial feminists argue that cultures impacted by colonialism are often vastly different and should be treated as such. Colonial oppression may result in the glorification of pre-

colonial culture, which, in cultures with traditions of power stratification along gender lines, could mean the acceptance of, or refusal to deal with, inherent issues of gender inequality. Postcolonial feminists can be described as feminists who have reacted against both universalizing tendencies in Western feminist thought and a lack of attention to gender issues in mainstream postcolonial thought.

Third-world feminism has been described as a group of feminist theories developed by feminists who acquired their views and took part in feminist politics in so-called third-world countries. Although women from the third world have been engaged in the feminist movement, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Sarojini Sahoo criticize Western feminism on the grounds that it is ethnocentric and does not take into account the unique experiences of women from third-world countries or the existence of feminisms indigenous to third-world countries. According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, women in the third world feel that Western feminism bases its understanding of women on "internal racism, classism and homophobia". This discourse is strongly related to African feminism and postcolonial feminism. Its development is also associated with concepts such as black feminism, womanism, "Africana womanism", "motherism", "Stiwanism", "negofeminism", chicana feminism, and "femalism".

## Multiracial

Multiracial feminism (also known as "women of color" feminism) offers a standpoint theory and analysis of the lives and experiences of women of color. The theory emerged in the 1990s and was developed by Dr. Maxine Baca Zinn, a Chicana feminist and Dr. Bonnie Thornton Dill, a sociology expert on African American women and family.

## Libertarian

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Classical liberal or libertarian feminism conceives of freedom as freedom from coercive interference. It holds that women, as well as men, have a right to such freedom due to their status as self-owners."

There are several categories under the theory of libertarian feminism, or kinds of feminism that are linked to libertarian ideologies. Anarcha-feminism (also called anarchist feminism or anarcho-feminism) combines feminist and anarchist beliefs,

embodying classical libertarianism rather than contemporary conservative libertarianism. Anarcha-feminists view patriarchy as a manifestation of hierarchy, believing that the fight against patriarchy is an essential part of the class struggle and the anarchist struggle against the state. Anarcha-feminists such as Susan Brown see the anarchist struggle as a necessary component of the feminist struggle. In Brown's words, "anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist". Recently, Wendy McElroy has defined a position (which she labels "ifeminism" or "individualist feminism") that combines feminism with anarcho-capitalism or contemporary conservative libertarianism, arguing that a pro-capitalist, anti-state position is compatible with an emphasis on equal rights and empowerment for women. Individualist anarchist-feminism has grown from the US-based individualist anarchism movement.

Individualist feminism is typically defined as a feminism in opposition to what writers such as Wendy McElroy and Christina Hoff Sommers term, political or gender feminism. However, there are some differences within the discussion of individualist feminism. While some individualist feminists like McElroy oppose government interference into the choices women make with their bodies because such interference creates a coercive hierarchy (such as patriarchy), other feminists such as Christina Hoff Sommers hold that feminism's political role is simply to ensure that everyone's, including women's, right against coercive interference is respected. Sommers is described as a "socially conservative equity feminist" by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Critics have called her an anti-feminist.

## Standpoint

Since the 1980s, standpoint feminists have argued that feminism should examine how women's experience of inequality relates to that of racism, homophobia, classism and colonization. In the late 1980s and 1990s postmodern feminists argued that gender roles are socially constructed, and that it is impossible to generalize women's experiences across cultures and histories.

## Post-structural and postmodern

Post-structural feminism, also referred to as French feminism, uses the insights of various epistemological movements, including psychoanalysis, linguistics, political theory (Marxist and post-Marxist theory), race theory, literary theory, and other

intellectual currents for feminist concerns. Many post-structural feminists maintain that difference is one of the most powerful tools that females possess in their struggle with patriarchal domination, and that to equate the feminist movement only with equality is to deny women a plethora of options because equality is still defined from the masculine or patriarchal perspective.

