



Syllabus/Programme

Violence, Gender and Resistance in West Asia

Olimpiada Usanova & Saida Sirazhudinova

When & Where:	Fridays, 14:00 CET	Off University Moodle, online
Hosted by:	Marburg University with 6 ECTS Certification*	
Department	Center for Conflict Studies	

*How to count your Off university course towards credit?

Successful completion of a course at Off University is certified by the host university. This means that you are able to use these credits at any university in the EHEA in a programme you are enrolled in, or you may count this as previous knowledge in a future study programme. In order to be sure that you can transfer the credits, we suggest you get written confirmation by your home university's students' office. And if you are not enrolled in any university programme: You are very welcome to join! All our courses are free of charge and open to anyone: students, scholars, activists.

Description:

Gender-based violence constitutes a structural and persistent form of inequality that shapes social relations, legal systems, and political responses across different societies. In West Asian countries, gender-based violence intersects with authoritarian governance, armed conflict, migration, and deeply rooted patriarchal norms, producing specific patterns of vulnerability as well as resistance.

This course examines gender-based violence in West Asia through feminist and queer perspectives, with a particular focus on physical, sexualized, economic, and psychological violence against women, children, and queer individuals. Special attention is paid to domestic violence, femicide, so-called "honour" killings, female genital mutilation, violence in conflict settings, and violence affecting displaced and migrant populations.

The course combines comparative regional analysis (Northern Caucasus, Southern Caucasus, and Iran) with an exploration of legal frameworks, social practices, and forms of resistance. It critically engages with activism, women's initiatives, and survival strategies such as migration and evacuation, highlighting how individuals and communities contest violence and create alternative spaces of agency.

Digital Self Defense

Our platform is dedicated to spread knowledge threatened by authoritarian and right-wing populist regimes and to put measures in place that enable people to practice digital self-defense.

We encourage all users to sign up for the platform anonymously and respect others' preferences for staying anonymous. **Please do not force anyone to share personal information or take screenshots of others without their knowledge.**

The courses take place on Off University's Moodle. The platform includes an encrypted video-call option, a cloud storage, as well as a messaging system. We would like to remind all users that communication with other users outside of the platform (i.e. e-mail, Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp or other video conferencing tools) may put them at risk.

Timeline of the Course Schedule

Week 1	17-04-2026	Introducing the course. What is violence .
Week 2	24-04-2026	Physical violence: approaches to its study and eradication. Gender-based violence against women
Week 3	29-04-2026	Domestic violence.
Week 4	08-05-2026	Children as victims of violence
Week 5	15-05-2026	Female genital mutilation.
Week 6	22-05-2026	Sexualized violence, including sexual violence in the context of armed conflict as a specific subtype.
Week 7	29-05-2026	'Honour' killings.
Week 8	05-06-2026	Abduction of children, including by relatives.
Week 9	12-06-2026	Economic and psychological violence
Week 10	19-06-2026	Domestic violence and queer people.
Week 11	26-06-2026	Comparative analysis of the situation in the region (Northern Caucasus, Southern Caucasus, Iran)
Week 12	03-07-2026	Forms and methods of resistance to violence (regional overview), including evacuation and migration as strategies of survival.
Week 13	10-07-2026	Activism and women's initiatives.
Week 14	17-07-2026	Feminist and queer perspectives on the eradication of violence.



Aimed Outcomes

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- Identify and critically analyse different forms of gender-based violence in West Asian contexts using feminist and queer theoretical approaches;
- Understand how gender-based violence is shaped by legal systems, political regimes, armed conflict, and migration processes;
- Compare manifestations of violence across different countries and social contexts within the region;
- Assess the role of activism, women's movements, and queer initiatives in resisting and challenging violence;

Develop skills in critical reading, comparative analysis, academic discussion, and written argumentation related to gender and violence.

Course components

The methodology includes:

- Live sessions
- Readings
- Screenings
- Critical discussion

The final grade for the course will be based on the following:

- **Active participation in sessions – 10%**
- **Group presentation(s) – 20%**
 - Group presentations will be based on assigned readings and aim to foster collaborative analysis and discussion.
- **Final written assignment (paper or analytical essay, max. 2,500 words) – 70%**
 - The final paper should focus on a topic closely related to the course themes and draw on both course literature and additional academic sources. Students are required to submit a short abstract and outline during the course to receive feedback before the final submission.

All written work must be original, properly referenced, and comply with academic integrity standards.

