

Teaching Materials

Teaching Strategies

The primary sources in this module are designed to demonstrate the ways in which women have interacted with political power in Southeast Asia through the 20th century.

The first two sources—[Nonfiction, Javanese Education](#) and [Nonfiction, Philippine Suffrage](#)—essays written by elite women, are set in the colonial era of Indonesia and the Philippines. They demonstrate the tension between feminism and nationalism as well as dilemmas faced by the emerging women’s movement. In addition, they present the opportunity to create a definition of a “feminist” and are useful for establishing suffragists’ primary arguments for the franchise.

The next two sources—[Court Records, Imelda Marcos](#) and [Newspaper, Unofficial Power](#)—examine women in unofficial and official power. Unofficial power here is represented by former First Lady Imelda Marcos of the Philippines, who wielded enormous influence, and by a “scandal” involving the alleged former mistress of President Fidel Ramos, also of the Philippines.

The two women whose speeches are reproduced—[Speech, Philippine State of The Nation](#) and [Speech, Burmese Democracy](#)—are classic examples of the workings of kinship politics. The photographs of Imelda Marcos and Aung San Suu Kyi—[Photograph, Philippine First Lady](#) and [Photograph, Burmese Activist](#)—address the politics of dress, exploring how women have tapped into symbols of dress, particularly cultural constructions of the feminine as bearer and wearer of national tradition, to achieve their political agendas.

Finally, there are several documents about second wave feminism in Southeast Asia—[Song, Philippine Feminist Movement](#) and [Website, Sisters In Islam](#). Feminism is still a negative word in Southeast Asia. “Feminism” is seen as “Western” and associated with the radical feminism of the 1960s (particularly the “bra-burners”). Most activists prefer the term “womanist.” These sources offer insight into how feminists “packaged” their ideas to promote the women’s movement.

They provide the opportunity to raise the issue of the “Orientalized” image of Filipinas worldwide as domestic helpers, “mail-order brides,” or prostitutes. The song *Maria* provides an opportunity to compare the tensions between feminism and nationalism over time. Although Kartini wrote her essay ([Nonfiction, Javanese Education](#)) and GABRIELA produced *Maria* in different countries and at different times, the tensions between feminism and nationalism are ever present. This theme cuts across countries (space) and across time (colonial and postcolonial eras).

[Website, Sisters In Islam](#) is an example of women who have confronted religious definitions of the feminine in a transnational context. This source can be the basis for a discussion on feminism and religion—in particular Islam. It is possible to discuss veiling (dress) as well since veiling is not traditional to Malaysia. If students are interested, the Resources section offers website addresses of two other transnational organizations—[AWARE](#) in Singapore and [GABRIELA](#) in the Philippines. Students can analyze the character of these organizations through their websites.

Discussion Questions:

- Is Kartini a feminist or a nationalist or both? Was she an elitist? Why or why not?
- What are the differences between Filipino first wave feminism and Western first wave feminism?
- To what extent was the debate on Filipino suffrage a debate about how “the Filipino woman” was going to be defined in the early 20th century?
- Is unofficial power real power? Is it problematic that it is linked to the male? Should scholars ignore unofficial power and focus on women’s access to official power only?
- Are Imelda Marcos and Rosemarie Arenas feminists? Are they the embodiment of women’s empowerment?
- Do the speeches of Corazon Aquino and Aung San Suu Kyi reflect a feminist perspective?
- What are the similarities and differences between how Corazon Aquino and Aung San Suu Kyi represent themselves as moral guardians and as alter egos of men?
- How does Imelda Marcos and Aung San Suu Kyi's dress reflect their conscious self-representation? How do they want people to interpret their dress, and how might their audiences have interpreted it differently? For example, historian Emma Tarlo showed how Mahatma Gandhi wore the loincloth made of white Khadi (course, homespun cloth) to send the message that India’s poverty would be solved by hand-spinning and freedom from British rule. But for many Indian people, the loincloth sent a different message—that he was a holy man, a saint, an ascetic. (See Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters Dress and Identity in India*, (London: Hurst & Co, 1996), chapter 2.)
- What does the song Maria portray as the traditional definition of Filipina woman (a cook, beauty queen, or sex object; someone who accepts oppression or is resigned to it)? The song raises alternative models for women. What sort of alternative role models does the song suggest?
- How does Islam define the feminine in Malaysia? And then how does the Sisters In Islam group challenge or attempt to redefine the feminine?

