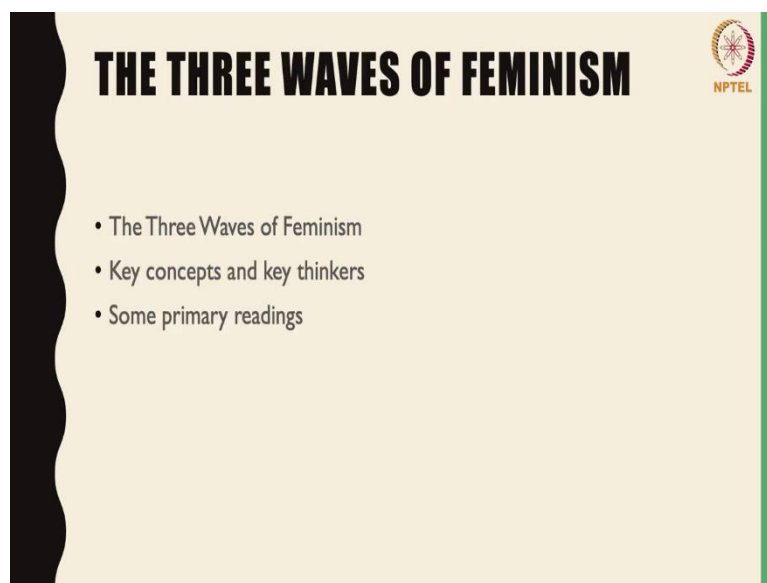


**Feminism: Concepts and Theories**  
**Dr. Mathangi Krishnamurthy**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Feminism: Concept and theories**  
**Summary: Weeks 5-11**

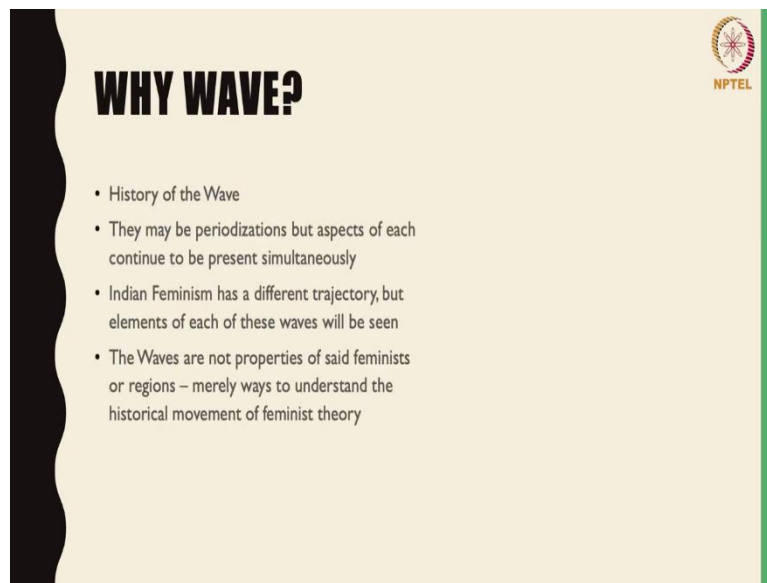
Feminism Concepts and Theories. This is lecture 27. This is your 2nd lecture for week 12 and we will continue with our agenda, which is mainly to recap our learnings; weeks 1 through 11. Now, in the last lecture we went through a summary of the main concepts covered in weeks 1 through 4. (tod) I am going to continue on weeks 5 to 11. If you remember, we had moved on from fundamental concepts, equality, choice, difference, etc., to a history of the feminist movement, specifically through an understanding of the three waves of feminism.

(Refer Slide Time: 1:04)



In this, we considered key concepts associated with each wave, as well as key thinkers specific to each wave. We also went through some primary readings. Now, of course, one of the important things to remember while considering this particular part of feminist history, is the very use of the term 'wave'.

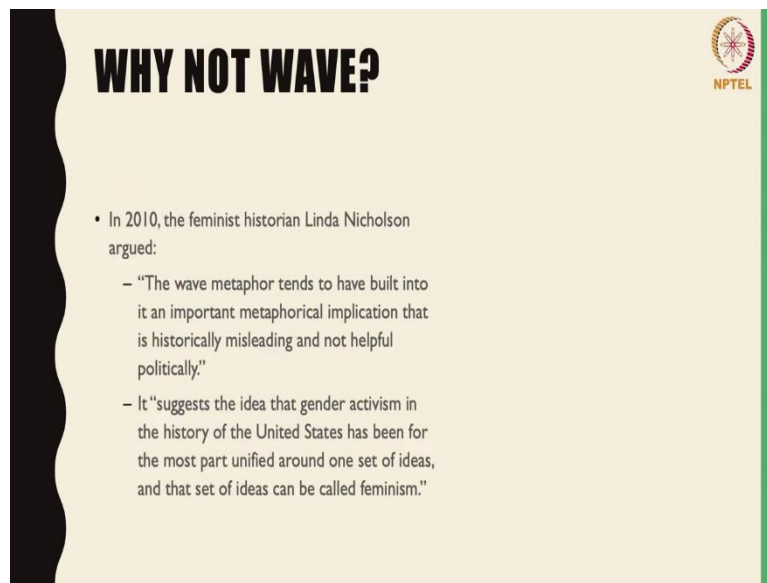
(Refer Slide Time: 1:26)



So, one of our sets of discussions was about the very history of the term itself. And we concluded that while each wave refers to periodization of a certain order, aspects of each wave can persevere beyond that time limit as well. And aspects of each wave are important to consider specifically also in relation to our understanding of feminisms, in various other parts of the world.

So, the wave or aspects of the wave in the first, second, and third instance are not properties of that time or of that geography. They are only ways to understand the historical specificity of feminist theory. And while different kinds of feminisms across the world may have had different trajectories, we can continue to identify aspects of each wave across all these geographies and forms of struggle.

