

Conference “Women and Politics in the Modern World (19th-21st Century): Women in Politics, the Politics for Women”

Abstract: “Feminism as (Political) Utopia.”

Historically, feminism and utopia have been intrinsically connected. From the attempts to change society in the late 19th century, to utopian lesbian communities in the 80s and the vast field of feminist science fiction, utopian thinking has always been an important part of feminist work. Lucy Sargisson once claimed that “without utopianism, feminism will grind to a halt.” Since this has not happened yet, the question remains: where does feminism stand today? Does the connection still prevail or has feminism moved on to a different driver? Would feminist still willingly associate with the notion of utopia?

Utopia has traditionally been a contested term, often wrongly equated with totalitarianism or impossibility. The 90s came with a dystopian turn, both literary as well as politically. This means the mere notion of change, of hope and a better future has been discarded and was replaced by critique, fear of transformation and the widespread disbelief in alternatives. Rooted in the neoliberal mindset that came with the 80s, contemporary dystopian thinking is based in a lack of prospects and the fixation on criticism rather than the proposal of change. Did this dystopian turn encompass feminism as well? In this paper, I attempt to find proposals of change in the contemporary feminist movement and therefore the utopian potential inherent in it.