Postmodern feminism is an approach to feminist theory that incorporates postmodern and post-structuralist theory. The largest departure from other branches of feminism is the argument that gender is constructed through language. The most notable proponent of this argument is Judith Butler. In her 1990 book, *Gender Trouble*, she draws on and critiques the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan. Butler criticizes the distinction drawn by previous feminisms between biological sex and socially constructed gender. She says that this does not allow for a sufficient criticism of essentialism. For Butler "woman" is a debatable category, complicated by class, ethnicity, sexuality, and other facets of identity. She states that gender is performative. This argument leads to the conclusion that there is no single cause for women's subordination and no single approach towards dealing with the issue.

In *A Cyborg Manifesto* Donna Haraway criticizes traditional notions of feminism, particularly its emphasis on identity, rather than affinity. She uses the metaphor of a cyborg in order to construct a postmodern feminism that moves beyond dualisms and the limitations of traditional gender, feminism, and politics. Haraway's cyborg is an attempt to break away from Oedipal narratives and Christian origin-myths like Genesis. She writes: "The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust."

A major branch in postmodern feminist thought has emerged from the contemporary psychoanalytic French feminism. Other postmodern feminist works highlight stereotypical gender roles, only to portray them as parodies of the original beliefs. The history of feminism is not important in these writings - only what is going to be done about it. The history is dismissed and used to depict how ridiculous past beliefs were. Modern feminist theory has been extensively criticized as being predominantly, though not exclusively, associated with Western middle class academia. Mary Joe Frug, a postmodernist feminist, criticized mainstream feminism as being too narrowly focused and inattentive to related issues of race and class.

## Environmental

Ecofeminism links ecology with feminism. Ecofeminists see the domination of women as stemming from the same ideologies that bring about the domination of the environment. Patriarchal systems, where men own and control the land, are seen as responsible for the oppression of women and destruction of the natural environment. Ecofeminists argue that the men in power control the land, and therefore they are able to exploit it for their own profit and success. Ecofeminists argue that in this situation, women are exploited by men in power for their own profit, success, and pleasure. Ecofeminists argue that women and the environment are both exploited as passive pawns in the race to domination. Ecofeminists argue that those people in power are able to take advantage of them distinctly because they are seen as passive and rather helpless. Ecofeminism connects the exploitation and domination of women with that of the environment. As a way of repairing social and ecological injustices, ecofeminists feel that women must work towards creating a healthy environment and ending the destruction of the lands that most women rely on to provide for their families.

Ecofeminism argues that there is a connection between women and nature that comes from their shared history of oppression by a patriarchal Western society. Vandana Shiva claims that women have a special connection to the environment through their daily interactions with it that has been ignored. She says that "women in subsistence economies, producing and reproducing wealth in partnership with nature, have been experts in their own right of holistic and ecological knowledge of nature's processes. But these alternative modes of knowing, which are oriented to the social benefits and sustenance needs are not recognized by the capitalist reductionist paradigm, because it fails to perceive the interconnectedness of nature, or the connection of women's lives, work and knowledge with the creation of wealth."

However, feminist and social ecologist Janet Biehl has criticized ecofeminism for focusing too much on a mystical connection between women and nature and not enough on the actual conditions of women.

## Society

The feminist movement has effected change in Western society, including women's suffrage; greater access to education; more nearly equitable pay with men; the right to initiate divorce proceedings and "no fault" divorce; and the right of women to make



individual decisions regarding pregnancy (including access to contraceptives and abortion); as well as the right to own property.

## Civil rights

From the 1960s on the women's liberation movement campaigned for women's rights, including the same pay as men, equal rights in law, and the freedom to plan their families. Their efforts were met with mixed results. Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include, though are not limited to: the right to bodily integrity and autonomy; to vote (universal suffrage); to hold public office; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to own property; to education; to serve in the military; to enter into legal contracts; and to have marital, parental and religious rights.

In the UK a public groundswell of opinion in favour of legal equality gained pace, partly through the extensive employment of women in men's traditional roles during both world wars. By the 1960s the legislative process was being readied, tracing through MP Willie Hamilton's select committee report, his Equal Pay for Equal Work Bill, the creation of a Sex Discrimination Board, Lady Sear's draft sex anti-discrimination bill, a government Green Paper of 1973, until 1975 when the first British Sex Discrimination Act, an Equal Pay Act, and an Equal Opportunities Commission came into force. With encouragement from the UK government, the other countries of the EEC soon followed suit with an agreement to ensure that discrimination laws would be phased out across the European Community.