Organization of the course

Focus/Topic of the week & Reading List

Week 1: Introducing the course | *What is violence*

Cost and measurement of violence. Concepts, types, facts and figures. Ways of defining the policy/legal problem: - the feminist approach to violence against women; distinction and tensions between violence against women and gender based violence; protection from violence as a women's rights and as a human rights issue.

Questions for discussion: Gender based violence: What is it? What forms? How to measure it? What is its cost?

Readings:

- Sally Merry Engle (2009) "Introduction" in Gender violence: a cultural perspective. Pp.1-25. "Naming and Framing the Problem" 27-29 in Gender Violence: a Cultural Perspective. Wiley-Blackwell
- Alice Edwards, Violence Against Women under International Human Rights Law, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 36-87

Recommended:

- Radford, Kelly, Hester (1995) "Introduction" in Marianne Hester , Liz Kelly , Jill Radford Eds. (1995) Women, Violence, and Male Power: Feminist Activism, Research, and Practice. Open University Press.
- Michael S. Kimmel (2002) "Gender Symmetry" in Domestic Violence: A Substantive and Methodological Research Review. Violence Against Women. 8: 1332-1363.
- Catherine MacKinnon "Equality Remade: Violence against Women" in Are Women Human? Harvard UP.2006. Pp. 105-111

Week 2: Physical violence: approaches to its study and eradication (global overview, statistics, and typologies, including gender-based violence, armed violence, violence against children and older persons, cyberviolence, etc.).

In this initial overview seminar, we will critically examine the phenomenon of physical violence, exploring its historical roots, socio-cultural drivers, and patterns of prevalence within the region under study. The session will provide a global context, incorporating statistical analyses, trends, and typologies of violence, with particular attention to gender-based violence, armed conflicts, violence against vulnerable populations, and emerging forms such as cyberviolence. We will also address region-specific manifestations and local representations of violence, highlighting their

societal and institutional dimensions. This foundational discussion will establish the thematic framework and research questions that guide the seminar series, emphasizing both analytical rigor and the practical relevance of understanding and preventing violence.

Reading materials:

- World Health Organization. (2022). Preventing injuries and violence: an overview.
- Hulley, J., Bailey, L., Kirkman, G., Gibbs, G. R., Gomersall, T., Latif, A., & Jones, A. (2023). Intimate partner violence and barriers to help-seeking among Black, Asian, minority ethnic and immigrant women: A qualitative metasynthesis of global research. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 24(2), 1001-1015.

Recommended:

- World Health Organization. (2021). Addressing violence against women in health and multisectoral policies: A global status report. World Health Organization.
- World Health Organization. (2022). Reporting on violence against children: a guide for journalists.
- Femicide in War and Peace. Edited By Shalva Weil. 1st Edition. Routledge, 2023. <https://www.routledge.com/Femicide-in-War-and-Peace/Weil/p/book/9781032482774>

Week 3: Domestic violence

This seminar will critically examine domestic violence as both a global phenomenon and a pressing regional challenge. In the region under study, domestic violence replicates and amplifies multiple forms of abuse, often intensified by local social norms, while remaining largely hidden and underreported. The issue is particularly urgent in the context of a marked resurgence of anti-gender attitudes and rollback of women's rights. We will explore the transformation of family structures and relationships, the key social, cultural, and institutional factors that sustain domestic abuse, and the multifaceted challenges faced by victims. The discussion will also address legislative frameworks, policy responses, and civil society initiatives, highlighting both their achievements and limitations, and considering pathways toward more effective prevention, intervention, and protection.

Reading materials:

- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Istanbul, 11.05.2011 // <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>

- Explanatory report to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Istanbul, 11.05.2011 // <https://rm.coe.int/16800d383a>

Recommended:

- Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation (Passed by the Committee against Torture at its 64th session (23 July – 10 August 2018) // https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2fC%2fRUS%2fCO%2f6 &Lang=en
- Human Rights Watch. They have long arms and they can find me. Anti-gay Purge by Local Authorities in Russia's Chechen Republic. May 2017. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/chechnya0517_web.pdf
- Violence against Women in the Russian Federation. Alternative Report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women / Anna National Center for the Prevention of Violence, 46th session, July 2010. Examination of the 6th and 7th report submitted by the Russian Federation. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/RUS/INT_CEDAW_NGO_RUS_46_9974_E.pdf
- Russian Federation. Briefing to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women / Amnesty International, 46th session, 2010. https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/ai_russianfederation46.pdf
- EASO Country of Origin Information Report. Chechnya: Women, Marriage, Divorce and Child Custody / European Asylum Support Office, 2014. <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/COI-Report-Chechnya.pdf>
- Violence Against Women in the Russian Federation / Stop Violence against Women, 2014. http://www.stopvaw.org/russian_federation

