

# The Power of Feminist Interventions In International Law: A Stanford Study

3/30/2006, 9:26 AM

## **Intervention, International Law, and Human Rights**

With Jeff Rice and Will Reno

Thursdays, 6 to 9pm

Parkes Hall, Room 214

(An electronic version of this syllabus is available at Reno's web site,

<http://pubweb.northwestern.edu/~wsr737>)

**Course description:** This course addresses the debate over whether the international community has a duty to intervene in instances of serious human rights abuses. Rooted in Kant's idea that democratic governance and respect for human rights would bring a "perpetual peace", 19<sup>th</sup> century European Great Powers intervened to force new countries to respect minority rights and root out oppressive customs. In the wake of the First World War, this mission confronted the reality of violent gangs, internecine conflict and massive refugee flows. The end of the Cold War raised again the prospect of a "perpetual peace" and along with it the argument for international intervention in conflict zones. Once again, the once-hopeful international community came into direct contact with nasty conflicts on the ground. Some populations proved reluctant to be "saved" and even attacked their supposed benefactors. The course will focus on events and political choices surrounding intervention in Bosnia, Kosovo and Rwanda and the international attempts to prosecute human rights violators. The course will examine how the current intervention in Iraq fits in this debate.

The course will follow a seminar format. There are ten scheduled weekly meetings on the Northwestern University north campus, 214 Parkes Hall, on Thursdays from 6 to 9pm.

### **Course Requirements:**

Response papers: Three one to two page essays focused on books and other weekly readings, 30%

Research paper, 10-12 pages, produced in stages; a statement, a bibliography, a draft, and a final product, 50%

Participation, 20%

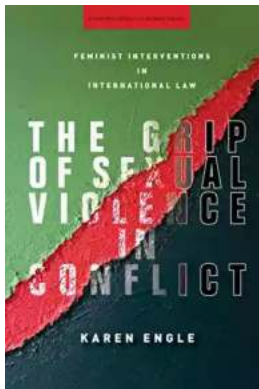
Books for this course are available at Beck's Books at 716 Clark Street in Evanston (M-Thurs 10-6, Fri 10-5, Sat 10-3). A course packet of readings is available at Quartet Copies (M-F 8am-6pm, Sat 9-5, Sun noon-5), just down the street at 825 Clark.

International law has been a complex and evolving field, shaping the interactions between nations and individuals on various levels. While it highlights the importance of equality and human rights, it is not immune to the biases and power imbalances that exist in societies worldwide. Recognizing this, feminist

interventions in international law have emerged as a powerful force in challenging these inequalities and advocating for a fair and inclusive legal framework.

## The Need for Feminist Interventions

Historically, international law has predominantly been shaped by male perspectives, often disregarding the experiences and struggles of women and marginalized communities. This has resulted in the perpetuation of discriminatory practices and the denial of basic rights to countless individuals. Feminist interventions aim to rectify this by challenging the existing norms and advocating for transformative change.



### The Grip of Sexual Violence in Conflict: Feminist Interventions in International Law (Stanford Studies in Human Rights) by Karen Engle (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 3409 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 376 pages
Hardcover	: 338 pages
Item Weight	: 1.91 pounds
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## Key Areas of Feminist Interventions

Stanford Studies in Human Rights has played a pivotal role in exploring and promoting feminist interventions in international law. Through their research and