In the USA, the US National Organization for Women (NOW) was created in 1966 with the purpose of bringing about equality for all women. NOW was one important group that fought for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). This amendment stated that "equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex." But there was disagreement on how the proposed amendment would be understood. Supporters believed it would guarantee women equal treatment. But critics feared it might deny women the right be financially supported by their husbands. The amendment died in 1982 because not enough states had ratified it. ERAs have been included in subsequent Congresses, but have still failed to be ratified.

In the final three decades of the 20th century, Western women knew a new freedom through birth control, which enabled women to plan their adult lives, often making way for both career and family. The movement had been started in the 1910s by US

pioneering social reformer Margaret Sanger and in the UK and internationally by Marie Stopes.

The United Nations Human Development Report 2004 estimated that when both paid employment and unpaid household tasks are accounted for, on average women work more than men. In rural areas of selected developing countries women performed an average of 20% more work than men, or an additional 102 minutes per day. In the OECD countries surveyed, on average women performed 5% more work than men, or 20 minutes per day. At the UN's Pan Pacific Southeast Asia Women's Association 21st International Conference in 2001 it was stated that "in the world as a whole, women comprise 51% of the population, do 66% of the work, receive 10% of the income and own less than one percent of the property".

## CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international convention adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Described as an international bill of rights for women, it came into force on 3 September 1981. Several countries have ratified the Convention subject to certain declarations, reservations and objections. Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Qatar, Nauru, Palau, Tonga and the United States have not ratified CEDAW. Expecting a U.S. Senate vote, NOW has encouraged President Obama to remove U.S. reservations and objections added in 2002 before the vote.

## Language

Gender-neutral language is a description of language usages which are aimed at minimizing assumptions regarding the biological sex of human referents. The advocacy of gender-neutral language reflects, at least, two different agendas: one aims to clarify the inclusion of both sexes or genders (gender-inclusive language); the other proposes that gender, as a category, is rarely worth marking in language (gender-neutral language). Gender-neutral language is sometimes described as non-sexist language by advocates and politically-correct language by opponents.

## Heterosexual relationships

The increased entry of women into the workplace beginning in the twentieth century has affected gender roles and the division of labor within households. Sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild in *The Second Shift* and *The Time Bind* presents evidence that in two-career couples, men and women, on average, spend about equal amounts of time working, but women still spend more time on housework. Feminist writer Cathy Young responds to Hochschild's assertions by arguing that in some cases, women may prevent the equal participation of men in housework and parenting.

Feminist criticisms of men's contributions to child care and domestic labor in the Western middle class are typically centered around the idea that it is unfair for women to be expected to perform more than half of a household's domestic work and child care when both members of the relationship also work outside the home. Several studies provide statistical evidence that the financial income of married men does not affect their rate of attending to household duties.

In *Dubious Conceptions*, Kristin Luker discusses the effect of feminism on teenage women's choices to bear children, both in and out of wedlock. She says that as childbearing out of wedlock has become more socially acceptable, young women, especially poor young women, while not bearing children at a higher rate than in the 1950s, now see less of a reason to get married before having a child. Her explanation for this is that the economic prospects for poor men are slim, hence poor women have a low chance of finding a husband who will be able to provide reliable financial support.

Although research suggests that to an extent, both women and men perceive feminism to be in conflict with romance, studies of undergraduates and older adults have shown that feminism has positive impacts on relationship health for women and sexual satisfaction for men, and found no support for negative stereotypes of feminists.

## Religion

Feminist theology is a movement that reconsiders the traditions, practices, scriptures, and theologies of religions from a feminist perspective. Some of the goals of feminist theology include increasing the role of women among the clergy and religious authorities, reinterpreting male-dominated imagery and language about God,

determining women's place in relation to career and motherhood, and studying images of women in the religion's sacred texts.

Christian feminism is a branch of feminist theology which seeks to interpret and understand Christianity in light of the equality of women and men. Because this equality has been historically ignored, Christian feminists believe their contributions are necessary for a complete understanding of Christianity. While there is no standard set of beliefs among Christian feminists, most agree that God does not discriminate on the basis of biologically-determined characteristics such as sex. Their major issues are the ordination of women, male dominance in Christian marriage, and claims of moral deficiency and inferiority of abilities of women compared to men. They also are concerned with the balance of parenting between mothers and fathers and the overall treatment of women in the church.