Week 4: Children as victims of violence

This seminar will provide a critical examination of violence against children, focusing on both its diverse forms and the social and cultural mechanisms that sustain it. Specific types of abuse to be addressed include psychological harm, gender- and appearance-based discrimination, restricted access to education, traditional practices of violence, child marriage, and forced separation from mothers, as well as other forms of abuse that are tolerated or even socially sanctioned. The session will also highlight the experiences and interventions of organizations working to combat these abuses, particularly efforts to prevent early marriage and family separations. Illustrative excerpts from films will be used to provide concrete examples, making the discussion more tangible and impactful. While female genital mutilation (FGM) is certainly related, it may be more appropriately treated as a separate, dedicated topic to allow for a focused and thorough analysis.

Readings:

- Breaking Barriers: Addressing Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Eurasia - Equality Now. <https://equalitynow.storage.googleapis.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/09212620/EN-Eurasia-CEFM-Marriages-Report-PDF-05.pdf>
- Aghtaie, N., & Staines, J. (2022). Child execution in Iran: furthering our understanding of child execution as a form of structural violence. *Critical criminology*, 30(2), 387-402.
- Child, Early and Forced Marriage: A MultiCountry Study A Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OCHCR). 15 December 2013.

Week 5: Female genital mutilation

This seminar will critically examine the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), focusing on its geographic prevalence and the complex social, cultural, and historical factors that perpetuate it in specific regions. We will analyze the practice itself, including the methods employed and the underlying motivations for its continuation. Special attention will be given to the perspectives of various actors: society at large, state authorities, religious institutions, and human rights organizations, highlighting both complicity and resistance. The discussion will also encompass international and regional legal frameworks, including legislative initiatives, prohibitions, and enforcement mechanisms aimed at eradicating FGM and safeguarding the rights and bodily integrity of women and girls.

Readings:

- Female Genital Mutilation of Girls in Dagestan (Russian Federation). Report based on the results of a qualitative study on female genital mutilation performed on girls. 2017. https://www.srji.org/upload/iblock/c94/fgm_dagestan_2016_eng_final_edited_2017.pdf

Film: "This Happens to Us" – Female Circumcision in the Caucasus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gu-PAHqfMUy>

This film is particularly notable for its impact on public discourse and religious authorities in the region. It prompted the Muftiate to issue a fatwa which, while ostensibly prohibiting the practice of female circumcision as suggested by its title, in practice provides a rationale that legitimizes its continuation. The film thus highlights the tension between public condemnation, religious interpretation, and the

persistence of entrenched cultural practices, offering a critical lens on the complexities of addressing harmful traditional practices in the Caucasus.

Recommended:

- Saida V. Sirazhudinova (2019) Attitudes Toward Female Circumcision in Dagestani Society: "Not to be Mentioned!", *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, 58:3, 123-133, DOI: 10.1080/10611959.2019.1686907
- WHO. . An Update on WHO's Work on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Progress Report, 2011. [World Health Organization, 2011].
- The practice of female genital mutilation in Dagestan: strategies for its elimination. https://www.srji.org/upload/iblock/957/The_practice_of_female_genital_mutilation_in_DagestaD_strategies_for_its_elimination_15.06.pdf
- As-Salam, 2008, no. 5. assalam.ru/content/story/3082
- Resolution 54/7 (E/2010/27-E/CN.6/2010/11) of the Commission on the Status of Women. [UN Commission on the Status of Women. Report on the forty-fourth session (13 March and 14 October 2009 and 1-12 March 2010). Economic and Social Council Official Records, 2010, Supplement No. 7 (E/2010/27. E/CN.6/2010/11). New York: United Nations, March 12, 2010.].
- WHO. Female Genital Mutilation: A Joint WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Statement. Geneva: World Health Organization, 1997.
- Femicide, Harmful Practices, Religious Organizations and the Law in the North Caucasus. in *Femicide in War and Peace*. Edited By Shalva Weil. 1st Edition. Routledge, 2023. <https://www.routledge.com/Femicide-in-War-and-Peace/Weil/p/book/9781032482774>
- Lightfoot-Klein, H. *Prisoners of Ritual: An Odyssey into Female Genital Circumcision in Africa*. New York: Haworth Press, 1989.
- Saadawi, N. *Women and Sex*. Cairo, 1972.
- Wilson, T. "Pharaonic Circumcision Under Patriarchy and Breast Augmentation under Phallogocentric Capitalism." *Violence Against Women*, 2002, vol. 8 (4), pp. 495-521.