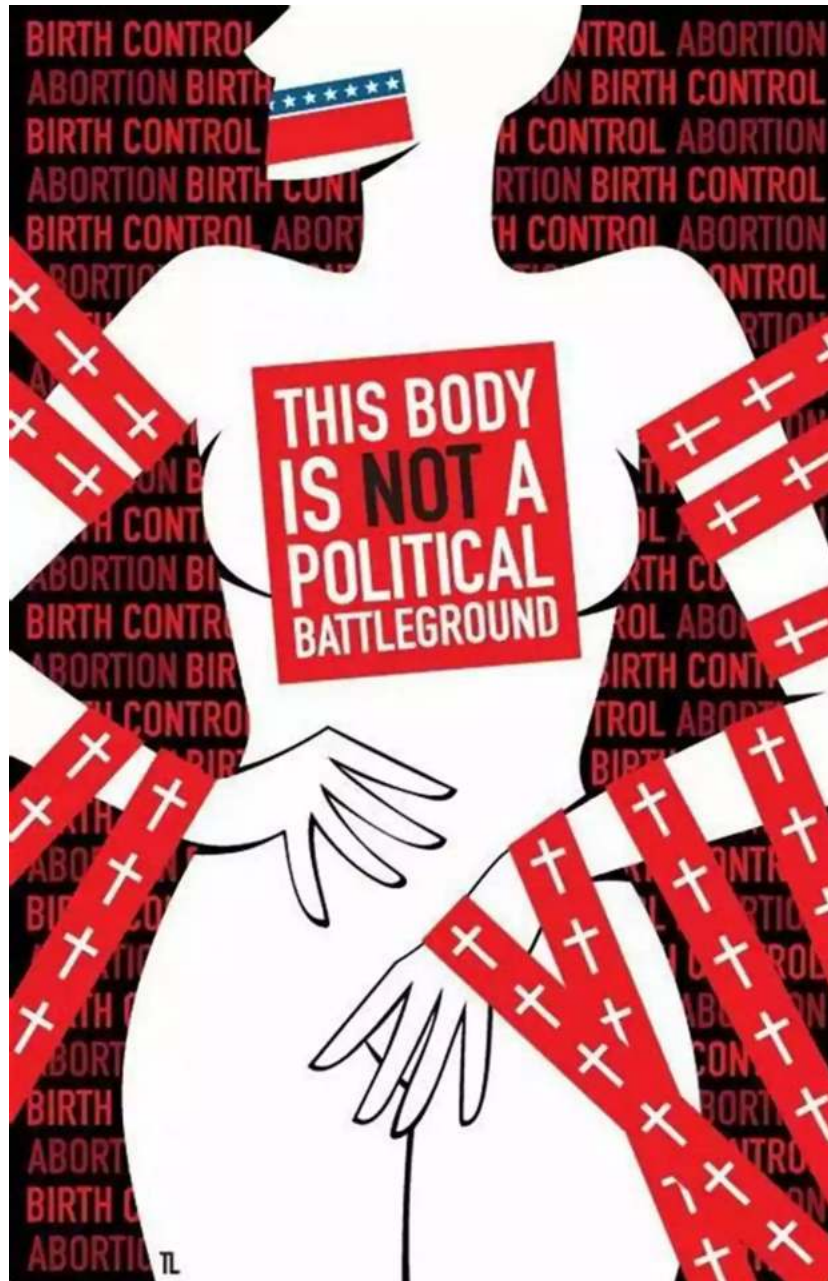
analysis, they have identified key areas where feminist interventions have made a significant impact:

## 1. Gender-Based Violence



One of the critical issues addressed by feminist interventions is gender-based violence. This pervasive problem affects women and other marginalized groups globally and remains a significant obstacle to achieving gender equality. Feminist legal scholars have brought attention to the gaps in international law, exposing the failure to adequately address and prevent such violence. Through their rigorous research, they have proposed legal reforms to ensure the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

## 2. Reproductive Rights



Another important area of feminist intervention is reproductive rights. Women's ability to make decisions about their bodies and reproductive health is fundamental to their autonomy and well-being. However, restrictive laws and policies often undermine these rights, leading to harmful consequences for women. Feminist legal scholars have identified these challenges and have been at the forefront of advocating for reproductive rights on an international scale.

### 3. Economic Justice



Feminist interventions also focus on addressing economic injustice, recognizing the link between gender inequality and economic disparities. Women worldwide face discrimination in employment, pay gaps, and limited access to resources. Through critical analysis and proposals for legislative changes, feminist legal scholars are working towards a more equitable economic system that empowers women and promotes inclusive growth.

## **The Impact of Feminist Interventions**

Feminist interventions in international law have not only raised awareness about critical issues but also produced tangible outcomes. Through their research and advocacy, feminists have successfully influenced policy decisions, reshaped legal frameworks, and secured landmark court rulings that promote gender equality and human rights.