Islamic feminism is concerned with the role of women in Islam and aims for the full equality of all Muslims, regardless of gender, in public and private life. Islamic feminists advocate women's rights, gender equality, and social justice grounded in an Islamic framework. Although rooted in Islam, the movement's pioneers have also utilized secular and Western feminist discourses and recognize the role of Islamic feminism as part of an integrated global feminist movement. Advocates of the movement seek to highlight the deeply rooted teachings of equality in the Quran and encourage a questioning of the patriarchal interpretation of Islamic teaching through the Quran, hadith (sayings of Muhammad), and sharia (law) towards the creation of a more equal and just society.

Jewish feminism is a movement that seeks to improve the religious, legal, and social status of women within Judaism and to open up new opportunities for religious experience and leadership for Jewish women. Feminist movements, with varying approaches and successes, have opened up within all major branches of Judaism. In its modern form, the movement can be traced to the early 1970s in the United States. According to Judith Plaskow, who has focused on feminism in Reform Judaism, the main issues for early Jewish feminists in these movements were the exclusion from the all-male prayer group or minyan, the exemption from positive time-bound mitzvot, and women's inability to function as witnesses and to initiate divorce.

The Dianic Wicca or Wiccan feminism is a female focused, Goddess-centered Wiccan sect; also known as a feminist religion that teaches witchcraft as every woman's right. It is also one sect of the many practiced in Wicca.

## Theology

Feminist theology is a movement found in several religions to reconsider the traditions, practices, scriptures, and theologies of those religions from a feminist perspective. Some of the goals of feminist theology include increasing the role of women among the clergy and religious authorities, reinterpreting male-dominated imagery and language about God, determining women's place in relation to career and motherhood, and studying images of women in the religion's sacred texts. In Wicca "the Goddess" is a deity of prime importance, along with her consort the Horned God. In the earliest Wiccan publications she is described as a tribal goddess of the witch community, neither omnipotent nor universal, and it was recognised that there was a greater "Prime Mover", although the witches did not concern themselves much with this being.

## Architecture

Gender-based inquiries into and conceptualization of architecture have also come about in the past fifteen years or so. Piyush Mathur coined the term "archigenderic" in his 1998 article in the British journal *Women's Writing*. Claiming that "architectural planning has an inextricable link with the defining and regulation of gender roles, responsibilities, rights, and limitations," Mathur came up with that term "to explore...the meaning of 'architecture' in terms of gender" and "to explore the meaning of 'gender' in terms of architecture"

## Culture

### Women's writing

Women's writing came to exist as a separate category of scholarly interest relatively recently. In the West, second-wave feminism prompted a general reevaluation of women's historical contributions, and various academic sub-disciplines, such as Women's history (or herstory) and women's writing, developed in response to the belief that women's lives and contributions have been underrepresented as areas of scholarly interest. Virginia Balisn et al. characterize the growth in interest since 1970 in women's writing as "powerful". Much of this early period of feminist literary scholarship was given

over to the rediscovery and reclamation of texts written by women. Studies such as Dale Spender's *Mothers of the Novel* (1986) and Jane Spencer's *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (1986) were ground-breaking in their insistence that women have always been writing. Commensurate with this growth in scholarly interest, various presses began the task of reissuing long-out-of-print texts. Virago Press began to publish its large list of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century novels in 1975 and became one of the first commercial presses to join in the project of reclamation. In the 1980s Pandora Press, responsible for publishing Spender's study, issued a companion line of eighteenth-century novels written by women. More recently, Broadview Press has begun to issue eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works, many hitherto out of print and the University of Kentucky has a series of republications of early women's novels. There has been commensurate growth in the area of biographical dictionaries of women writers due to a perception, according to one editor, that "most of our women are not represented in the 'standard' reference books in the field".