Week 6: Sexualized Violence in Conflict.

In this session, we discuss peacekeeping and the inclusion of sexual violence under international criminal law, as well as the issues that arise in the field during wartime. We will pay special attention to the ongoing armed conflict.

Readings:

- Catherine MacKinnon, *Are Women Human?* Harvard University Press, 2006, pp. 141-159 and pp. 192-195
- Sally Merry Engle (2009) "Women and Armed Conflict" in *Gender violence: a cultural perspective*. Ch 7

- UNHR. Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (2023). Available <https://ukraine.ohchr.org/en/Report-of-the-Secretary-General-on-conflict-related-sexual-violence>

Watch: PBS documentary Women, War and Peace: War Redefined

Week 7: "Honor Killings"

This session will critically examine crimes commonly justified by tradition and socially sanctioned within certain communities, known as honor-motivated killings or, more broadly, honor killings. We will explore the historical, cultural, and social roots of these crimes, their prevalence, and the complex ways in which communities perceive and sometimes condone them. The discussion will also cover legal frameworks, judicial practices, and the responses of regional authorities, highlighting both gaps and challenges in enforcement. Furthermore, we will analyze trends, provide statistical insights, and examine strategies for prevention, emphasizing the pivotal role of civil society, advocacy groups, and grassroots initiatives in challenging these violations and promoting accountability.

Readings:

- Killed by gossip "Honor killings" of women in the North Caucasus. Report on the results of a qualitative study in the republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya (Russian Federation)
<https://www.srji.org/upload/medialibrary/a3d/PPI-2018-12-18-Honor-killings-Eng-final.pdf>
- Femicide, Harmful Practices, Religious Organizations and the Law in the North Caucasus. in Femicide in War and Peace. Edited By Shalva Weil. 1st Edition. Routledge, 2023. <https://www.routledge.com/Femicide-in-War-and-Peace/Weil/p/book/9781032482774>

Recommended:

- Neeman-Haviv, V. (2021). Honor killings in Muslim and Western countries in modern times: A critical literature review and definitional implications. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 13(3), 381-397.
- Malik, S., & Tomar, S. (2025). The Hidden Face of Modernity: Unravelling Honor Killings in Russia. In *Criminological Analyses on Global Honor Killing* (pp. 419-440). IGI Global.
- Heydari, A., Teymoori, A., & Trappes, R. (2021). Honor killing as a dark side of modernity: Prevalence, common discourses, and a critical view. *Social Science Information*, 60(1), 86-106.
- Moghaddasi, M. B., & Roustaie, M. (2024). Honor killings and a comparative study of its representation in western, islamic and Iran criminal systems. *Comparative Studies on Islamic and Western Law*, 11(2), 139-162.

Week 8: Abduction of children, including by relatives

At this seminar, we will examine the issue of violence against children. Violence against children in patriarchal societies is closely linked to specific child-rearing practices, children's roles within the family hierarchy, and their structural dependence. We will demonstrate that gender continues to play a significant role in determining children's status and the ways they are treated (including sex-selective abortions, inequality, discrimination, domestic labor, access to education, and forced early marriages). We will also explore different forms of violence against children, as well as the problem of the violent separation of mothers and children. Particular attention will be paid to customs and traditions related to child upbringing that involve restrictions and violence. Finally, we will discuss how children are protected from violence and assess the effectiveness of these protection mechanisms.

Readings:

- Sirazhudinova, S. (2023). Femicide, Harmful Practices, Religious Organizations and the Law in the North Caucasus. In *Femicide in War and Peace* (pp. 71-80). Routledge.
- Aprilianda, N., Farikhah, M., & Krisna, L. A. (2022). Critical review selecting a proper law to resolve sexual violence against children. *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam*, 6(2), 954-974.
- CIURBEA, F. E., MARINESCU, V., RODIDEAL, A. A., NEAGU, A. E., & Rada, C. (2025). Adolescents and violence: A systematic review of protective and risk factors. *Anthropological Researches and Studies*, 15, 1-29.