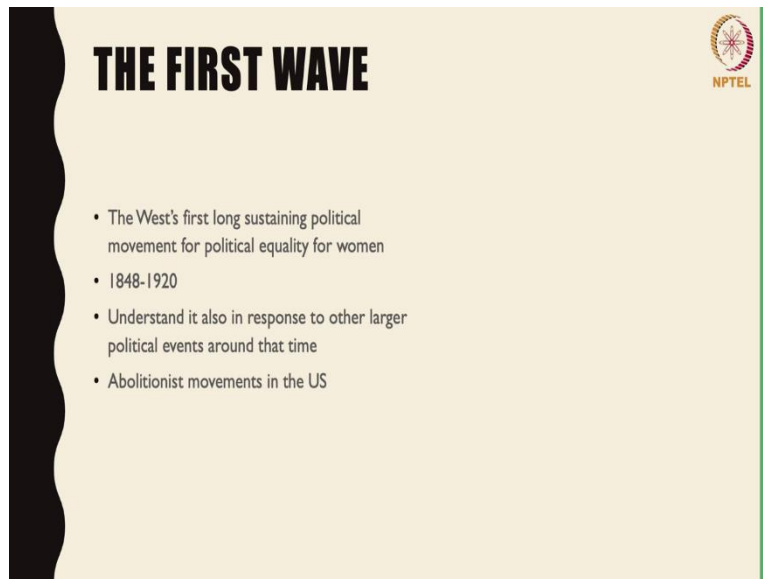
(Refer Slide Time: 2:28)



At the same time, we also considered ongoing critiques of the use of the wave as a metaphor, which according to feminist historian Linda Nicholson for example, can be problematic and is historically misleading and not politically helpful. In Nicholson’s words, it suggests that gender activism in the history of the United States has been for the most part unified around one set of ideas, a set of ideas called Feminism. And we know this to certainly not be the case.

So, wave itself is not a term, that must necessarily be adopted in an uncritical fashion. In many ways, it is an organizing device – a heuristic, and it allows us to identify certain historical elements, in the development of feminist theory proper. It allows us to see broadly in a global north-specific fashion, where is it that feminist thought often gained its energy from. So, it serves as a kind of method and not necessarily a historical truth to feminist movements around the world.

(Refer Slide Time: 3:49)



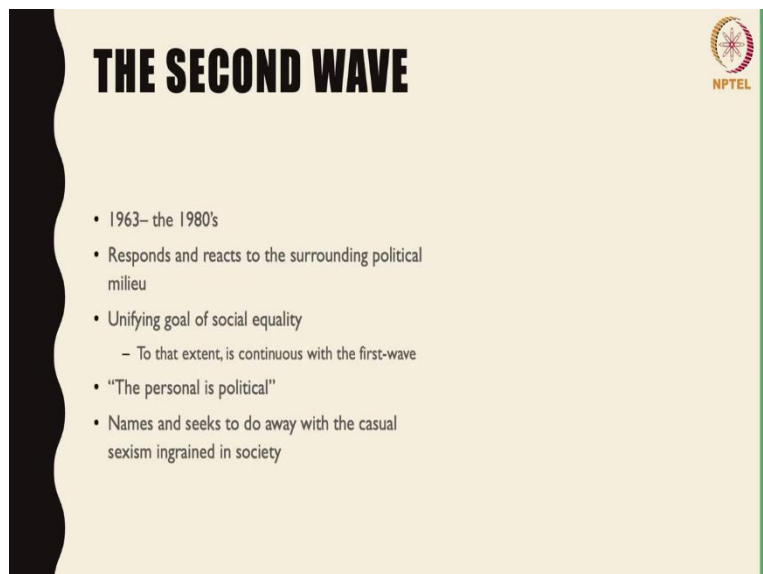
**THE FIRST WAVE**

- The West's first long sustaining political movement for political equality for women
- 1848-1920
- Understand it also in response to other larger political events around that time
- Abolitionist movements in the US

NPTEL

We then went on to discuss aspects of each of the waves. For example; the first wave was the West's first long sustaining political movement for political equality for women and it can be broadly located in the years 1848 to 1920. The first wave also serves as a useful example, because it can be understood in response to other larger political events around that time, say for example, Abolitionist movements in the U.S. So in many ways, gender is often argued about in the same tone as race in that moment, even as often there were struggles and differences between the two sets of movements, feminism often claimed primacy over race-based movements leading also to the critique that the first wave could not account for differences in race, amongst women.

(Refer Slide Time: 4:48)



**THE SECOND WAVE**

- 1963– the 1980's
- Responds and reacts to the surrounding political milieu
- Unifying goal of social equality
  - To that extent, is continuous with the first-wave
- "The personal is political"
- Names and seeks to do away with the casual sexism ingrained in society

NPTEL

The second wave can broadly be located 1963 to the 1980s, and, it also responds and reacts to a different surrounding political milieu. It is continuous with the first wave to the extent that it has a unifying goal of social equality. It is also in the second wave that we located the popular feminist motto, “the personal is political”. The second wave however moved on from the goals of the first wave, to also look at the casual sexism ingrained in society.

So, from political equality, we go on to analyzing the ways in which gender becomes enshrined in a hierarchical fashion in society and the second wave named and called out such sexism.

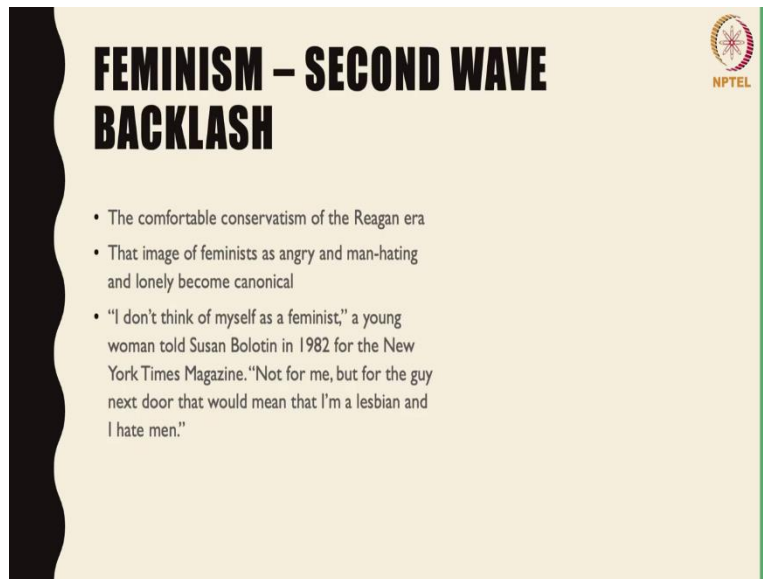
(Refer Slide Time 5:43)



To this extent, the discussions of the second wave were about body, if there is a fundamental nature to women, how is it that women are constructed? So, we read Simone de Beauvoir instance, who speaks about becoming a woman, as to woman is not somebody that is born a woman, but has to become a woman over the lifetime.

We continued speaking about reproductive rights, consciousness raising, male violence, pornography, and the notion of sisterhood, that we first read about in bell hooks. However, the second wave also continued to be limited in relation to questions of race or the different concerns of women of color in relation to the feminist movement.