Another early pioneer of Feminist writing is Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose most notable work was *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

## Science fiction

In the 1960s the genre of science fiction combined its sensationalism with political and technological critiques of society. With the advent of feminism, questioning women's roles became fair game to this "subversive, mind expanding genre". Two early texts are Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and Joanna Russ' *The Female Man* (1970). They serve to highlight the socially constructed nature of gender roles by creating utopias that do away with gender. Both authors were also pioneers in feminist criticism of science fiction in the 1960s and 70s, in essays collected in *The Language of the Night* (Le Guin, 1979) and *How To Suppress Women's Writing* (Russ, 1983). Another major work of feminist science fiction has been *Kindred* by Octavia Butler.

## Riot grrrl movement

Riot grrrl (or riot grrl) is an underground feminist punk movement that started in the 1990s and is often associated with third-wave feminism (it is sometimes seen as its starting point). It was Grounded in the DIY philosophy of punk values. Riot grrrls took an anti-corporate stance of self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Riot grrrl's emphasis on universal female identity and separatism often appears more closely allied with second-

wave feminism than with the third wave. Riot grrrl bands often address issues such as rape, domestic abuse, sexuality, and female empowerment. Some bands associated with the movement are: Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Excuse 17, Free Kitten, Heavens To Betsy, Huggy Bear, L7, and Team Dresch. In addition to a music scene, riot grrrl is also a subculture; zines, the DIY ethic, art, political action, and activism are part of the movement. Riot grrrls hold meetings, start chapters, and support and organize women in music.

The riot grrrl movement sprang out of Olympia, Washington and Washington, D.C. in the early 1990s. It sought to give women the power to control their voices and artistic expressions. Riot grrrls took a growling double or triple r, placing it in the word girl as a way to take back the derogatory use of the term.

The Riot Grrrl's links to social and political issues are where the beginnings of third-wave feminism can be seen. The music and zine writings are strong examples of "cultural politics in action, with strong women giving voice to important social issues though an empowered, a female oriented community, many people link the emergence of the third-wave feminism to this time". The movement encouraged and made "adolescent girls' standpoints central," allowing them to express themselves fully.

## Pornography

The "Feminist Sex Wars" is a term for the acrimonious debates within the feminist movement in the late 1970s through the 1980s around the issues of feminism, sexuality, sexual representation, pornography, sadomasochism, the role of transwomen in the lesbian community, and other sexual issues. The debate pitted anti-pornography feminism against sex-positive feminism, and parts of the feminist movement were deeply divided by these debates.

## Anti-pornography movement

Anti-pornography feminists, such as Catharine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, Robin Morgan and Dorchen Leidholdt, put pornography at the center of a feminist explanation of women's oppression.

Some feminists, such as Diana Russell, Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, Susan Brownmiller, Dorchen Leidholdt, Ariel Levy, and Robin Morgan, argue that pornography



is degrading to women, and complicit in violence against women both in its production (where, they charge, abuse and exploitation of women performing in pornography is rampant) and in its consumption (where, they charge, pornography eroticizes the domination, humiliation, and coercion of women, and reinforces sexual and cultural attitudes that are complicit in rape and sexual harassment).

Beginning in the late 1970s, anti-pornography radical feminists formed organizations such as Women Against Pornography that provided educational events, including slide-shows, speeches, and guided tours of the sex industry in Times Square, in order to raise awareness of the content of pornography and the sexual subculture in pornography shops and live sex shows. Andrea Dworkin and Robin Morgan began articulating a vehemently anti-porn stance based in radical feminism beginning in 1974, and anti-porn feminist groups, such as Women Against Pornography and similar organizations, became highly active in various US cities during the late 1970s.

## Sex-positive movement

Sex-positive feminism is a movement that was formed in order to address issues of women's sexual pleasure, freedom of expression, sex work, and inclusive gender identities. Ellen Willis' 1981 essay, "Lust Horizons: Is the Women's Movement Pro-Sex?" is the origin of the term, "pro-sex feminism"; the more commonly-used variant, "sex positive feminism" arose soon after.

Although some sex-positive feminists, such as Betty Dodson, were active in the early 1970s, much of sex-positive feminism largely began in the late 1970s and 1980s as a response to the increasing emphasis in radical feminism on anti-pornography activism.