Recommended:

- Youngman, M., & Wilhelmsen, J. (2026). Introduction: Power and Social Hierarchies in the North Caucasus: Perceptions and Challenges. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 73(1), 1-6.
- Danaeifar, M., Arshi, M., & Moghanibashi-Mansourieh, A. (2022). Child sexual abuse in Iran: a systematic review of the prevalence, risk factors, consequences, interventions and laws. *Journal of injury and violence research*, 14(3), 225.
- Aghtaie, N., & Staines, J. (2022). Child execution in Iran: furthering our understanding of child execution as a form of structural violence. *Critical criminology*, 30(2), 387-402.
- Child, Early and Forced Marriage: A MultiCountry Study A Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OCHCR). 15 December 2013.
- Breaking Barriers: Addressing Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Eurasia - Equality Now. 2024. <https://equalitynow.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/EN-Eurasia-CEFM-Marriages-Report-PDF-05-1.pdf>

Week 9: Economic and psychological violence

In the context of the North Caucasus and Iran, economic and psychological violence against women and children is deeply embedded in patriarchal social structures and reinforced by a combination of customary norms, religious interpretations, and state practices. Economic violence manifests through systematic restrictions on access to financial resources, inheritance, property ownership, and paid employment, as well as through the normalization of women's unpaid domestic and care labor. In both regions, economic dependence on male family members significantly limits women's and children's ability to leave abusive environments and reinforces hierarchical family relations.

Psychological violence operates through mechanisms of control, surveillance, and moral regulation of behavior, including the denial of political voice, the suppression of dissent, and the restriction of personal autonomy. In the North Caucasus, this violence is often legitimized through references to "tradition," "honor," and communal reputation, while in Iran it is additionally institutionalized through legal frameworks and state-enforced moral norms. In both cases, individuals—especially girls and young women—are deprived of the freedom to determine their own life trajectories, including decisions regarding education, marriage, mobility, and participation in public life.

Particular attention will be paid to practices such as forced and early marriages, the limitation of access to education, and the control over reproductive choices, all of which function as forms of economic and psychological coercion rather than merely "cultural" phenomena. The lecture will critically examine how these forms of violence are normalized, rendered invisible, or justified as moral obligations, and how they intersect with broader systems of political power, gender inequality, and social control in both regions.

Readings:

- Chemtob, C. M., & Carlson, J. G. (2004). Psychological Effects of Domestic Violence on Children and Their Mothers. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 11(3), 209.
- Figueredo, A. J., & McCloskey, L. A. (1993). Sex, money, and paternity: The evolutionary psychology of domestic violence. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 14(6), 353-379.

Recommended:

- Doroudchi, A., Zarenezhad, M., Hosseininezhad, H., Malekpour, A., Ehsaei, Z., Kaboodkhani, R., & Valiei, M. (2023). Psychological complications of the children



exposed to domestic violence: a systematic review. *Egyptian journal of forensic sciences*, 13(1), 26.

- Peters, J., Shackelford, T. K., & Buss, D. M. (2002). Understanding domestic violence against women: Using evolutionary psychology to extend the feminist functional analysis. *Violence and victims*, 17(2), 255.
- Postmus, J. L., Hoge, G. L., Breckenridge, J., Sharp-Jeffs, N., & Chung, D. (2020). Economic abuse as an invisible form of domestic violence: A multicountry review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 21(2), 261-283.
- Khatchvani, T. (2015). The impact of gender-related stereotypes on intimate partner violence in the South Caucasus: Comparative study of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia.
- Adineh, H. A., Almasi, Z., Rad, M. E., Zareban, I., & Moghaddam, A. A. (2016). Prevalence of domestic violence against women in Iran: A systematic review.

Week 10: Domestic violence and queer people.

This section of the seminar will focus on the situation of queer people in the North Caucasus and Iran, examining domestic and societal violence in contexts marked by strong patriarchal norms, heteronormativity, and political repression. We will trace the dynamics of violence and exclusion, paying particular attention to how family structures, community control, religious discourses, and state policies contribute to the vulnerability of LGBTQ+ individuals.

The seminar will analyze the escalation of risks faced by queer people in recent years, including the impact of restrictive and repressive legislation in Russia, which has intensified stigmatization, legitimized violence, and reduced access to protection and support. In the case of Iran, attention will be paid to the criminalization of same-sex relations and the role of state violence alongside familial and social coercion.

