



# **Feminist Stories from an Illiberal State: Revoking the License to Teach Gender Studies in Hungary at a University in Exile (CEU)**

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## **► To cite this version:**

Andrea Pető. Feminist Stories from an Illiberal State: Revoking the License to Teach Gender Studies in Hungary at a University in Exile (CEU). Gender and Power in Eastern Europe, pp.35 - 44, 2020, <10.1007/978-3-030-53130-0\_4>. <hal-04215248>

**HAL Id: hal-04215248**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04215248v1>**

Submitted on 22 Sep 2023

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# Feminist Stories from an Illiberal State: Revoking the License to Teach Gender Studies in Hungary at a University in Exile (CEU)

Gender and Power in Eastern Europe pp 35-44 | Cite as

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Chapter

First Online: 01 November 2020

- 17 Downloads

Part of the Societies and Political Orders in Transition book series (SOCPOT)

## Abstract

When I received the invitation to contribute to this important volume, there were two major interconnected events related to gender studies research happening in Hungary. The first was the Hungarian government's decision to revoke the license of a 2-year gender studies master's program without consulting any professional or scientific institution. The other was that after 2 years of uncertainty, Central European University (CEU) became the first university in the European Union forced to move to another country due to media harassment and legal uncertainty—thus becoming a university in exile. CEU was among those universities that offered a master's degree in gender studies. Sherry Ortner succinctly asks: “What is the point of opposing neoliberalism if we cannot imagine better ways of living and better futures? How can we be both realistic about the ugly realities of the world today and hopeful about the possibilities of changing them” (2016, p. 60)? In this paper, I attempt both: to oppose neoliberalism and imagine better ways of pursuing research. I will do so by telling two stories: one about the gender studies ban and the other about the attack on academic freedom in Hungary, both of which urge us to think about the personal and theoretical consequences of recent attacks on freedom of science and higher education. I will conclude by proposing a new theoretical framework in order to better understand these recent developments.

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## About this chapter

Cite this chapter as:

Pető A. (2021) Feminist Stories from an Illiberal State: Revoking the License to Teach Gender Studies in Hungary at a University in Exile (CEU). In: Bluhm K., Pickhan G., Stypinska J., Wiercholska A. (eds) *Gender and Power in Eastern Europe. Societies and Political Orders in Transition*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53130-0\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53130-0_4)

- First Online 01 November 2020
- DOI [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53130-0\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53130-0_4)

- Publisher Name Springer, Cham
- Print ISBN 978-3-030-53129-4
- Online ISBN 978-3-030-53130-0
- eBook Packages [Political Science and International Studies](#) [Political Science and International Studies \(Ro\)](#).
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