Sex-positive feminists are also strongly opposed to radical feminist calls for legislation against pornography, a strategy they decried as censorship, and something that could, they argued, be used by social conservatives to censor the sexual expression of women, gay people, and other sexual minorities. The initial period of intense debate and acrimony between sex-positive and anti-pornography feminists during the early 1980s is often referred to as the Feminist Sex Wars. Other sex-positive feminists became involved not in opposition to other feminists, but in direct response to what they saw as patriarchal control of sexuality.

## Relationship to political movements

### Socialism

Since the early twentieth century some feminists have allied with socialism. In 1907 there was an International Conference of Socialist Women in Stuttgart where suffrage was described as a tool of class struggle. Clara Zetkin of the Social Democratic Party of Germany called for women's suffrage to build a "socialist order, the only one that allows for a radical solution to the women's question".

In Britain, the women's movement was allied with the Labour party. In America, Betty Friedan emerged from a radical background to take command of the organized movement. Radical Women, founded in 1967 in Seattle is the oldest (and still active) socialist feminist organization in the U.S. During the Spanish Civil War, Dolores Ibarruri (La Pasionaria) led the Communist Party of Spain. Although she supported equal rights for women, she opposed women fighting on the front and clashed with the anarcho-feminist Mujeres Libres.

Revolutions in Latin America brought changes in women's status in countries such as Nicaragua where Feminist ideology during the Sandinista Revolution was largely responsible for improvements in the quality of life for women but fell short of achieving a social and ideological change.

### Fascism

Scholars have argued that Nazi Germany and the other fascist states of the 1930s and 1940s illustrates the disastrous consequences for society of a state ideology that, in glorifying traditional images of women, becomes anti-feminist. In Germany after the rise of Nazism in 1933, there was a rapid dissolution of the political rights and economic opportunities that feminists had fought for during the prewar period and to some extent during the 1920s. In Franco's Spain, the right wing Catholic conservatives undid the work of feminists during the Republic. Fascist society was hierarchical with an emphasis and idealization of virility, with women maintaining a largely subordinate position to men.

### Scientific discourse

Some feminists are critical of traditional scientific discourse, arguing that the field has historically been biased towards a masculine perspective. Evelyn Fox Keller argues that

the rhetoric of science reflects a masculine perspective, and she questions the idea of scientific objectivity.

Many feminist scholars rely on qualitative research methods that emphasize women's subjective, individual experiences. According to communication scholars Thomas R. Lindlof and Bryan C. Taylor, incorporating a feminist approach to qualitative research involves treating research participants as equals who are just as much an authority as the researcher. Objectivity is eschewed in favor of open self-reflexivity and the agenda of helping women. Also part of the feminist research agenda is uncovering ways that power inequities are created and/or reinforced in society and/or in scientific and academic institutions. Lindlof and Taylor also explain that a feminist approach to research often involves nontraditional forms of presentation.

Primatologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy notes the prevalence of masculine-coined stereotypes and theories, such as the non-sexual female, despite "the accumulation of abundant openly available evidence contradicting it". Some natural and social scientists have examined feminist ideas using scientific methods.

## Biology of gender

Modern feminist science challenges the biological essentialist view of gender, however it is increasingly interested in the study of biological sex differences and their effect on human behavior. For example, Anne Fausto-Sterling's book *Myths of Gender* explores the assumptions embodied in scientific research that purports to support a biologically essentialist view of gender. Her second book, *Sexing the Body* discussed the alleged possibility of more than two true biological sexes. This possibility only exists in yet-unknown extraterrestrial biospheres, as no ratios of true gametes to polar cells other than 4:0 and 1:3 (male and female, respectively) are produced on Earth. However, in *The Female Brain*, Louann Brizendine argues that brain differences between the sexes are a biological reality with significant implications for sex-specific functional differences. Steven Rhoads' book *Taking Sex Differences Seriously* illustrates sex-dependent differences across a wide scope.

Carol Tavris, in *The Mismeasure of Woman*, uses psychology and sociology to critique theories that use biological reductionism to explain differences between men and women. She argues rather than using evidence of innate gender difference there is an over-changing hypothesis to justify inequality and perpetuate stereotypes.

