

## **İZMİR UNIVERSITY MODEL FOR EDUCATING STUDENTS ON WOMEN-RELATED ISSUES**

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*İzmir University has been following a special programme on women-related issues since 2011. An elective course called “Women and Society” is added as an elective course to the curriculum of all the departments. The main objective of this course is to raise students’ awareness on women issues and to heighten their sensitivity and sense of responsibility. The course covers several topics such as general status of women in Turkey, main problems of Turkish women, organizations for women, legal issues related to women, international agreements on women’s rights signed by the Turkish government, gender roles, violence against women, national action plans on gender equality and prevention of violence against women, women and education, women and politics, women entrepreneurship, glass ceiling, women and health, women and media, women and language and suchlike. There isn’t one instructor for this course; each session is conducted by a different lecturer from different departments of the university. Students are assessed on the basis of classroom attendance, participation in the discussions and the projects they conduct throughout the term.*

**Keywords:** Women; Gender; Education; Consciousness raising.

İzmir University strongly believes that women rights are human rights, and tries to fulfil all its responsibilities within its capacity to provide gender equality, to strengthen the status of women in the society in all respects and to produce politics to prevent gender discrimination and violence against women. The first step was taken by a group of volunteers from the academic staff of the university with the foundation of İzmir University Women Studies Commission in the academic year of 2010-2011. This commission held several meetings with the heads of the departments in all the faculties to create a positive attitude to women studies and to see what can be done to include all the faculty members and the students into women related studies. As a result of these meetings it was decided to add an elective course to the programmes of all the departments and thus to increase students’ knowledge and awareness about women issues in Turkey and in the world. On May 11<sup>th</sup> 2011 this commission turned into Women Studies Research and Application Centre with the approval of YOK, the Board of Higher Education. The new centre carried out the decision of the former commission to open the course.

An elective course called “Women and Society” was added to the curriculum of all the departments in 2011 and has been successfully maintained since then. This is the seventh semester of the course and every term about 60 students register for it. The main objective of this course is to raise students’ awareness on women issues and to heighten their sensitivity and sense of responsibility. It covers several topics such as general status of women in Turkey, main problems of Turkish women, organizations for women, legal issues related to women, international agreements on women’s rights signed by the Turkish government, gender roles, violence against women, national action plans on gender equality and prevention of violence against women, women and education, women and politics, women entrepreneurship, glass ceiling, women and health, women and media, women and language.

There is not one instructor for this course; each session is conducted by a different lecturer from different departments of the university on voluntary basis. At the beginning of each term, a meeting is held to determine the topics of the term and the names of the academic staff to deliver them. To give a clear idea of what it is like, the syllabus of this term is given below:

**Week 1:**

Introduction to the Course, Planning and Organization

**Week 2:**

Lecturer: Dr. Nazife Aydınoğlu, Faculty of Arts and Letters, ELT Department

Topic: Introduction of National Action Plans

a- Combating Domestic Violence against Women National Action Plan 2007-2010

b- Gender Equality National Action Plan 2008-2013

c- Combating Violence against Women National Action Plan 2012-2015

**Week 3:**

Lecturer: Dr. Defne Erzene Burgin, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Topic: A Historical Survey of Feminist Theory

**Week 4:**

Lecturer: Dr. Ahu Güzel, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Business Administration

Topic: Women and Entrepreneurship

**Week 5:**

Lecturer: Dr. Günseli Pişkin, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Cinema and Television

Topic: Women and Media

**Week 6:**

Lecturer: Dr. Sezen Zeytinoğlu, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Psychology

Topic: Gender Roles: Differences, Prejudices and Discrimination

**Week 7:**

Lecturer: Dr. Naile Alankaya, School of Health, Department of Nursing

Topic: Women and Health

**Week 8:**

Discussion and Supervision of Student Projects

**Week 9:**

Lecturer: Dr. Merdan Hekimoğlu, Faculty of Law

Topic: Articles Related to Women in the Constitution and Laws

**Week 10:**

Lecturer: Dr. Aydan Çelebiler, Faculty of Medicine

Topic: Women and Medical Science

**Week 11:**

Lecturer: Dr. Tuba İnal, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of International Relations

Topic: Violence against Women

**Week 12:**

Lecturer: Dr. Tuba Yenidoğan Gürçayırılılar, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Business Administration

Topic: Glass Ceiling

**Week 13:**

Lecturer: Dr. Zafer Parlak, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of American Culture and Literature

Topic: To be a Foreign Woman in Turkey

**Week 14:**

Lecturer: Dr. Sevinç Arslan Hızal, Faculty of Law

Topic: Legal Aspects of Violence against Women

Students are assessed on the basis of classroom attendance, participation in the discussions and the projects they conduct throughout the term. Allocation of the percentages for assessment is as follows:

Classroom Attendance	20 %
Attendance to Activities	20 %
Projects	60 %

Student Projects are carried out in groups in groups of four or five. Groups are arranged by the students themselves and each group chooses an advisor either from their department or Women Research and Application Centre. The groups choose their projects together with their advisors and fill in a project proposal form to be submitted to the course coordinator. In the application form they state the title and a short description of the project, their aim, names of the group members and the advisor people and organizations they cooperate with if there are any, and contact information. With the help of the coordinator the dates and places of project presentations are settled. The groups prepare a file of their projects after the presentation, in which they include everything that is presented and their reflections. The presentations and the files are evaluated by the advisors and the coordinator.

The students are free to choose their project types and subjects as long as they fit the course schedule. The projects that have been carried out so far are mainly of the following types:

- 1- Making research on women related issues and presenting it to the class either by power point or video;
- 2- Preparing biographies and achievements of well-known Turkish women in history or at present and presenting them by posters or power point;
- 3- Having coordination with governmental, local governmental or non-governmental organizations and taking part in their projects or introducing these organizations to the university students;
- 4- Organizing exhibitions and competitions to raise awareness on women related issues;
- 5- Inviting successful women to the university as role models and organizing lectures, panel discussions and talks.

With the help of the group projects İzmir University has had the opportunity to host a number of well-known women among whom are businesswomen, managers, members of the Parliament, local administrators, members of women organizations, novelists, poets, critics, sculptors, painters, lawyers, judges, sea-captains, pilots, air traffic controllers, bus-drivers, military women, and women footballers.

Some of the topics of the lectures and talks are violence against women, marriage age, distribution of marital property, the effects of stress on women, how to be a women entrepreneur, prevention of

discrimination against women, effects of working women on family life, problems of Turkish women in family life and business life, rights of working women, mobbing, from witchcraft to medical sciences, homophobia, sexual preferences, betrayed women and women traumas.

Some of the exhibitions are photograph exhibitions on working women, violence towards women and gender equality; newspaper clips about violence against women, child brides, and achievements of women; and pictures on gender roles painted by primary school students.

Poster presentations cover almost any subject from the lives of well-known women, to women candidates in elections and their campaigns, from information about women organizations to caricatures about women, from new legal arrangements in laws and regulations to historical survey of fashion of Turkish women.

Apart from this course called Women and Society, İzmir University organizes and takes part in several activities for 8<sup>th</sup> of March to celebrate International Women's Day. Since 2011 three panel discussions have been held to this end; one on status and rights of Turkish working women with panellists from Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and several universities, another one on Women and Politics in which the panellists were women politicians, and the last one on the Violence against Women and Turkish Laws in which the panellists were a forensic medicine doctor, a family court judge and two faculty members from İzmir University. Every year İzmir University has a stand at Women Festival held by İzmir Municipality in İzmir International Fair for four days in which visitors are informed about what is being done at the university on women related issues and new bonds are established with several other organizations having stands at the festival. This year a photograph exhibition was prepared by 20 university members to raise awareness about gender equality. 10 male and 10 female academicians had male make-up on one half of their faces and female make-up on the other half. The exhibition appeared widely on local and national media. Another study the university plans this year is the publication of a book titled Women and Society; all the voluntary lecturers of Women and Society course will contribute to the book with one chapter.

As it is so far explained, İzmir University is highly sensitive towards women-related issues and determined to do its best to achieve gender equality, to prevent violence against women and to shed light to several problems of women and to find solutions to them.

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## **Authors**

AYDINOĞLU, Nazife – Dr. Nazife Aydınoglu completed her MA and PhD on American Language and Literature at Ege University. Her MA and Ph.D. dissertations are on American women writers and poets. She has been a lecturer and a researcher for over 39 years. She has been working as a faculty member at ELT Department of İzmir University for four years. Her areas of interest in research are literature and language teaching, American Literature, and women studies. At present she is the director of Women Research Center at İzmir University.

GÜZEL, Ahu – Dr. Ahu Güzel completed her Ph.D. in the field of Accounting and Finance in 2007 at Kocaeli University. She has been working as a faculty member in Izmir University since 2008. She conducts various undergraduate and graduate courses such as economics, accounting, finance, applied entrepreneurship. She is working in the areas of risk management, small and medium-sized enterprises, family businesses and women's entrepreneurship. She is also the vice dean of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences and Head of Business Administration department.