(Refer Slide Time: 6:35)



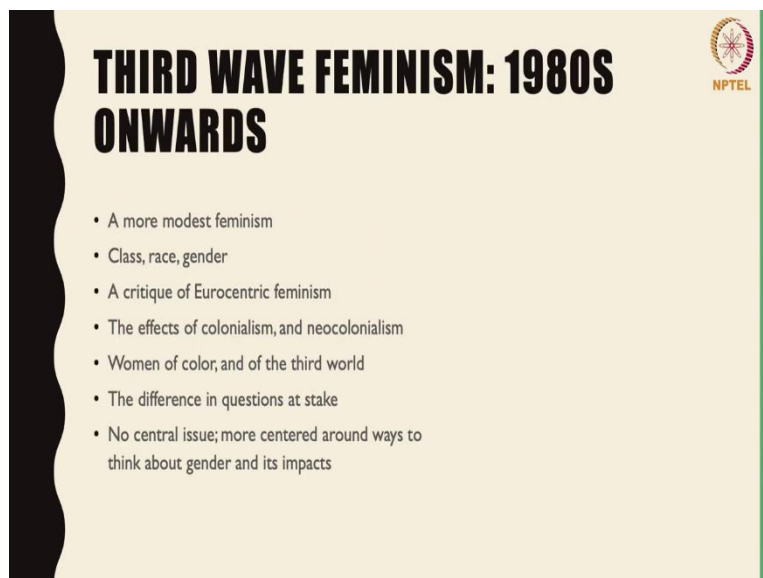
## **FEMINISM – SECOND WAVE BACKLASH**

- The comfortable conservatism of the Reagan era
- That image of feminists as angry and man-hating and lonely become canonical
- “I don’t think of myself as a feminist,” a young woman told Susan Bolotin in 1982 for the New York Times Magazine. “Not for me, but for the guy next door that would mean that I’m a lesbian and I hate men.”

The slide features a light beige background with a dark wavy border on the left and a green vertical bar on the right. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

Moving on from there, we spoke about the backlash to the second wave, in the comfortable conservatism of the Reagan era in the US, where the image of feminists as angry and man-hating and lonely became canonical. If you remember this quote from the New York Times magazine, a young woman says, I do not think of myself as a feminist; not for me, but for the guy next door, that would mean that I am a lesbian and I hate men.

(Refer Slide Time: 7:04)



## **THIRD WAVE FEMINISM: 1980S ONWARDS**

- A more modest feminism
- Class, race, gender
- A critique of Eurocentric feminism
- The effects of colonialism, and neocolonialism
- Women of color, and of the third world
- The difference in questions at stake
- No central issue; more centered around ways to think about gender and its impacts

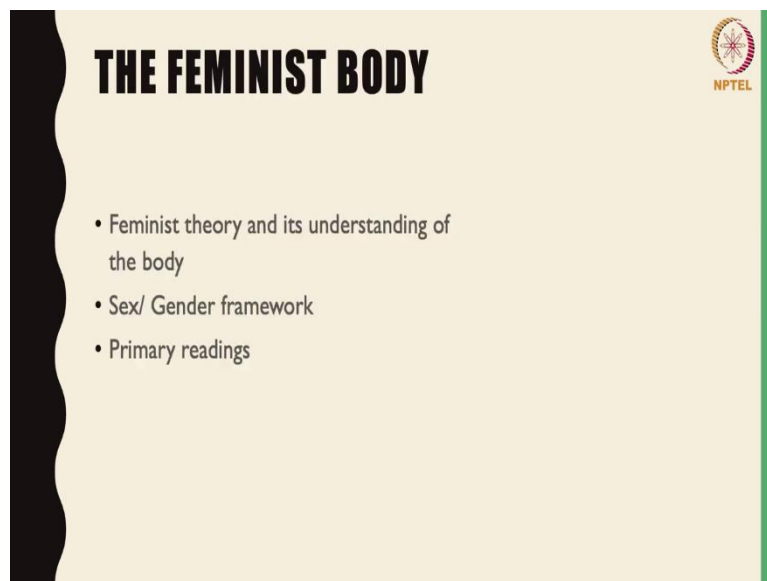
The slide features a light beige background with a dark wavy border on the left and a green vertical bar on the right. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

As a result of this, what we identify as third wave feminism, that 1980s onwards becomes a more modest feminism. It does take into account class, race, and gender and produces a range of differential feminisms as much as it also critiques Eurocentric feminism – feminism located only in the concerns of white, middle, or upper-class women in the global north.

Third wave feminism takes into account women of color, of the third world and argues that it is important to consider all of these different questions.

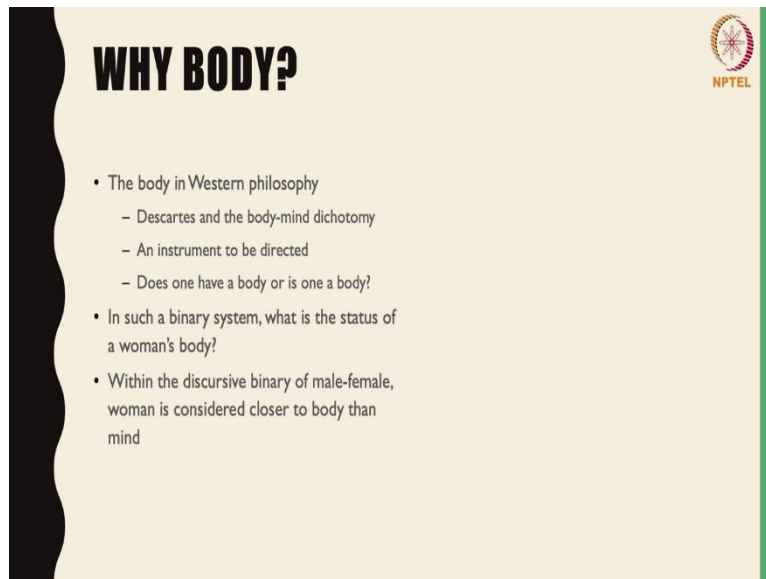
There is no central issue as a result of this. It is much more centered in its location and questioned around ways to think about gender and its impacts. Here, we ended our series of lectures by looking at the question of whether there is a fourth wave and we have said, we will discuss it later on, as we did in week 10.

(Refer Slide Time: 8:12)



From here, we looked at the feminist body and very specifically feminist theory's understanding of the body; given how central it is, to all forms of thoughts and disciplines. We revisited the sex gender framework through theory and through a set of primary readings.