Drawing on human rights reports, documentation by international and local NGOs, and personal testimonies of individuals who have managed to escape these regions, we will examine different forms of violence experienced by queer people. These include domestic violence within families, social ostracism, threats, forced confinement, torture, and the risk of so-called "honor killings." Particular emphasis will be placed on the role of the family as both a primary site of violence and a mechanism of surveillance and control.

Finally, the seminar will address the strategies of survival and resistance developed by queer individuals, as well as the widespread aspiration to evacuate and leave the region as the only viable means of ensuring safety. We will critically discuss the limitations of existing protection mechanisms and explore the ethical, legal, and political challenges surrounding asylum, evacuation, and international solidarity with queer people fleeing violence from the North Caucasus and Iran.

Watch:

- **Karen Shainyan. Chechnya's War on LGBT People (2020) (in Russian with English subtitles).** <https://youtu.be/tCYTKvzrUug?si=MxcXvRtcv6e3U6NT>

Shainyan's film focuses on the torture, kidnapping, and forced "treatment" of suspected gays and lesbians in Chechnya, as well as the fact that many of the region's LGBTQ people have simply been killed. Moreover, Shainyan looks at why queer people continue to return to Chechnya, regardless of the abuse they've faced, and threats to their lives and health. The film's main subjects talk about how Chechen gays are working to accept themselves, and seek to answer the question of why the persecution of LGBTQ people is so widespread in Chechnya, but not in neighboring regions of the Russian North Caucasus, like Dagestan. In their opinion, the influence of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov isn't the only factor.

- **David France. Welcome to Chechnya. (2020)**
https://vk.com/video469520291_456239029 (in Russian with English subtitles)

The film "Welcome to Chechnya" recounts the events of 2017, when, according to human rights activists, Chechen security forces detained and tortured members of the LGBT community, predominantly men, over a period of several weeks. Those who managed to escape were later able to recount what had happened to them in secret prisons. However, most of them hide their faces for fear of their lives. In order to preserve the anonymity of the protagonists, the film uses innovative "digital skin" technology.

The film's main character, Maxim Lapunov, is the only one who dared to speak openly about the persecution. Maxim and his family were threatened, and activists from the Moscow Community Center for LGBT+ Initiatives and the Russian LGBT Network, Olga Baranova and David Isteev, helped them leave Russia. In total, they helped more than a hundred Chechen gays and lesbians: through a network of shelters, constantly changing addresses, they fled first from Grozny and then from Russia.

Readings:

- Muravyeva, M., & Kondakov, A. S. (2024). Queering Family Violence: Introduction to Queer Family Violence Studies. *Journal of Family Violence*, 39(7), 1207-1218.

Recommended:

- Meyer, D. (2015). *Violence against queer people: Race, class, gender, and the persistence of anti-LGBT discrimination*. Rutgers University Press.
- Mahomed, N. (2016). Queer Muslims: between orthodoxy, secularism and the struggle for acceptance. *Theology & Sexuality*, 22(1-2), 57-72.



- Wilkinson, C., & Dall'Agnola, J. (2024). Introduction: LGBTQ+ visibilities in the Caucasus and Central Asia. *Central Asian Survey*, 43(1), 1-11.
- Scicchitano, D. (2021). The "real" Chechen man: Conceptions of religion, nature, and gender and the persecution of sexual minorities in postwar Chechnya. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 68(9), 1545-1562.
- Andreevskikh, O. (2024). Discourses on non-heteronormative masculinities and intimate partner violence: A Russian media case study. *Journal of family violence*, 39(7), 1313-1324.
- Ahmady, K. (2023). Investigating the dynamics of the Iranian LGBT community from legal and religious perspectives. *Lampyrid: J Bioluminescent Beetle Res*, 13, 846-69.

Week 11: Comparative analysis of the situation in the region (Northern Caucasus, Southern Caucasus, Iran)

In this section of the seminar, we will bring together the analyses developed in previous sessions and conduct a comparative examination of different forms of violence across the Northern Caucasus, the Southern Caucasus, and Iran. Having previously examined specific types of violence—domestic, economic, psychological, gender-based, and violence against children and queer people—in individual regional contexts, we will now focus on identifying both shared patterns and region-specific dynamics.

The comparative approach will allow us to distinguish between common structural factors influencing domestic and gender-based violence across the region, such as patriarchal family models, gender hierarchies, religious and customary norms, political authoritarianism, and the weakness or selective application of legal protections. At the same time, we will analyze how these factors operate differently depending on state policies, legal frameworks, historical trajectories, and the role of religious institutions in each context.

Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which different states and societies respond to domestic violence: the presence or absence of legal mechanisms, the role of law enforcement and the judiciary, the availability of shelters and support services, and the activities of civil society and human rights organizations. We will compare official narratives, informal practices, and grassroots initiatives in order to assess the effectiveness and limitations of existing responses.

Finally, the seminar will explore future perspectives and possible pathways for addressing violence in the region. By comparing common and specific forms of violence, as well as different models of resistance, protection, and advocacy, we aim to develop a deeper understanding of the structural roots of violence and to identify context-sensitive strategies for prevention, support, and social change in the Northern Caucasus, the Southern Caucasus, and Iran.

Readings:

- Sirazhudinova, S. (2022). The Women Organizations and Activism in Combating Domestic Violence in the North Caucasus. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(11), 57-63.
- Sirazhudinova S. V. (2021). Gender strategy in Muslim society: the case of the north Caucasian republics. *Woman in Russian Society*, 1: 56—67. DOI: 10.21064/WinRS.2021.1.5
- Jahromi, M. K., Jamali, S., Koshkaki, A. R., & Javadpour, S. (2015). Prevalence and risk factors of domestic violence against women by their husbands in Iran. *Global journal of health science*, 8(5), 175.

Recommended:

- Khatchvani, T. (2015). The impact of gender-related stereotypes on intimate partner violence in the South Caucasus: Comparative study of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia.
- Dehkordi, A. H., & Heydari, H. (2024). The prevalence of domestic violence in Iran: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Jundishapur Journal of Chronic Disease Care*, 14(14), 156-584.
- Chernyak, E. (2020). A comparative study of intimate partner violence in post-Soviet countries: Evidence from National surveys. *Journal of Family Issues*, 41(12), 2297-2327.
- Collins-Breyfogle, K. (2011). *Negotiating Imperial Spaces: Gender, Sexuality & Violence in the Nineteenth-century Caucasus*. The Ohio State University.

Week 12: Forms and methods of resistance to violence (regional overview), including evacuation and migration as strategies of survival.

This section of the seminar provides a regional overview of the diverse forms and methods of resistance to violence in the North Caucasus, the Southern Caucasus, and Iran. We will examine both individual and collective strategies of resistance, including personal acts of defiance, the formation of women's groups, crisis networks, shelters, and other forms of mutual aid that operate under conditions of limited visibility and high risk.

The seminar will also explore public and semi-public attempts to draw attention to violence through petitions, video appeals, human rights reports, expert assessments, and public testimonies. Particular attention will be paid to evacuation and forced migration as key strategies of survival for individuals facing immediate threats, highlighting the gendered and political dimensions of displacement.

Finally, we will address the risks associated with resistance and activism, including criminalization, persecution under the pretext of national security, intimidation, and violence against activists and survivors. The discussion will critically examine how

acts of resistance are suppressed, and how, in extreme cases, individuals who challenge violence face severe reprisals, including assassination, underscoring the high cost of opposing entrenched systems of violence in the region.

Film screening on resistance to violence

Readings:

- Chenoweth, E. (2023). The role of violence in nonviolent resistance. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 26(1), 55-77.
- Rajah, V., & Osborn, M. (2022). Understanding women's resistance to intimate partner violence: A scoping review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 23(5), 1373-1387.

Recommended:

- Moghissi, H. (1999). Away from home: Iranian women, displacement cultural resistance and change. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 30(2), 207-217.
- Knaus, I. (2024). "Woman, Life, Freedom": collective female resistance in Iran.

Week 13: Activism and women's initiatives.

This section of the seminar explores the role of women's initiatives in responding to violence and producing gradual social change in restrictive and high-risk contexts. We will examine how grassroots women's activism—often non-public and informal—provides concrete forms of protection and support, including emergency assistance, evacuation, legal aid, and psychological support. Special attention will be paid to the role of women in documenting violence through human rights reports and alternative media, thereby challenging dominant narratives and making violence visible.

Through selected examples of women's initiatives in the North Caucasus, the Southern Caucasus, and Iran, the seminar will highlight the tangible outcomes of such activism, as well as the personal risks involved. We will discuss women's courage and willingness to confront family, community, and state pressure, and assess how these bottom-up forms of activism contribute to slow but meaningful transformations in social attitudes, solidarity networks, and practices of resistance.