Lesson Plan: Constructing Womanhood: Politics in 20th-Century Southeast Asia

Time Estimate

Five 50-minute blocks and DBQ as an independent assignment.

Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

1. analyze textual primary sources.
2. analyze visual primary sources.
3. recognize gender as a social construction.
4. understand that those social constructions change over time.

Materials

- Sufficient copies of the [Southeast Asian Politics Introduction](#)
- Sufficient copies of the following sources, stapled together:
 - [Source 1: Nonfiction, Javanese Education](#)
 - [Source 2: Nonfiction, Philippine Suffrage](#)
 - [Source 4: Newspaper, Unofficial Power](#)
 - [Source 7: Painting, Philippine First Lady](#)
 - [Source 8: Photograph, Burmese Activist](#)
 - [Source 9: Song, Philippine Feminist Movement](#)
 - [Source 10: Website, Sisters in Islam](#)
- Sufficient copies of [Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Images](#)
- Sufficient copies of [Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Texts](#)

Strategies

- **Hook:**
 - Write the word “feminine” on the board. Ask your students to write down the first three words that come to mind when they see that word.
 - Write the word “masculine” on the board. Ask your students to write down the first three words that come to mind when they see that word.
 - Ask your students to share their responses; as they say them, write their responses underneath of “feminine” and “masculine.”
 - Discuss their responses. What generalizations can they make about their ideas of femininity and masculinity? Where do these ideas come from?
 - Write the sentence “Gender is a social construction,” on the board, then explain that what they have been describing have been ways that our society constructs, or creates, gender. Other societies have different beliefs

about what it means to be a man or a woman, and what roles men and women should play in a society. For the next week, the class will be examining how gender roles were constructed in Southeast Asia in the twentieth century.

- **Contextualizing the Sources:**

- Direct students to read the [Southeast Asian Politics Introduction](#).
- As they read, they should answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:
 - What time period and area of the world is the subject of the introduction?
 - Students should answer that it focuses on 20th-century Southeast Asia.
 - Summarize how Southeast Asia's relationship to the rest of the world changed between 1920 and 1970.
 - Students should answer that most Southeast Asian countries went from being colonized by European nations, to being occupied by Japan, to being independent nations.
 - When independence came, Southeast Asian countries had internal struggles for power. Describe those struggles and analyze why independence would bring about internal conflict.
 - Students should see that as new governments were created, different groups of people wanted different things out of that government. Some wanted democracy, while others wanted a strong central authority. Students may theorize that these struggles occurred because there was a power vacuum left by the European colonizers.
 - What roles did women play in those struggles for power?
 - Students should answer that women mostly played unofficial roles, meaning that they exercised power behind the scenes through their kinship groups. Some women campaigned for women to have official power as well.

- **Introduction to Primary Sources:**

- Explain to students that they will be using primary sources to research social constructions of womanhood in 20th-century Southeast Asia. Introduce the idea of a primary source by explaining that they are sources created during the time period being studied.

- Pass out copies of [Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Images](#) and [Primary Source Analysis Worksheet: Texts](#)
 - Instruct students to examine [Source 7: Painting, Philippine First Lady](#) and fill out the worksheet for images.
 - Instruct students to examine [Source 1: Nonfiction, Javanese Education](#) and fill out the worksheet for texts.
 - Discuss their responses as a class, emphasizing the importance of primary sources in doing historical research.
- **Analyzing Social Constructions of Womanhood:**
 - Direct students to read all of the sources in their source packet. Remind them that they are reading with a purpose: to understand and analyze how ideas of womanhood were constructed in 20th-century Southeast Asia. If students have access to computers, also direct them to explore [Source 10: Website, Sisters in Islam](#) on the web.
 - After students have completed an initial reading of the sources, direct them to work in partners to pull apart the sources. Ask them to:
 - Pick out clues that indicate what it meant to be a woman in this time period, in this area of the world. Students should circle key words and sentences and make notes in the margins. Remind students to make a note of the date each document was created so that they are aware of change over time.
 - Create a concept map to reflect the competing notions of womanhood they found in the documents. Students may create a map that shows two major trends: one of women as moral guardians and more traditionally feminine, and one of women as activists and more androgynous. Or, students may create a map that reconciles those competing notions by acknowledging that both recognize women’s power, just in different realms. Students may also create a map that reflects chronological changes in gender constructions. There is no “correct” concept map.
 - Ask each group to share their map with the class and explain why they made the decisions they made about organizing their information.
 - Guide students in a discussion around the following questions:
 - What did it mean to be a woman in 20th-century Southeast Asia?
 - Students should make generalizations based on their concept maps.
 - How were notions of womanhood used by women to achieve political goals?