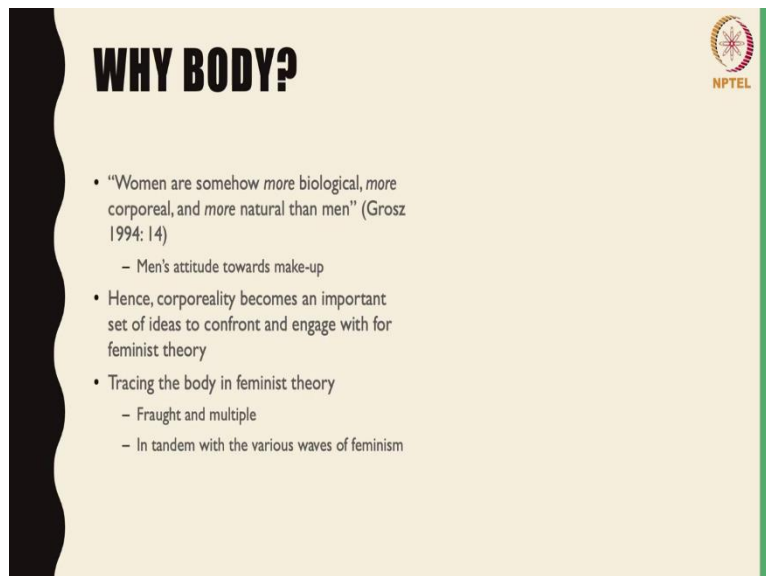
(Refer Slide Time: 8:36)



**WHY BODY?**

- The body in Western philosophy
  - Descartes and the body-mind dichotomy
  - An instrument to be directed
  - Does one have a body or is one a body?
- In such a binary system, what is the status of a woman's body?
- Within the discursive binary of male-female, woman is considered closer to body than mind

NPTTEL



**WHY BODY?**

- "Women are somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men" (Grosz 1994: 14)
  - Men's attitude towards make-up
- Hence, corporeality becomes an important set of ideas to confront and engage with for feminist theory
- Tracing the body in feminist theory
  - Fraught and multiple
  - In tandem with the various waves of feminism

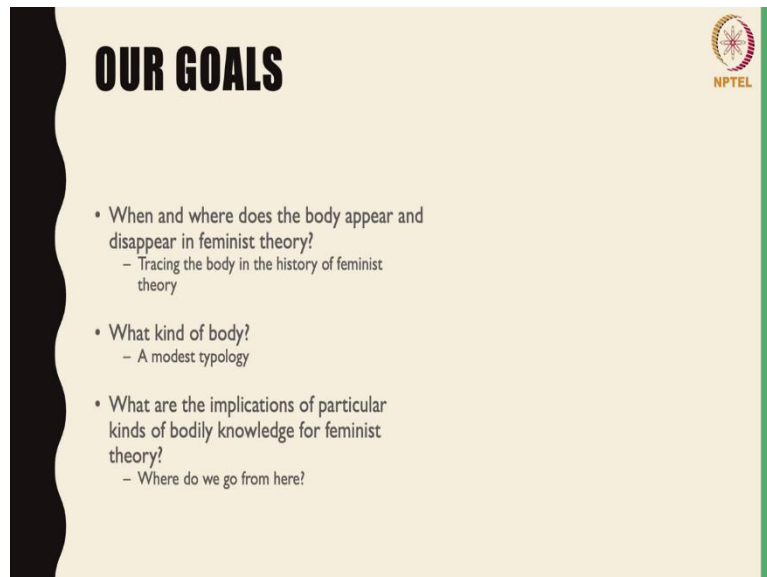
NPTTEL

We began our lecture by speaking about why is it that the body is so central to feminism. Two reasons: the body in western philosophy itself has always been conditioned by the body-mind dichotomy. The body becomes an instrument to be directed. And therefore, one debates questions such as 'Does one have a body or it is one a body?' Given the hegemonic nature of this dichotomy, this Descartes-ian dichotomy, we wanted to ask, what is the status of a woman's body. If woman is always considered to be closer to body than mind, then in a philosophical system, where body is already devalued or considered to be directed, would it not be intuitive to then suggest that women also are directed by men or by masculinity? We looked at how theorists like Grosz argue for example; discursively of course that women somehow see more biological, more corporeal and more natural than men. And this is why, we argued that corporeality becomes an important set of ideas to confront as well as engage



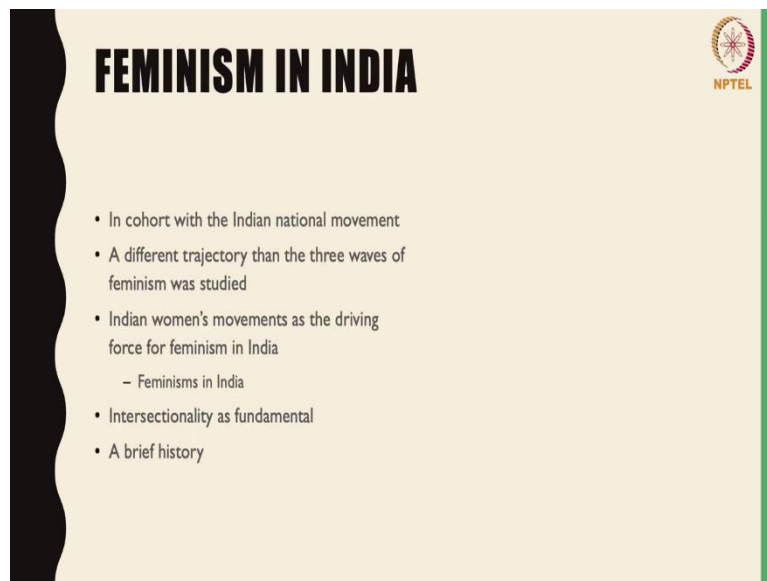
with, for feminist theory. And here, we wanted to trace the body across multiple feminist theorizations, even as we argued to begin with, that these theorizations are fraught and multiple; they are not simple or unified. And one can trace them, also in tandem with the three waves of feminism.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:12)



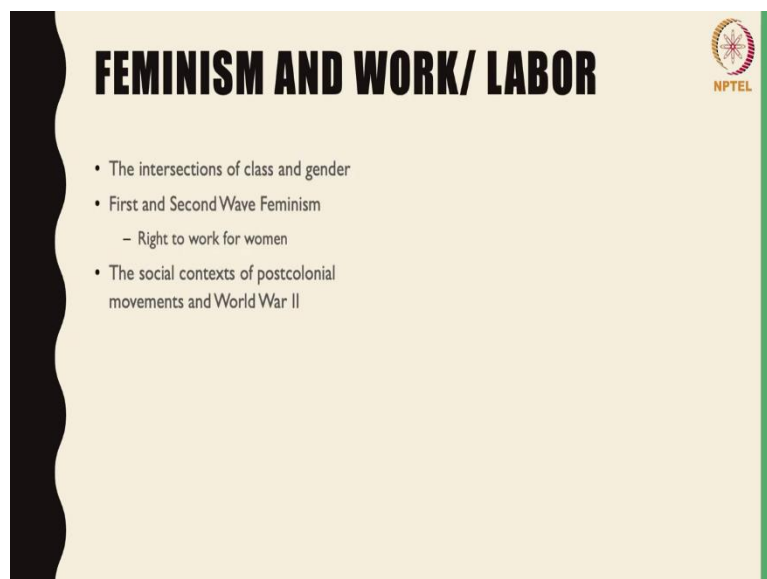
In the lecture, our goals were fairly structured. We wanted to look at how the body appears and disappears in feminist theory. In other words, tracing a sort of history of the body, in a history of feminist theory. And because, we wanted to look at a few examples, we considered a modest typology, which is: let us look at particular kinds of theorizations about body, in relation to feminist theory. We also asked as to the implications of these different kinds of typologies and bodily knowledges, for feminist theory.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:50)



From here, we moved on to the very specific question in history of feminism in India conducted by Professor Kalpana Karunakaran. Here, we spoke about feminism in India, both pre and post-independence in cohort with the Indian National Movement, but also on a different trajectory than the three waves of feminism that we studied before. Professor Karunakaran demonstrated how Indian women's movements were the driving force for feminism or feminisms in India. And therefore, intersectionality as a principle was fundamental to such an understanding. She also provided a brief history.

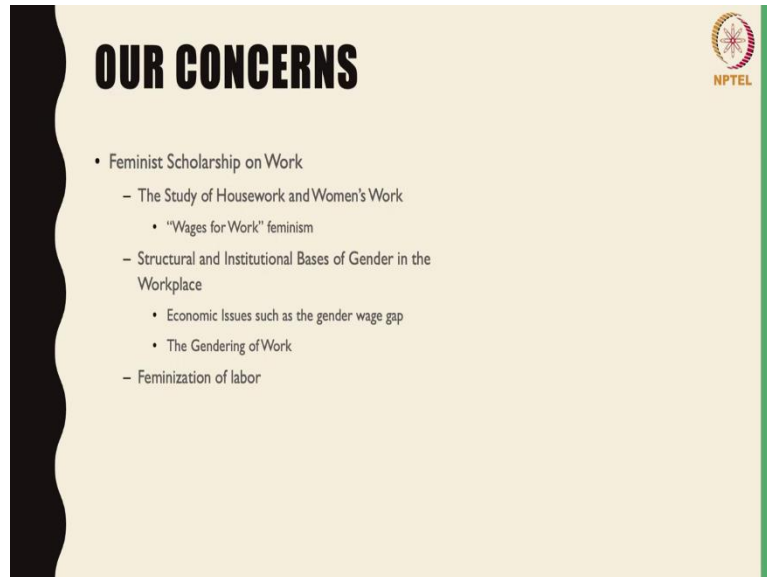
(Refer Slide Time: 11:39)



Our next week of lectures took into consideration very specifically feminism and feminist theory, in relation to work and labor. And here, we took into consideration a very specific

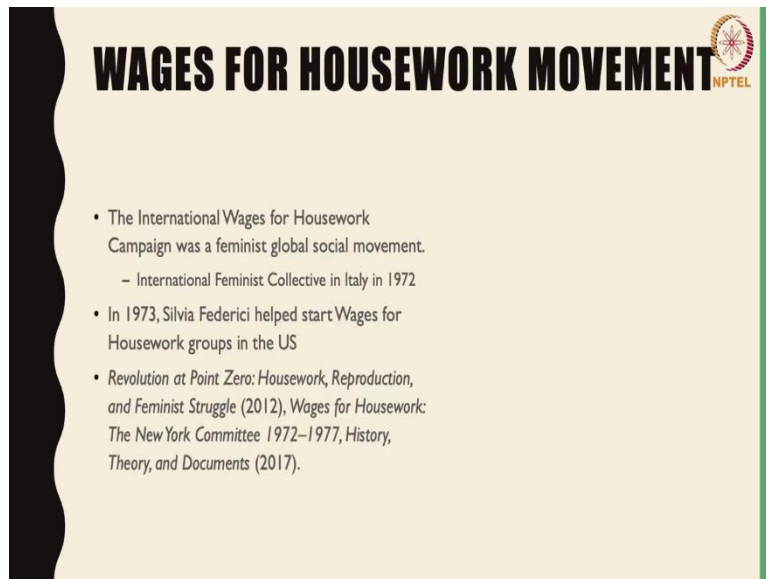
intersectionality, that of class and gender, also in relation to Marxist and socialist feminism. We looked at how, for first and second wave feminists, the right to work was paramount. This was of-course also conditioned by the social context of postcolonial movements and World War 2; both of which we revisited.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:15)



In this week, we were concerned with feminist scholarship on work, so the study of housework itself and how it features in Marxist analyses. We also considered the structural and institutional bases of gender in the contemporary workplace. In other words, if we have moved on to a situation where women are free to work, where are the new locations of gender or gendering? Here, we were interested in economic issues such as the gender wage gap, but also forms of sexism in the workplace. And lastly, we took into account the broad literature on feminization of labor.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:02)

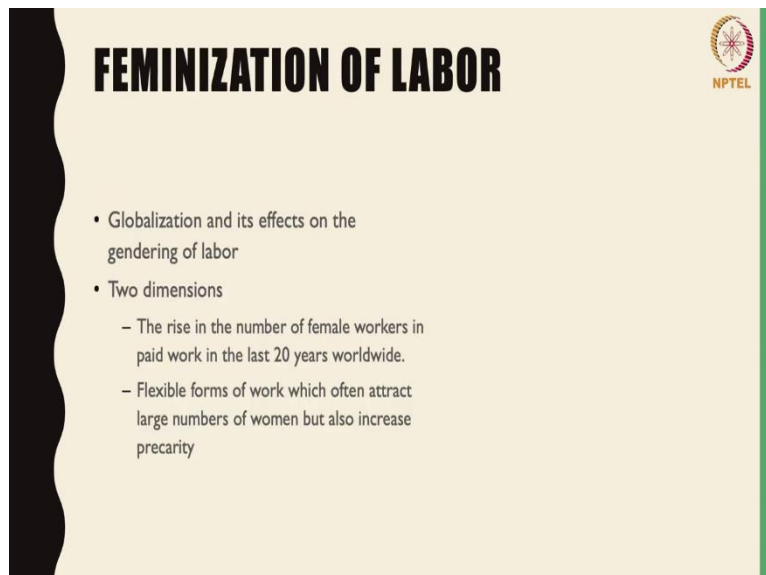


## WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK MOVEMENT

- The International Wages for Housework Campaign was a feminist global social movement.
  - International Feminist Collective in Italy in 1972
- In 1973, Silvia Federici helped start Wages for Housework groups in the US
- *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (2012), *Wages for Housework: The New York Committee 1972–1977, History, Theory, and Documents* (2017).

Very specific to the question of women and housework, we examined the wages for housework movement, led by feminist like Silvia Federici and we looked at how the International Wages for Housework campaign argued for housework as an important consideration in Marxist calculations of capitalist oppression.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:26)



## FEMINIZATION OF LABOR

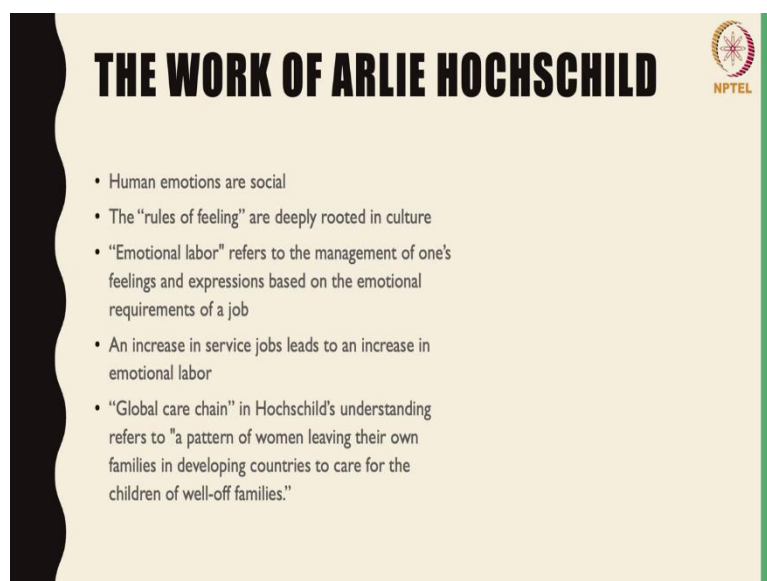
- Globalization and its effects on the gendering of labor
- Two dimensions
  - The rise in the number of female workers in paid work in the last 20 years worldwide.
  - Flexible forms of work which often attract large numbers of women but also increase precarity



Under feminization of labor, we were very specifically concerned with the globalization and its effects on the gendering of labor. We focused on two dimensions: the rise in the number of female workers in paid work in the last 20 years worldwide – a); but also, the nature of work which was flexible and flexible forms of work often attract large numbers of women for sure, but also increase precarity in their lives.

In the set of discussions, we were also concerned with new forms of understanding labor, related to care work, related to emotional or affective labor, and we took up examples in relation to body sexuality and work, very specifically to do with sex work and sex workers.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:22)




We examined in detail the work of Arlie Hochschild in relation to emotional labor, where Hochschild argues that human emotions, given how social they are; come into play in relation

to new forms of service labor. And for Hochschild, this has to do with her study of airlines stewardesses, where she refers to the management of ones' feelings and expressions, based on the emotional requirements of a job. And therefore, we see how this form of analysis becomes very important in the present day, because we are seeing an increase in precisely these forms of service jobs.

Hochschild's continued theorization had to do with concepts like the "global care chain," which refers to a pattern of women leaving their own families in developing countries, to care for the children of well-off families. We also took into account other sets of case studies on sex work and surrogacy and sex worker's rights, in order to explicate these concepts.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:34)



## EMOTIONAL/ AFFECTIVE LABOR

- "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others—in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place."(Hochschild 1983; p.7)
- The fundamental gendering of labor through affect/emotion
- Not restricted to female bodies

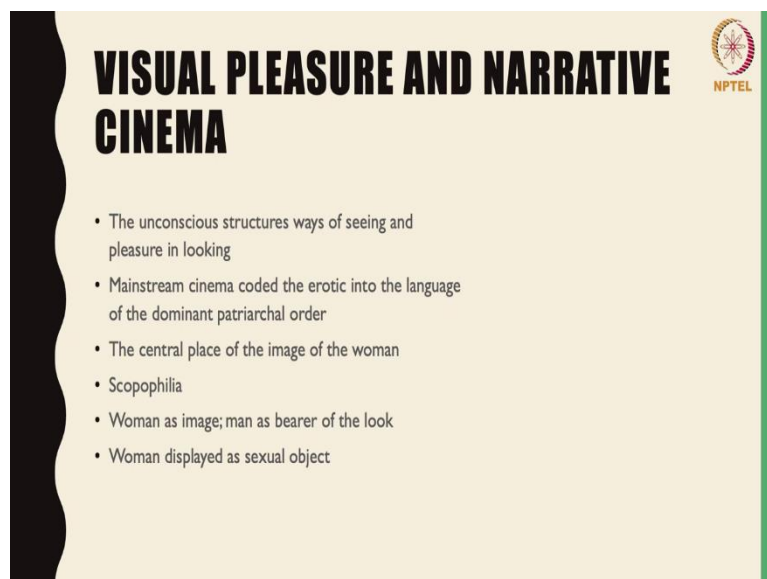
We ended our discussion with a set of definitions around emotional or affective labor. In Hochschild's understanding, emotional labor requires one to induce or suppress feeling, in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others: in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place. And here, we shifted the location of gender, we argued for a fundamental gendering of labor through affect or emotion. So, there is a feminization of emotion itself that is not restricted to female bodies.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:17)



In the week following the set of discussions, we looked at feminism in film and theatre. We began with a guest lecture from Dr. Harmony Siganporia, who spoke about her work in relation to female impersonators in Parsi theatre. I continued the discussion taking into account, Laura Mulvey's seminal work on feminist film studies and her important essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. We also went on to discuss the Indian context very specifically in relation to Hindi films and the ways in which women have been depicted in Indian cinema, in Hindi cinema; pre and post 1991.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:03)



In the essay, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Mulvey looks at unconscious as structuring ways of seeing and pleasure in looking. She borrows from psycho analytical

theory and transforms it into a political tool. In order to understand concepts like scopophilia, in relation to gendering and feminist struggles, she demonstrates how in films, woman is always the image and man is always the bearer of the look and women are displayed as sexual objects.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:42)



From here, we moved on to popular culture, social media and feminism and took up a question, that we had left hanging at the end of our week on the three waves of feminism. Here, we asked; is there a fourth wave of feminism? is it ongoing? what are its characteristics? how do we understand its importance? And looked at new interdisciplinary forms of thinking across media, we were interested in the set of discussions on social media, art and digital production and dissemination, in the question of what next for feminism.



(Refer Slide Time: 18:24)



**CONTEMPORARY FEMINISTS**

- The gains of the first, second, and third wave have led to a consistent and continuous set of discussions, some radical, some reformist, some problematic, some erudite, some thoughtful, on feminism.
- Feminism is also, now a global discussion, no longer restricted to Women's Studies departments

The slide features a light beige background with a dark wavy border on the left and a green vertical bar on the right. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

We agreed that thanks to what we can tentatively call a fourth wave, feminism is now a global discussion, no longer restricted to women's studies departments. And therefore, the gains of the first, second and third wave have arguably led to a consistent and continuous set of discussions; some radical, some reformist, some problematic, some erudite and some thoughtful.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:51)



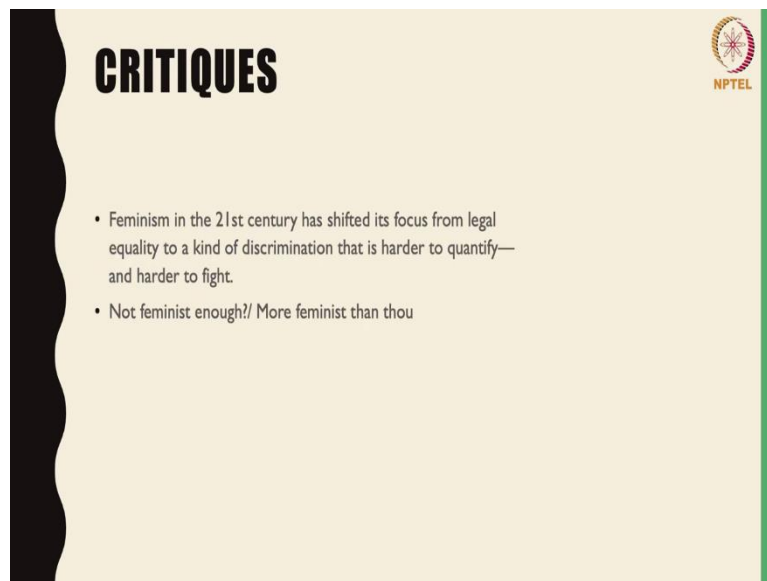
**FOURTH-WAVE FEMINISM**

- Queer Feminism
  - Queering of gender and sex based binaries
  - Trans-inclusive
- Sex-positive
- Body-positive
- Digitally driven
- Pragmatism, inclusion and humour

The slide features a light beige background with a dark wavy border on the left and a green vertical bar on the right. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

Broadly, we gathered characteristics of fourth wave feminism to encompass the following: Fourth wave feminism is queer, it is trans-inclusive, it is sex positive, body positive, digitally driven, and displays large measures of pragmatism, inclusion, and humour.

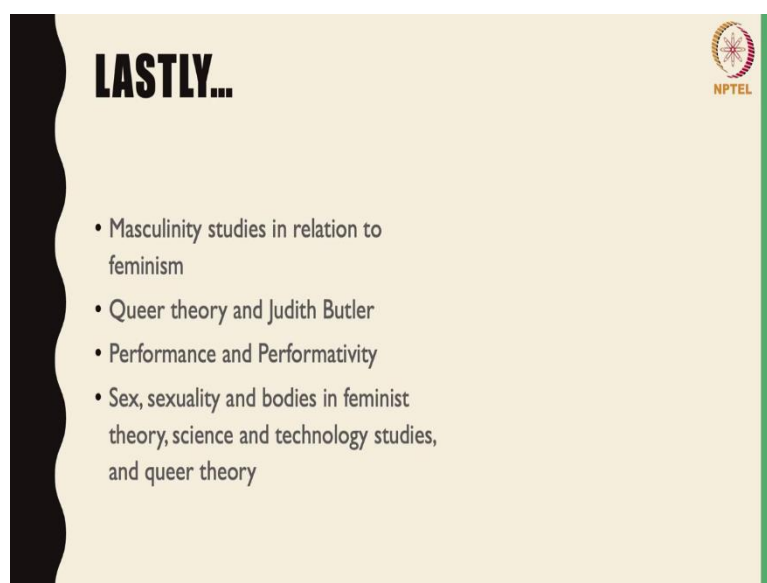
(Refer Slide Time: 19:18)



At the same time, we were also taking into account critiques of this information fourth wave feminism, in that, feminism in this century has shifted its focus from legal equality to a kind of discrimination, that is harder to quantify and therefore harder to fight. It has also led to many internal struggles, taking on the nature of “not feminist enough” or “more feminist than thou,” which can often be counterproductive.


In the series of lectures, we took up a few examples such as Menstrupedia, the stellar work of Agents of Ishq, #HappytoBleed and #MeToo to examine the characteristics of fourth wave feminism.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:06)



And in week 11, our last week of theorization, we examined the import of masculinity studies, in relation to feminism, before going on to explore the interventions made by Queer Theory and theorists like Judith Butler. We examined the concepts of performance and performativity, and located sex, sexuality, and bodies across different disciplinary formations, such as feminist theory, science and technology studies, and queer theory.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:44)

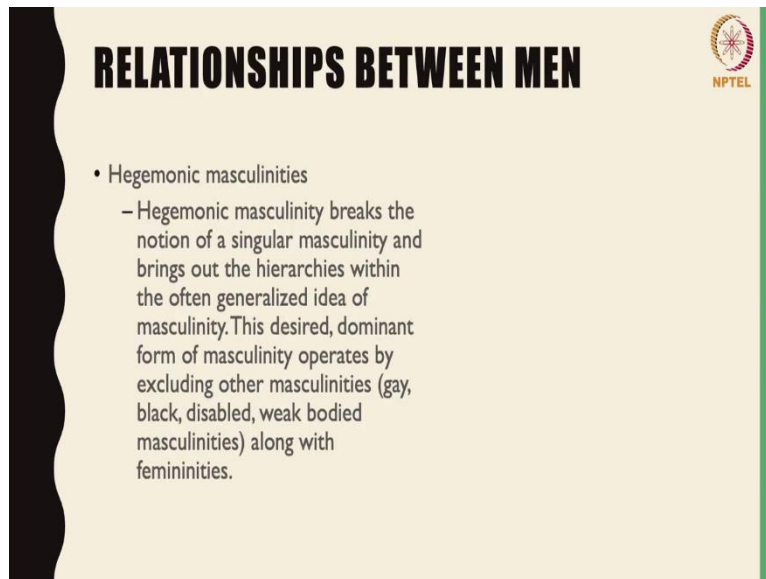


## MASCULINITY AND FEMINIST THOUGHT

- One stream of thought
  - Masculinity = the institutional practices, attitudes, and personality traits of men—like aggression and competitiveness—that uphold male dominance and oppress women.
- An alternate formulation
  - It is a slippery entity without consistent content. Some feminists think it can be restructured so that it does not depend on male dominance over women.

In relation to masculinity studies, we examined different formulations. One stream of thought for example suggests, that masculinity consists of the institutional practices, attitudes and personality traits of men, like aggression and competitiveness, that uphold male dominance and oppress women. An alternate formulation, that allows us to imagine it differently, suggests that it is a slippery entity without consistent content. Some feminists think it can be restructured, so that it does not depend on male dominance over women.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:23)



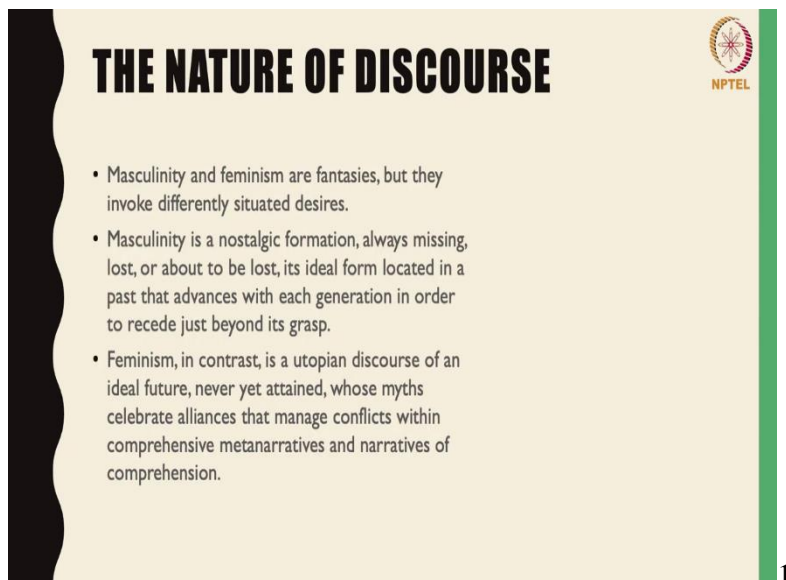
**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEN**

- Hegemonic masculinities
  - Hegemonic masculinity breaks the notion of a singular masculinity and brings out the hierarchies within the often generalized idea of masculinity. This desired, dominant form of masculinity operates by excluding other masculinities (gay, black, disabled, weak bodied masculinities) along with femininities.

The slide features a light beige background with a dark wavy border on the left and a green vertical bar on the right. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

We also introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinities, which can break the notion of a singular masculinity thereby bringing out hierarchies within that very seemingly singular notion. This desired dominant form of masculinity operates by excluding other masculinities; gay, black, disabled, weak bodied, along with femininities, thereby suggesting the possibility of a different kind of political allegiance, between women and discounted masculinities.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:03)



**THE NATURE OF DISCOURSE**


- Masculinity and feminism are fantasies, but they invoke differently situated desires.
- Masculinity is a nostalgic formation, always missing, lost, or about to be lost, its ideal form located in a past that advances with each generation in order to recede just beyond its grasp.
- Feminism, in contrast, is a utopian discourse of an ideal future, never yet attained, whose myths celebrate alliances that manage conflicts within comprehensive metanarratives and narratives of comprehension.

The slide features a light beige background with a dark wavy border on the left and a green vertical bar on the right. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner. A small number '1' is visible at the bottom right of the slide.

We concluded the section by invoking the nature of discourse, in relation to masculinity and femininity, as well as feminism. We suggested that both masculinity and feminism are fantasies, but they invoke differently situated desires. While masculinity is nostalgic, always missing, lost or about to be lost, its ideal form located in a past that advances with each

generation, in order to recede just beyond its grasp, feminism is a utopian discourse of an ideal future, never yet attained, whose myths celebrate alliances that manage conflicts within comprehensive metanarratives and narratives of comprehension.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:55)

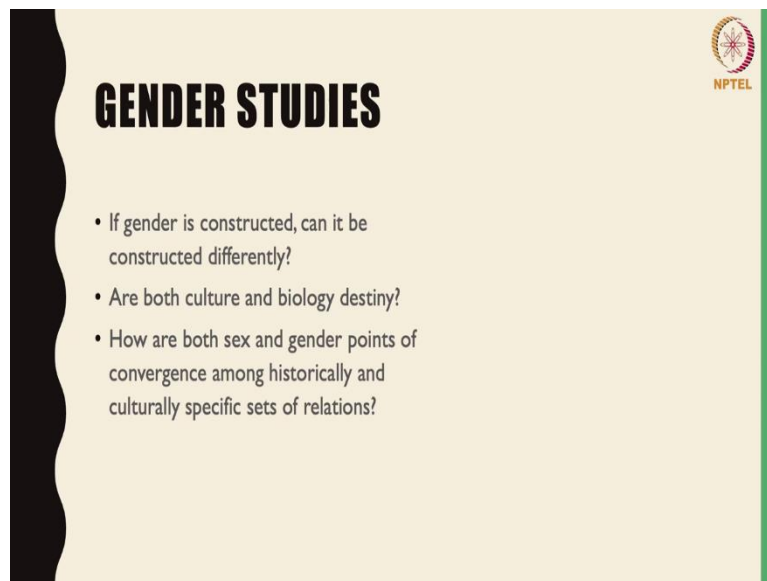


## WHAT IS QUEER THEORY?

- A form of post-structuralist critical thinking
- Identity is not fixed and does not determine who we are
- History of Sexuality; Michel Foucault
  - 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century notions of identity and sexuality
  - Developing a relationship to oneself through sexuality

From this, we moved on to a brief discussion of Queer theory where, we presented Queer theory as a form of post structuralist critical thinking, that builds upon the idea, that identity is not only not fixed, it does not determine who we are. Queer theory builds upon the work of figures like Michel Foucault and History of Sexuality, his seminal work, where one asks about the relationships built with oneself through sexuality.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:32)



We spoke about the importance of Queer theory, in relation to gender studies. And therefore, came full circle in relation to sex gender and the sex gender framework. We asked are both culture and biology destiny? And how are both sex and gender, not just gender, points of convergence among historically and culturally specific sets of relations?

In this lecture, we took up the case studies of sports people like Shanti Sundararajan and models like Andre Pejic and Casey Legler This is what we have covered: weeks 1 to 11. I hope this is an adequate summary. And let me just say this once again. This is just to give you a broad idea of the trajectory that we have traversed. It is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for you to be prepared for your exams.