

I teach “Women, Race, and Class,” (RRS 571), an upper division course in my department, Race and Resistance Studies. I have incorporated “comfort women” under a new theme I’ve developed for my course, “The Gendered Violence of War.”

Below are the lesson plans I’ve created.

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### **Lesson 1: Introduction to “Comfort Women”**

**Objective:** Introduce students to the history of the “comfort women” system.

1. **Before class:** have them watch the documentary “Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women” (2000) and respond to the film in an online forum. I ask them to post a 125-175 word response describing two specific things they learned from the film.
  2. **Discussion:** before the lecture, I have them first tell me all of the things they learned from the film, which I put on the board. Since the film is very powerful, this exercise often involves students sharing their emotional responses.
  3. **Lecture:**
    - In the lecture, I describe more of the historical details of the “comfort women” system and its origins under the Japanese Imperial Army.
  4. **Small group work/ report back:**
    - Have students draw on the film and their own ideas to discuss what they feel are the responsibilities of nations to these women and/or their families.
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### **Lesson 2: Feminist Geopolitics and “Comfort Women”**

**Objective:** Introduce students to feminist geopolitics and how it helps us analyze the history of the “comfort women” system and violence towards these women.

1. **Before class:** have them read and submit a summary of 3 key arguments made in the article, “Remembering the ‘comfort women’: geographies of displacement, violence and memory in the Asia-Pacific and beyond,” by Orhon Myadar and R.A. Davidson.
2. **Small group work / report back:**
  - Prompt: “Based on the reading, what is your understanding of feminist geopolitics? How does it challenge traditional narratives of war and violence?”
3. **Lecture:**
  - Introduce feminist geopolitical frameworks, emphasizing how they: (1) challenge state-centric narratives by attending to the lived experiences of marginalized individuals; (2) help us understand the intersections of nationalism with patriarchy; (3) provide an expansive understanding of violence against women.

4. **Small group work/ report back:**

- Prompts:
    - (1) How does the “comfort women” system echo modern, state-building practices (particularly around prostitution) that originated in the west?
    - (2) What do the authors mean when they say “the displacement of “comfort women” is a form of multi-layered violence”? In other words, how does a feminist geopolitical framework help us understand the multiple forms of violence these women experienced beyond the most immediate forms of abuse? How did the displacement of “comfort women” compound their suffering?
    - (3) The authors discuss the tension between Japan and South Korea and how it has played out historically. How has nationalist discourse on both sides appropriated the “comfort women” narrative for patriarchal nationalist ends?
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**Lesson 3: Public Culture, Nationalism, and the Politics of Memory**

**Objective:** Introduce students to the politics of the memorials resurrected to remember the “comfort women.”

1. **Before class:** have the students watch videos covering the history of the Column of Strength memorial in San Francisco. Being in the Bay Area, this is a great example of a memorial for students to analyze more deeply.
2. **Lecture:**
  - a. Why do memorials matter? Discuss how memorials play a crucial role in shaping historical narratives by serving as tangible representations of collective memory, values, and especially, interpretations of past events. Their design, placement, and the stories they tell can emphasize or exclude social inequalities and can influence how history is remembered and understood. Discuss the most recent examples of struggles around memorial in light of the murder of George Floyd.
  - b. Review the historical conflicts that have taken place over memorials designed to remember “comfort women.”
3. **Small group work / report back:**
  - Take some time to analyze the design of the “Column of Strength.” What does the design convey? You can analyze for example, the scale, its placement, its colors, the particular figures chosen, their stances, and their expressions.
  - If you were to design a memorial, what are some of the choices you would make and why?
  - Thinking more broadly, what, in your opinion, are the successes and failures of memorials in reconciling the issues facing “comfort women.”

## **Lesson 4: Histories of Resistance; Ongoing Struggles**

**Objective:** Examine the ongoing struggles for justice and recognition.

**1. Lecture**

- Discuss the history of resistance among survivors. Discuss the transnational movement for justice as well as declarations by the UN.

**2. Student presentations:**

- Divide students into groups and have them do a 5-10 minute presentation on the history and current activism of groups such as CARE (Comfort Women for Redress and Action), WCCW (Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issues), CWJC (Comfort Women Justice Coalition). They are welcome to find and report on other relevant organizations.

**3. Small group work/ report back:**

- What would you propose as actionable steps for reparations for “comfort women”?
- Should the international community take a more active role? What would that look like?

**4. Activism activity:**

- Create a written, audio, and/or visual piece (e.g. a flyer, a letter, a social media post) designed to advocate on behalf of survivors. Draw explicitly on 3 sources from the class for the information you use.