- Students should recognize that Southeast Asian women used womanhood as justification for achieving more rights. The most common argument was that women, as mothers and moral guardians, controlled the spiritual and political future of the nation and therefore should be given more education and entrusted with more political rights. Other arguments, later in the 20th century, focused more on women as men’s equals, and therefore deserving of equal rights.
- What generalizations can you make around how ideas of womanhood changed from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end? How can you account for these changes?
 - Students should see that portrayals of women as traditionally feminine were used in the early-20th century; feminist descriptions of women as equals to men were used in the late-20th century. The main trend is a move away from emphasizing women’s differences from men and toward emphasizing women’s sameness with men. Students might theorize that these changes happened because of the influence of Western ideas of power—the unofficial power that women held in Southeast Asia was not recognized as “real” power in Western society. Students might also theorize that the rhetoric used to argue for Southeast Asian nations’ independence would have resonated with women, who also wanted freedom and justice.
- **Document-Based Essay Question:**
 - Distribute copies of the **Document-Based Essay Question**.
 - Allow students time in class to brainstorm and outline their ideas.
 - Instruct students to complete the essay for homework.

Differentiation

Technology:

- Use a SMART Board to examine **Source 10: Website, Sisters in Islam** together. Discuss the language and the imagery chosen by the Sisters in Islam to convey their message. Click on the “Links” tab on the website to visit other, similar sites. Compare how those sites are constructed and which ones are the most effective at conveying their message. Note: The content of the sites may not be appropriate for all age groups.

- Ask students to use laptops to create the concept map under step number four, “Analyzing Social Constructions of Womanhood.” They may use SMART Ideas or Inspiration. Ask them to e-mail the maps to you when they are done, then display the best one on the SMART Board and use it to guide your discussion.

Advanced Students:

- Accelerate the lesson by skipping step three, “Introduction to Primary Sources.”
- Instruct students to complete the Document-Based Essay at home; do not allow for extra in-class time to complete outlines and do brainstorming around the question.

Less Advanced Students:

- Give students extra time to complete the Document-Based Essay by adding an intermediate step of handing in their outlines for comments before writing the essay.

Document Based Question (Suggested writing time: 40 minutes)

Directions: The following question is based on the documents included in this module. This question is designed to test your ability to work with and understand historical documents. Write an essay that:

1. Has a relevant thesis and supports that thesis with evidence from the documents.
2. Uses all or all but one of the documents.
3. Analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible. Does not simply summarize the documents individually.
4. Takes into account both the sources of the documents and the authors' points of view.
5. You may refer to relevant historical information not mentioned in the documents.

Question: Analyze how the relationship between social constructions of womanhood and power changed during the 20th-century in Southeast Asia.

Be sure to analyze point of view in at least three documents or images.

What additional sources, types of documents, or information would you need to have a more complete view of this topic?

Bibliography

Books

Abueva, Jose V. "Assessing the Presidential Leadership of Corazon C. Aquino." In Abueva, Jose and Roman, Emerlinda R., eds., *The Aquino Presidency and Administration (1986-1992): Contemporary Assessments and "The Judgment of History?"* Diliman, Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 1993.

This chapter presents the many opinions, assessments, interpretations of the Aquino presidency by journalists, academics, and politicians. This article is a good source for exploring how she used official power and whether or not she was a "weak" president. Teachers could also assign this reading and ask students to compare Aquino's exercise of power with that of Imelda Marcos.

Blackburn, Susan. "Winning the Vote for Women in Indonesia." *Australian Feminist Studies* 14.29 (1999), 207-18.

Blackburn is the leading scholar on the topic of women's suffrage in Indonesia. She is also the author of the Indonesia chapter in the Edwards and Roces volume.

Coté, Joost. "Introduction." *On Feminism and Nationalism: Kartini's Letters to Stella Zeehandelaar, 1899-1903*. Melbourne: Monash University Press, 1995.

This introduction gives a brief sketch of Kartini's life and engages with the question of whether she is a feminist or a nationalist. It contextualizes her work in the history of the Indonesian nationalist movement. The rest of the book is a collection of Kartini's letters to Stella Zeehandelaar, her Dutch friend who had inspired her feminist ideas.

Diaz, Ramona. *Imelda*. 2003; Singapore: Golden Village, 2004, VHS.

A documentary using interviews with Imelda Marcos that allows the viewer to hear her words and make their own interpretations.

Edwards, Louise and Mina Roces, eds. *Women in Asia: Tradition, Modernity and Globalization*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000.

This anthology explores the status of women in a number of Asian countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Burma and Thailand.

Edwards, Louise and Mina Roces, eds. *Women's Suffrage in Asia*. London: Routledge Curzon, 2004.

There is a chapter by Mina Roces entitled: "Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct: Defining 'the Filipino woman' in Colonial Philippines" which is a good companion to the reading. There are also chapters on women's suffrage in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. This is the most recent and up to date one. There are few works published in this field. Prior to this volume the only other study was by Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*. London: Zed Books, 1985.

Kartini, Raden Ajeng. *Letters from Kartini: An Indonesian Feminist, 1900-1904*.

Translated by Joost Coté. Melbourne: Monash University, 1992.
This primary source is a collection of Kartini's letters and writings.

Kyi, Aung San Suu. *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*. London: Viking, 1991.
A collection of Aung San Suu Kyi's speeches since 1988.

Kyi, Aung San Suu. *Letters from Burma*. New York: Penguin, 1997.
A collection of Aung San Suu Kyi's writings.

Leshkowich, Ann Marie. "The *ao dai* goes Global: How International Influences and Female Entrepreneurs Have Shaped Vietnam's "National Costume" in Niessen, Sandra, Ann Marie Leshkowich, and Carla Jones, eds., *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalisation of Asian Dress*. Oxford: Berg, 2003.

This chapter is written by a social anthropologist and traces the recent popularity of the *ao dai* (Vietnamese National dress for women) when Miss Vietnam won "best national costume" at an international beauty pageant.

Lyons, Lenore. *A State of Ambivalence, The Feminist Movement in Singapore*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Singapore second wave feminism. Or her article, Lyons, Lenore, "A State of Ambivalence: Feminism in a Singaporean Women's Organization." *Asian Studies Review* 24.1 (2000), 1-24. These are the first studies of AWARE, the feminist women's organization in Singapore.

McGovern, Ligaya Lindio. *Filipino Peasant Women: Exploitation and Resistance*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

This book on second wave feminism examines one women peasant organization Amihan in one province in the Philippines.

Ong, Aihwa.. "State Versus Islam: Malay Families, Women's Bodies and the Body Politic." *American Ethnologist* 17.2 (1990), 258-276.

This article talks about veiling and its connections with the rise of the *dakwa* movement in Malaysia in the 1970s. It argues that women who veil are middle class, educated, urban and modern.

Othman, Norani, ed. *Shari'a Law and the Modern Nation-State A Malaysian Symposium*. Kuala Lumpur: Sisters in Islam, 1994.

This collection of essays was published by SIS and edited by one of their founders and leading feminist. This is one of their early academic publications and deals very much with women and *Hudud* law.

Roces, Mina. "Gender, Nation and the Politics of Dress in 20th Century Philippines." *Gender & History* (forthcoming, 2005).

Explores how women and male politicians manipulated the semiotics of dress for political agendas. Looks at the contrast between Western Dress/National Dress used to express opposing political identities and how women's dress is the "other" of men's dress. This goes through several eras (one century) in Philippine history. Looks at how male and female presidents manipulated dress, and how activists such as suffragists and nuns (the habit) used dress to negotiate for political spaces. An alternative would be Roces, Mina. "Women, Citizenship and the Politics of Dress in 20th Century Philippines." In Qi Wang, Wil Burghoorn, Kazuki Iwanaga, and Cecilia Milwertz, eds., *Gender Politics in Asia—Processes of Change and Empowerment*, (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, forthcoming, 2005). Focuses on women's use of dress to negotiate political spaces, including the nun's habit, and the indigenous women's use of undress as a form of protest.

Roces, Mina. "The Gendering of Philippine Post-War Politics." In Sen, Krishna and Maila Stivens, eds., *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Roces, Mina. *Women, Power, and Kinship Politics: Female Power in Post-War Philippines*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998.

This is the first study documenting the concept of "unofficial power" in the Philippines and uses case studies of Mrs. Marcos and wives, sisters, mothers, daughters and mistresses of male politicians.

Sekimoto, Teruo. "Uniforms and Concrete Walls Dressing the Village Under the New Order in the 1970s and 1980s." In Nordhold, Henk Schulte, ed., *Outward Appearances Dressing State and Society in Indonesia*. Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997.

This chapter has a similar approach as the one by Taylor but applies it to the 1970s. Sekimoto observed the dress of Indonesian officials and their wives at independence day ceremonies. Political men wore safari suits but their wives wore the *sarong* and *kebaya*. The anthology *Outward Appearances* (above) is also recommended since it has chapters on the uses and meanings of dress in Indonesia from the colonial period to the contemporary era.

Stivens, Maila. "Gender, Modernity and the Everyday Politics of Islamic Revival in Middle Class Malaysia." In Summers, L. and Wilder, W., eds., *Gendered States and Modern Powers: Perspectives from Southeast Asia*. London: Macmillan, 1999.

This chapter by a well known anthropologist who had written extensively on the middle class in Malaysia explores the reasons why middle class women wear the veil and includes the argument that veiling is one way Malaysian women can assert a non-Western form of modernity.

Tarlo, Emma. *Clothing Matters Dress and Identity in India*. London: Hurst & Co, 1996.

Though not on Southeast Asia, this is a classic work on the meanings of dress in Indian society and politics. The chapter on Gandhi's invention of Indian dress (chapter 2) is particularly useful.

Taylor, Jean Gelman. "Official Photography, Costume and the Indonesian Revolution."

In Taylor, Jean Gelman, ed., *Women Creating Indonesia The First Fifty Years*. Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, 1997.

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the official photograph of the Indonesian independence day ceremony which showed the Indonesian president (Sukarno) in Western suit and the women in *sarong* and *kebaya* (Indonesian national dress). The original photograph had two other women in it in Western dress. This part of the photograph was cropped so that women in the photograph appeared in native dress and veiled. Taylor then analyzed this photograph in terms of how Sukarno presented the gendering of politics in the first day of independence with men in Western suits (as inheriting the power once exercised by the West—the Dutch), and women in national dress. Men were therefore associated with modernity and power, while women were embedded in the nations' past.

Taylor, Jean Gelman, "Once More Kartini." In Sears, Laurie J., ed., *Autonomous Histories, Particular Truths: Essays in Honor of John Smail*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin, Center for Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Number 11, 1993.

Jean Gelman Taylor is a leader scholar of Kartini. She is among the first Southeast Asian specialists to write about Kartini. This essay is her last essay on the topic. It is a terrific summary of the life and work of Kartini.

Wieringa, Saskia. *Sexual Politics in Indonesia*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2002.

This book is the most comprehensive study of GERWANI, the second wave feminist organization in Indonesia that was linked to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The organization was destroyed with the PKI when President Suharto took power in 1965. Wilson, Verity. "Dressing for Leadership in China: Wives and Husbands in an Age of Revolutions (1911-1976)." In Burman, Barbara and Turbin, Carole, eds., *Material Strategies: Dress and Gender in Historical Perspective, a Gender and History Special Issue*. London: Blackwell, 2003.

This chapter originally appeared in the journal *Gender & History* in 2002. This article focuses on Chinese politicians, but does an excellent job analyzing photographs of Sun Yat Sen and his wife, Chiang Kai-shek and Song Meiling, and Mao Zedong and Jiang Qing and their use of clothing.

Websites

AWARE (Association of Women for Action and Research),
<http://www.aware.org.sg/main/>

GABRIELA (General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action), <http://www.gabnet.org>