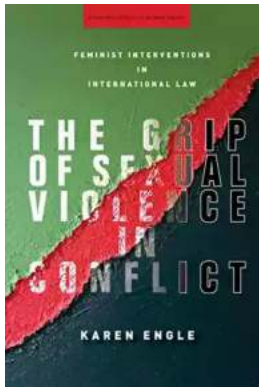
Furthermore, feminist interventions have opened up spaces for dialogue and collaboration, giving voice to individuals and communities traditionally marginalized in the international legal arena. By shifting the focus from a male-dominated perspective, they have enabled a more inclusive and intersectional approach to international law.

## **The Way Forward**

While feminist interventions have made significant strides, challenges still remain. Resistance to change, patriarchal ideologies, and power imbalances present ongoing obstacles in achieving true gender equality in international law. However, the continuous efforts of feminist legal scholars, institutions like Stanford Studies in Human Rights, and advocates around the world are gradually pushing these boundaries and paving the way for a more just and equitable future.

The inclusion of feminist interventions in international law, as explored by Stanford Studies in Human Rights, is a critical step towards addressing the biases and inequalities present in the legal framework. By bringing attention to gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and economic justice, feminism continues to challenge the status quo and advocate for transformative change. The impact of these interventions is evident in the progress made so far, but the journey towards a more inclusive and equal legal system is far from over. It

requires ongoing collaboration, advocacy, and a renewed commitment to dismantling gender inequality on a global scale.



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Contemporary feminist advocacy in human rights, international criminal law, and peace and security is gripped by the issue of sexual violence in conflict. But it hasn't always been this way. Analyzing feminist international legal and political work over the past three decades, Karen Engle argues that it was not inevitable that sexual violence in conflict would become such a prominent issue.

Engle reveals that as feminists from around the world began to pay an enormous amount of attention to sexual violence in conflict, they often did so at the cost of attention to other issues, including the anti-militarism of the women's peace movement; critiques of economic maldistribution, imperialism, and cultural essentialism by feminists from the global South; and the sex-positive positions of many feminists involved in debates about sex work and pornography. The Grip of

Sexual Violence in Conflict offers a detailed examination of how these feminist commitments were not merely deprioritized, but undermined, by efforts to address the issue of sexual violence in conflict. Engle's analysis reinvigorates vital debates about feminist goals and priorities, and spurs readers to question much of today's common sense about the causes, effects, and proper responses to sexual violence in conflict.



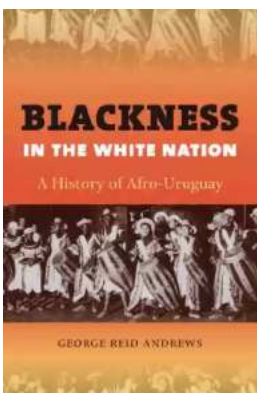
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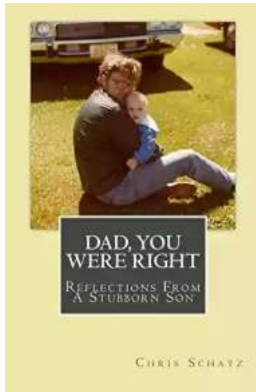
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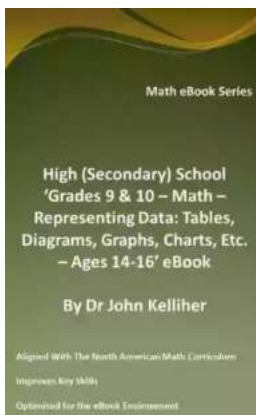
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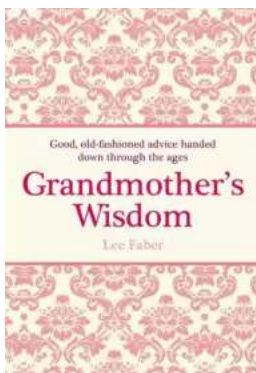
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