

WGSS 301: THEORIZING GENDER, RACE, AND POWER

Course mailing list: wgss-301-01-fal16@courses.umass.edu **Term: Fall 2016**

Instructor: K. Asher (kasher@umass.edu)

Office: Bartlett 387

Class time: TuTh 10:00-11:15am

Meets in: Bartlett 212

Walk-in Office Hours: Weds 11:00am-12:00 pm; Th: 11:30am-12:30pm, or by appointment only if you cannot make either time

Gender, race, and power play a key role in shaping our worlds and experiences. In this core course of the WGSS major, students will build on what they learnt about sex, gender and difference in WGSS 201 to critically examine diverse theoretical and analytical approaches to interrogating gender, race, and power. Through close readings of a diverse range of classic and contemporary feminist theories of gender, race and power, we will enter in critical dialogue with feminist debates to understand and foster social change. Students are expected to have some prior grounding in social theory, or be prepared to gain it. In the first part of the seminar we will begin discussing key feminist concerns and debates from historical and methodological perspectives. In the second part of the semester, we will revisit selected themes to deepen our understanding of feminist engagements.

The **goals of this course are to enable** students to

- ❖ Recognize and critically examine diverse theoretical and analytical approaches to interrogating gender, race, and power
- ❖ Identify the analytical parameters of an argument, especially feminist ones
- ❖ Understand why and how feminist theories engage with the state, capitalism, colonialism, the governing of sexuality, and other workings of power
- ❖ See how the complex, contradictory and power laden connections between the “West” and the “Rest,” i.e. transnational thinking is key to feminist theories
- ❖ Examine how feminist struggles are linked to others such as anti-racist, anti-imperialist, economic and environmental justice struggles
- ❖ Develop your own critical and self- reflexive understandings of feminisms, feminist politics, organizing and analysis for social change.
- ❖ Develop strong reading, thinking, and writing skills
- ❖ Practice collaborative learning

Required Readings (ordered through Amherst Books unless on ereserve)

- ❖ McCann, Carole and Seung-kyung Kim, eds. 2017. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*. 4th edition. Routledge. (FTR below)
- ❖ Weedon, Chris . 1997. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Blackwell
- ❖ Additional readings (as Ereserve or uploads on Moodle).

Background Readings (on reserve at the DuBois Library and/or ereserve)

- ❖ Lemert, Charles, ed. 1993/2004. *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. (I especially recommend Lemert’s introductory essays to each section)
- ❖ Disch, Lisa and Hawkesworth Mary. 2015. [Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory](#). Oxford University Press.

Assignments and Grades

❖ Attendance & Participation	25%
❖ Written Work (Details below and on Moodle)	75%
❖ Two short reading Forms or annotations	15%
❖ Midterm and critical reviews (due Oct 12 and Nov 14)	35%
❖ Final written Assignment (due Dec 16 via Moodle)	25%

Attendance and Absences: The success of the class depends on the instructor and students being physically and intellectually present in class. Being a little late occasionally is understandable. However, if you are more than 10 minutes late, you will be marked absent. If you have to miss class because of legitimate reasons (illness, injury, death of a loved one), excuse your absence in writing within a week of the missed session. Over two absences will result in the lowering of your overall grade, as even excused absences will affect your participation grade. So try not to miss class. If you have to, know that it is your responsibility to catch up on what you missed. Set up a “study buddy” with whom you can exchange notes, review material, and check in about intellectual or logistical issues related to the class.

Participation: Good participation means active and mindful engagement with the course material and class participants, including your peers. Active and mindful engagement goes beyond agreements and disagreements to foster collective learning through critical dialogues about the topics and ideas generated by the course material. Critical dialogues entail listening, thinking, talking, and asking questions of the material and of each other. The best classrooms conversations are ones that expand your knowledge and understanding, and bring the intense pleasure of critical intellectual inquiry. It is a skill that requires practice and like other academic skills it is useful far beyond the classroom.

Preparation and Reading: Good participation and great conversations rest on good preparation. So do the assigned readings and any other work before coming to class. Develop a practice of reading closely to identify main theme(s) and examine the premise of an argument critically. so we can engage in critical dialogues. Class discussions will focus on:

- ❖ the main points and key terms of each reading (so identify good quotes)
- ❖ how arguments are substantiated or claims developed
- ❖ the relevance on the argument of the authors biography and other context of the assigned texts (so do some background sleuthing)
- ❖ how each reading is in conversation with other pieces for that week and prior weeks (does it build on them? Contest them? Both? How and why?)
- ❖ critically assessing the contributions, limits, and questions generated by the readings and approaches

We will be doing a lot of reading and deep thinking. So be patient with yourselves and with each other so that we may grapple productively with important ideas and debates. This may mean learning to disagree respectfully and learning to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Notes: Learn to keep notes (digitally or in paper notebooks) on what you read, highlight key quotes (if you copy quotes from the readings, make sure to note page numbers), on how an author makes an argument, how the terms of one article relate to the broader course themes. If you don't understand something or are confused, make notes to prompt you to ask questions about them in class. Bring your readings and notes to class! And don't forget to set up a study buddy.

Using smart phones in class is decidedly un-smart as it invites me to fail you. When in class **turn OFF your mobile devices**. You may seek permission to use your computer in class to refer to readings and notes, and to take notes. However, please do not connect to the Internet.

Online communications and Email etiquette: Instructions, study questions, and updates about the course will be posted on **Moodle** and/or sent through the class lists (see above). So make sure that your university email (yourname@umass.edu) is functional, and check Moodle regularly. I welcome appropriate email queries and will respond to them within a reasonable amount of time (24-48 hours is normal). For a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate email, familiarize yourself with [Emails as Professional Correspondences or Email Etiquette](#).

Office Hours are listed above and updated on Moodle. I strongly encourage you to stop by with questions about class material, brainstorm research ideas, talk about topics that spark your intellectual curiosity, or discuss your performance in class. However, keep in mind that, office hours are not the time to review course material you missed or entertain inquiry such as "I was absent, what did I miss?" Talk to your study buddy first and then follow up with me to discuss specific queries.

Research: Go beyond wikipedia and google! [UMASS libraries](#) (click the Menu button on the upper right) have excellent resources and amazing professional staff to help you meet your learning goals. So learn to use them and to do library research.

Writing is a crucial tool for learning and an invaluable skill for communicating what you learn. So learn to write well. Check out some of the excellent resources available to you, including <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> (one of the most extensive lists of handouts on writing and research help).

You can also get free writing help at the [Writing Center](#), and from the WGSS writing tutor, Elise Swinford (eswinfor@english.umass.edu). She has drop-in office hours (no appointment necessary) on Tuesdays 9:30am-12:30pm, and Thursdays 2:30-5:30pm. Her office is in 102A Bartlett (the location may change. Please check).

Take a copy of the assignment instructions and your draft response to your session. Engage your editing process by articulating what you want the tutor to focus on in addressing your work. Finally, all **written assignments**:

- ❖ May be discussed with your peers, with the WGSS writing tutor or with me during my office hours

- ❖ Must be submitted **by the stated deadlines and stated format (hard copy or online)**. By handing in assignments late you forfeit your right to comments and lose half a letter grade for every day that your work is late.
- ❖ May be revised and resubmitted accepted within two weeks of receiving comments back from the instructor. Submit hardcopies of your substantially revised written work along with the original submission, and the comments you received on it. Note that resubmitting a paper does not guarantee a higher grade. In fact, cursorily rewritten work may receive a lower grade than the original.
- ❖ Should follow my **writing guidelines** (see the end of the syllabus).
- ❖ Will be graded according to the **criteria** listed below.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING WRITTEN WORK

- A = a well organized, lucidly written paper free of mechanical errors (or oral argument) that indicates your thorough understanding of the material and your interesting insights or critical responses to it. In a phrase, an A paper is a “perfect 10” paper.
- B = a paper (or presentation) that offers evidence of your understanding of the material, but in which your points are obscured due to mechanical errors, lack of organization, inadequate evidence and/or insufficiently developed arguments.
- C = a paper in which the student’s understanding and response to the material is unclear or largely obscured due to any one or more factors listed under B.
- D, F = indicate that students are submitting unacceptable work.

GRADE CHART

	Out of 10	Out of 5	GPA
A	9.3 - 10	4.7 - 4.9	4
A-	8.6 - 9.2	4.3 - 4.6	3.7
B+	7.9 - 8.5	4.0 - 4.2	3.3
B	7.2 - 7.8	3.6 - 3.9	3.0
B-	6.5 - 7.1	3.3 - 3.5	2.7
C+	5.8 - 6.4	3.0 - 3.2	2.3
C	5.1 - 5.7	2.6 - 2.9	2.0
C-	4.4 - 5.0	2.3 - 2.5	1.7
D+	3.7 - 4.3	2.0-2.2	1.7
D	3.0 - 3.6	1.9 - 1.7	1.0
F	2.7 - 2.9		0.0

Short reading forms or Annotations (max 500 words): Twice in the semester each of you will write a short reading form (max 500 words). Please sign up to write the first of for a class before fall break and the second for a class before Thanksgiving break. Further guidelines for the annotations will be posted on Moodle and handed out in class, but please make sure to follow the general writing guidelines for this class, and hand in **hard copies** to me in class.

Midterm (15% of grade, 5 double-spaced pages): In this take-home exam, you will be asked to articulate your understanding of material covered in the first part of the semester. Prompts and further details will be posted 10 days before the exam is due. Bring drafts of your midterm to workshop in class on Thursday, October 6, and drop off **hard copies** in my office **by noon on Wednesday, October 12th**.

Critical review (20% of grade, 5-7 double-spaced pages, due Nov 14 at noon), and the **final assignment** (25% of grade, due via Moodle by noon Dec 16). Details about these will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle later in the semester.

Accommodation Statement: If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me and make necessary arrangements: <http://www.umass.edu/disability/procedures.pdf>

Academic Honesty Statement: Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at UMass. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

Pronoun Statement: I will gladly address you by the name you prefer and use the gender pronouns that correspond to your gender identity. Please advise the class and me on your name and pronoun preference, and the proper pronunciation of your name.

Course Schedule: This is a working course schedule and is subject to change. For example, readings may be added or substituted at the professor's discretion. The readings listed under each week are for that week. That is, please read the listed material before coming to class.

Week 1: Why Theory? What is Theory? Theorizing What?

Tu, Sept 6: **Introductions: Seminar topics, approach and participants**

- ❖ Discussion:
 - ❖ What according to you is feminist theory?
 - ❖ What is your favorite feminist theory text or texts? Why? What problem or problematic does it engage? How? Please include the full citation(s) at the end of your response.
 - ❖ Do you think feminisms need theory? Why or why not?
 - ❖ What are your learning goals for this class? What do you expect to get from the seminar? What do you hope to give to it?
 - ❖ What are your biggest concerns and/or most radical hopes about it?
- ❖ Collect key terms and analytical questions to parse through the semester
- ❖ Post your responses to the above questions on Moodle by noon Wed, Sept 7. Read your classmates' responses before class on Thursday.

Th, Sept 8: **Theorizing What? How? Since when? According to whom?**

- ❖ Culler, Jonathan. 2011. What is Theory? Pp. 1-18 in *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Moodle)
- ❖ FTR: Introduction to the volume and section 1, Selections 1-7
- ❖ Humm, Maggie. 1982. Chronology of Events, and History of Feminism in Britain and America (xv-xx, 1-7), and Second Wave Feminism (53-60) in *Modern Feminisms*. Columbia University Press. (Ereserve through Moodle)
- ❖ Sign up to write annotations for Weeks 2-4

Week 2: Unpacking Feminist Concerns: Women, Gender, Oppression, and Freedom

Tu, Sept 13:

- ❖ Truth <http://www.sojournertruth.org/Library/Speeches/AintIAWoman.htm>
- ❖ FTR: Intro to Section II, Boxes 1, 3, 4; Selections 12 (Combahee River Collective), 13 (Firestone), 14 (Clarke, Lesbianism), 30 (Lorde) and any other 2
- ❖ Annotation writers:

Th, Sept 15: "Intersectionality"

- ❖ FTR: Boxes 6, 9, 10, Selections 10, 17-18
- ❖ Weedon, Chapter 1-2
- ❖ Annotation writers:

Suggested/Supplemental:

- ❖ Viveros, Mara. 2015. Sex/Gender. Pp. 852-873 in *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, Disch, Lisa and Hawkesworth Mary, eds. Oxford Univ Press. (Moodle)
- ❖ Marx, K. Theses on Feuerbach," *Marx-Engels Reader*, 143-145

Week 3: Work, Labor, Economy and the State

Tu, Sept 20:

- ❖ FTR: Introduction to Section III, Box 5, 7, 13, 19; selections 20, 21,
- ❖ Annotation writers

Th Sept 22

- ❖ Duggan, Lisa. "Introduction" and "Downsizing Democracy." *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003. xi- xxii and 1-21. (Moodle)
- ❖ FTR: 10 (Kandiyoti)
- ❖ Annotation writers

Suggested/Supplemental:

- ❖ For excellent overview of the analytical parameters of the capitalist a mode of production, see Kloppenborg, *First the Seed*, pp. 22-27, and Chapter 3 of Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People without History* (Moodle)
- ❖ Marx, K. Abstract from the Preface of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) and First, Second, and Third Observations from Chpt 2 of *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) (find both on Marxists.org)

Week 4: Producing and Governing Sexualities

Tu, Sept 27:

- ❖ FTR: Reread introduction to Section III, Boxes: 2-5, 13-15, 16; Selections 42 (Butler), 24 (Smith), 25 (Wittig), 26 (Connell)
- ❖ Weedon, Chpt 3 (skim)
- ❖ Annotation writers:

Th, Sept 29

- ❖ Weedon 4-6
- ❖ Foucault, TBA
- ❖ Annotation writers:

Week 5: Subjectivity, Identity and Difference

Tu, Oct 4

- ❖ FTR: Reread intro to Section II, Boxes 8, 9, 11, 12, Selections 22-23, 27-33,

Th Oct 6: **Workshop midterm with peers and tutor**

Oct 11: Fall Break, Monday schedule, no class.

Hardcopies of midterm due in my office (387 Bartlett) by noon, Wed, Oct 12

Th, Oct 14:

- ❖ FTR: Reread intro to Section III, Selection 39 (Haraway)

Details for the second half of the semester TBA after collective discussions

Week 6: Race, Rights and Representation I

Tu, Oct 18:

Th, Oct 20

Week 7: Race, Rights and Representation II

Tu, Oct 25:

Th, Oct 27:

Week 8: Racialized Political Economy

Tu, Nov 1:

Th, Nov 3

Week 9: Queer Theory, Sexualities and Bodies

Tu: Nov 8:

Th, Nov 10

Week 10: Economies, States, and Law

Tu, Nov 15: Th, Nov 16:

Nov 20-25: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 11: Questions of Affect

Week 12: Feminisms in Movements

Th, Dec 8, Th 10

Week 13: LAST CLASS

Tu, Dec 13: WRAP UP

Checklist for Written Work for Prof Asher, AKA her 20 COMMANDMENTS!

1. I have a central argument or a main point and I state it clearly.
2. I define the key terms on which my argument is based.
3. I have developed my argument systematically and organized my points clearly. That is, my points follow from each other and speak to my central argument.
4. I substantiate my claims with supporting evidence, and cite relevant sources using a correct and consistent format. Prof Asher prefers the author-date style:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
5. By the middle of my paper, I have lost neither clarity nor focus.
6. I make clear transitions between my points and between paragraphs and sections.
7. The passive voice has not been used by me. Instead, I use the active voice.
8. I have edited my paper and it is free from repeated errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and I have used short sentences and made sure that my sentences do not run on like this one does.
9. My sources are formatted correctly and consistently, as is my Reference List.
10. In my introductory and concluding remarks, I neither over generalize nor make banal claims. Rather, I begin and conclude with insightful remarks about my topic.

Logistical and Mechanical details checklist

1. My paper has a title. It tells my reader what my paper is about.
2. My name, course name and number, type and number of the assignment, and the date appear single-spaced in the upper left hand corner of the first page.
3. I have used a legible font, double-spaced my writing, and used 1-inch margins.
4. There are NO double-returns between my paragraphs.
5. I have numbered all the pages of my assignment
6. I have STAPLED all the pages of my assignment. Prof Asher will not accept paper clipped papers.
7. As per Prof. Asher's instructions, I am NOT including a cover page or a report cover with my assignments.
8. I am submitting a hardcopy of my paper on time. I know that Prof Asher does not accept email submissions and that late papers loose half a letter grade for each day the paper is late.
9. I understand what plagiarism (<http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/geninfo/plagiarism.html>) means and have avoided it.
10. I have conferenced this assignment at the Writing Center (<http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>) if necessary, or at the very least I have read and addressed the issues in Section V of Strunk and White's The Elements of Style.