## Evolutionary biology

Sarah Kember - drawing from numerous areas such as evolutionary biology, sociobiology, artificial intelligence, and cybernetics in development with a new evolutionism - discusses the biologization of technology. She notes how feminists and sociologists have become suspect of evolutionary psychology, particularly inasmuch as sociobiology is subjected to complexity in order to strengthen sexual difference as immutable through pre-existing cultural value judgments about human nature and natural selection. Where feminist theory is criticized for its "false beliefs about human nature," Kember then argues in conclusion that "feminism is in the interesting position of needing to do more biology and evolutionary theory in order not to simply oppose their renewed hegemony, but in order to understand the conditions that make this possible, and to have a say in the construction of new ideas and artefacts."

## Male reaction

The relationship between men and feminism has been complex. Men have taken part in significant responses to feminism in each 'wave' of the movement. There have been positive and negative reactions and responses, depending on the individual man and the social context of the time. These responses have varied from pro-feminism to masculism to anti-feminism. In the twenty-first century new reactions to feminist ideologies have emerged including a generation of male scholars involved in gender studies, and also men's rights activists who promote male equality (including equal treatment in family, divorce and anti-discrimination law). Historically a number of men have engaged with feminism. Philosopher Jeremy Bentham demanded equal rights for women in the eighteenth century. In 1866, philosopher John Stuart Mill (author of "The Subjection of Women") presented a women's petition to the British parliament; and supported an amendment to the 1867 Reform Bill. Others have lobbied and campaigned against feminism. Today, academics like Michael Flood, Michael Messner and Michael Kimmel are involved with men's studies and pro-feminism.

A number of feminist writers maintain that identifying as a feminist is the strongest stand men can take in the struggle against sexism. They have argued that men should be allowed, or even be encouraged, to participate in the feminist movement. Other female feminists argue that men cannot be feminists simply because they are not women. They maintain that men are granted inherent privileges that prevent them from identifying with

feminist struggles, thus making it impossible for them to identify with feminists. Fidelma Ashe has approached the issue of male feminism by arguing that traditional feminist views of male experience and of "men doing feminism" have been monolithic. She explores the multiple political discourses and practices of pro-feminist politics, and evaluates each strand through an interrogation based upon its effect on feminist politics.

A more recent examination of the subject is presented by author and academic Shira Tarrant. In *Men and Feminism* (Seal Press, May 2009), the California State University, Long Beach professor highlights critical debates about masculinity and gender, the history of men in feminism, and men's roles in preventing violence and sexual assault. Through critical analysis and first-person stories by feminist men, Tarrant addresses the question of why men should care about feminism in the first place and lays the foundation for a larger discussion about feminism as an all-encompassing, human issue.

Tarrant touches on similar topics in *Men Speak Out: Views on Gender, Sex, and Power* (Routledge, 2007).

## Pro-feminism

Pro-feminism is the support of feminism without implying that the supporter is a member of the feminist movement. The term is most often used in reference to men who are actively supportive of feminism and of efforts to bring about gender equality. The activities of pro-feminist men's groups include anti-violence work with boys and young men in schools, offering sexual harassment workshops in workplaces, running community education campaigns, and counseling male perpetrators of violence. Pro-feminist men also are involved in men's health, activism against pornography including anti-pornography legislation, men's studies, and the development of gender equity curricula in schools. This work is sometimes in collaboration with feminists and women's services, such as domestic violence and rape crisis centers. Some activists of both genders will not refer to men as "feminists" at all, and will refer to all pro-feminist men as "pro-feminists".

## Anti-feminism

Anti-feminism is opposition to feminism in some or all of its forms. Writers such as Camille Paglia, Christina Hoff Sommers, Jean Bethke Elshtain and Elizabeth Fox-

Genovese have been labeled "anti-feminists" by feminists. Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge argue that in this way the term "anti-feminist" is used to silence academic debate about feminism. Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young's books *Spreading Misandry* and *Legalizing Misandry* explore what they argue is feminist-inspired misandry. Christina Hoff-Sommers argues feminist misandry leads directly to misogyny by what she calls "establishment feminists" against (the majority of) women who love men in *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women*. Marriage rights advocates criticize feminists like Sheila Cronan who take the view that marriage constitutes slavery for women, and that freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage.