

## Diversifying the Curriculum: Gender, War & Militarism

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January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Funding from the Diversify the Curriculum was used to invite the eminent feminist scholar Professor Marsha Henry to deliver an interactive book talk in my third-year module, POLI30791 Gender, War & Militarism.

Professor Henry, recently appointed the Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton Chair in Women, Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's Belfast, is a prominent feminist of colour in the discipline of International Relations and her scholarship has been at the forefront of conversations on intersectionality and its (mis)uses in feminist scholarship on the gendered politics of conflict, war, and peacekeeping. More broadly, Professor Henry's research is concerned with the gendered and racialised politics of violence and militarisation, and the coloniality of gender and humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping. She is the author of several books, the latest of which is the one she was invited to present on, *The End of Peacekeeping: Gender, Race, and the Martial Politics of Intervention* (University of Pennsylvania Press).

Her book, *The End of Peacekeeping*, nicely dovetails with the aims of the course which are oriented around exposing the deep and enduring entanglements between coloniality, gender, war and militarism. Through a feminist curiosity, the book explores how peacekeeping is best understood as an epistemic project that actively produces knowledge about peacekeeping and the people and practices involved in it to maintain global systems of power and domination including colonialism, racism, heterosexism and militarism. In so doing, she argues, modern peacekeeping is invested in maintaining and reproducing what W.E.B De Bois named the 'global colour line' and as such it cannot be reimagined or reinvented. More bluntly, she argues that peacekeeping is and always has been a male-dominated, colonial, and militarist/militarising project of global power that cannot be reformed. The book encourages students interested in challenging war and militarism with imagining abolitionist futures and alternatives to peacekeeping. To truly invest in humane responses to conflict, she argues, requires us to take seriously decolonisation and demilitarisation as necessary for working toward less violent futures.

The book critically captures and puts into use the analytical scaffolding of the course including the coloniality of gender, feminist rethinking of war and militarism, a feminist curiosity which asks 'where are the women (of colour)?' as a radical methodology, and more. It also fits with the final question covered in the course, 'should militaries be abolished?'. Students were asked to read the Introduction and Chapter 3 of the book, the latter of which showed the limits of a solitary focus on gender, the lived experiences of women peacekeepers, how discourses of 'operational effectiveness' are a strategic way in which gendered structures of power are reproduced, and how representations of sexual exploitation and assault on peacekeeping missions are fundamentally colonial.

Feedback from students was overwhelmingly positive. They appreciated having a woman of colour in the classroom speaking passionately, accessibly, and authoritatively about the analytical frameworks of analysis introduced in the course and brought to life in multiple peacekeeping contexts. While the Department of Politics has worked to address gender representation amongst its staff, it remains overwhelmingly white. Through decolonising and diversifying the reading list, amongst other strategies, the course has a reading list that is more than 50% produced by women of colour. However, this can only do so much to disrupt the conflation between whiteness and academic authority. Having someone such as Professor Henry at the front of the classroom sharing her work on the coloniality of gender and militarism goes a long way to affirming racially minoritised students as belonging and importantly, as voices of authority and radical knowledge.

The Diversify the Curriculum fund supported a significant step in further decolonising my module and helping to foster a more diverse and inclusive classroom. The process of applying and accessing the funds was thankfully easy and straightforward, demonstrating the School's commitment to diversifying the curriculum. The next step is to work toward making this a more permanent feature of my classroom, rather than a singular event. While the session was recorded and will be shared with future students, it's not the same as physical presence. My aim is to connect the course to similar courses on the coloniality of gender and war taught by women of colour in the discipline to create a collective, global classroom. This, however, is not easy and it is my next decolonial challenge.