Watch:

- Kidnappings, exorcisms, and forced marriages: how to survive family dictatorship | BBC film (2023) (in Russian with English subtitles).
<https://youtu.be/j7L18FFPq8E?si=qawn9TYLSl2XOndr>



When women from the republics of the North Caucasus face domestic violence and total control by their families, they have virtually nowhere to turn. Some of them decide to take the most risky step – to run away.

These young women not only sever ties with their families forever, but also learn to live in constant fear for their safety. Many families are willing to do anything to find the runaways and force them to return home, where the girls may face “honor killings.”

The BBC Russian Service film “When I Ran Away” tells the stories of those who managed to escape to freedom and are trying to start a new life.

Recommended:

- Sirazhudinova, S. (2022). The Women Organizations and Activism in Combating Domestic Violence in the North Caucasus. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(11), 57-63.
- Aliyeva, Y. G. (2019). Exploring two generations of women activists in Azerbaijan: between feminism and a post-Soviet locality. In *Women's everyday lives in war and peace in the South Caucasus* (pp. 225-252). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Kluczevska, K., & Luciani, L. (2025). Framing feminism in Eurasia: bottom-up strategies of depoliticisation and repoliticisation. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1-25.
- Çağatay, S., Liinason, M., & Sasunkevich, O. (2022). Feminist and LGBTI+ activism across Russia, Scandinavia and Turkey: Transnationalizing spaces of resistance (p. 252). Springer Nature.
- Ishkanian, A. (2003). VI. Gendered Transitions: The Impact of the Post-Soviet Transition on Women in Central Asia and the Caucasus. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, 2(3), 475-496.
- Mitchell, K. (2021). Security and Emancipation as Resistance: How Contesting and Navigating Narratives of Women in Chechnya Impacts NGO Actions.
- Alikarami, L. (2019). *Women and equality in Iran: law, society and activism*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Mahdi, A. A. (2004). The Iranian Women's Movement: A Century Long Struggle. *Muslim World*, 94(4).
- Женская активность: история и современность: материалы Международной научно-практической конференции/ под редакцией С.В. Сиражудиновой, О.С. Мутиева. – Махачкала: АЛЕФ, ДГУНХ, 2021. – 325 с.
https://dgunh.ru/content/glavnay/nauka/nauchn-conferencii/mat_konf_2021-1.pdf#page=122

Week 14: Feminist and queer perspectives on the eradication of violence.

This section of the seminar introduces feminist and queer perspectives on violence and its eradication, focusing on how gender, sexuality, power, and inequality shape both violence and responses to it. We will examine how feminist and queer theories

conceptualize violence not only as individual acts but as structural and systemic phenomena embedded in family, law, religion, and the state.

Particular attention will be paid to feminist and queer strategies of resistance and prevention, including legal advocacy, grassroots activism, community-based support, and transnational solidarity. Drawing on examples from the North Caucasus, the Southern Caucasus, and Iran, we will discuss the possibilities and limits of these approaches in contexts marked by authoritarianism, patriarchy, and restricted civic space.

Reading:

- McPhail, B. A., Busch, N. B., Kulkarni, S., & Rice, G. (2007). An integrative feminist model: The evolving feminist perspective on intimate partner violence. *Violence against women*, 13(8), 817-841.
- Hall, R. J. (2015). Feminist strategies to end violence against women. *The Oxford handbook of transnational feminist movements*, 394-415.
- Pertek, S. I. (2020). Deconstructing Islamic perspectives on sexual and gender-based violence, toward a faith inclusive approach. *Islam and international development: insights for working with muslim communities*. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing, 131-152.

Recommended:

- Bochorishvili, A. (2019). Gender in Georgia. *Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation, and History in the South Caucasus*.
- Kosterina, I. (2015). Modernization, Patriarchy, and the Life of Girls in the North Caucasian Region. *Girlhood Studies*, 8(2), 71-85.
- Tohidi, M. (2016). Women's rights and feminist movements in Iran. - *International Journal on Human Rights*, 13, 75.
- Ahmadi, F. (2006). Islamic feminism in Iran: Feminism in a new Islamic context. *Journal of feminist studies in religion*, 33-53.
- Molana, H., Ranjbar, A. M., & Razavi, S. (2023). Woman, life, freedom: Decoding the feminist uprising in Iran. *Political Geography*, 103(January), 102834.
- Mohammadpour, A. (2024). Decolonizing voices from Rojhelat: Gender-othering, ethnic erasure, and the politics of intersectionality in Iran. *Critical Sociology*, 50(1), 85-106.