

WOST 201H	Critical Perspectives in Women's Studies	Fall
2004		
TuTh 1:00-2:15		
		Professor Arlene Voski Avakian email: avakian@wost.umass.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays 2:30-3:45 and by appointment 208 Bartlett		

This course will ask the fundamental questions and introduce the basic concepts in women's studies. Who are the women in Women's Studies? How can we conceptualize the category "women" so that it is reflective of all the similarities among us as well as our very substantive differences? What are the relationships among gender, race, class, sexuality, in a global context? What do we mean when we say that gender is socially constructed? What theoretical frameworks have feminists developed to explain women's oppression and what strategies have they proposed for women's liberation? How has feminist activism addressed these issues in the past, and what are some contemporary approaches to change?

We will be thinking about women's lives and theorizing about how to make change, but we will not be merely studying them/us from the outside. Everyone of us is part of the systems we are going to be studying, though our relationships to the power structure differs depending on the social categories we are occupy. Assumptions about women may be seriously challenged by this approach. When we focus on race, for example, our discussion will not be limited to women of color. Since the beginning of Western colonialism and the African slave trade more than 500 years ago, the world has been organized around a racial hierarchy and race, therefore, is a significant factor in everyone's lives. Thinking about the ways white supremacy has constructed the culture of the United States might be difficult when we are raised to believe the U.S. represents freedom and equality. We need to probe ourselves to discover blocks to our ability to hear new information.

The focus on activism will help us to work through these issues by grounding us in the lived experiences of women and by addressing the ongoing question of "what can we do to change the world to improve women's lives?" Studying women's lives is vitally important, but it is only one part of what needs to be done. We must think about how we can make change, particularly in these times when so many of the gains of past struggles are being eroded. We can act, and we can make a difference.

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places--and there are so many--where people have behaved

magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live *now* as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory. (Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train: A Personal History of Our Times*. 1994. Boston: Beacon Press. p. 208)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. SOCIAL POSITIONALITY PAPER

This 2-3 page paper will not be graded, but *IS* required. Despite the lack of a grade, I consider this assignment to be vitally important and expect you to give it your very serious attention. You will be graded down if you do not complete this assignment. **Due: 9/16**

2. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS (6 assignments – 2 pages each)

I will be handing out a list of homework assignments that help to connect the class material to your lives. You must choose 6 from this list, **3 before the midterm, 20% OF GRADE.**

3. MIDTERM ESSAY (5 pages) An analytic paper synthesizing and critiquing an article from a list I will provide, 20% OF GRADE. DUE: 10/26. LATE PAPERS WILL BE GRADED DOWN.

4. FINAL ANALYTIC ESSAY (5-7 pages). I will hand out the topics later in the semester. 20% OF GRADE. DUE: 10/30. LATE PAPERS WILL BE GRADED DOWN.

5. GROUP ACTION PROJECT

After a brainstorming session to identify issues for women on and off campus, students will work in groups on an action project, on or off campus, to address those issues. While groups will have to meet outside of class, I will allow some class time for group meetings and for students to share their progress with and get feedback from each other. Each group will be required to:

- design and implement an action project
- do a class presentation on their project, and
- prepare a written description and evaluation of the project.

The last two classes of the semester are set aside for group presentations. If projects are done earlier than the end of the semester, we will make time for presentations if the groups decides they do not want to wait until the end of the semester. **THE GRADE WILL BE GIVEN TO THE GROUP AND WILL BE 20% OF THE GRADE FOR THE COURSE. Written part of the assignment is due on 12/9–last day of class. I will hand out guidelines for the**

evaluations later in the semester. **LATE PAPERS WILL BE GRADED DOWN.**

6. CLASS PARTICIPATION

The issues we will be discussing this semester have both academic and personal implications. In order to grapple with this material it is vital to read the assignments carefully and on time, come to class with questions, agreements, disagreements--in other words to be prepared to participate in an intellectual debate. Regular and timely attendance will be factored in. **STUDENTS WILL LOSE POINTS FOR MORE THAN 3 UNEXCUSED ABSENCES. CLASS PARTICIPATION COUNTS FOR 10% OF THE GRADE.**

7. OCCASIONAL IN-CLASS WRITING

This writing is to help you think about the topics and will not be collected, nor will it impinge on your grade.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*. 2002. Ballantine Books

Inderpal Grewal & Caren Kaplan, *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*. 2002. McGraw Hill

**BOOKS ARE FOR SALE AT:
FOOD FOR THOUGHT BOOKS--E. PLEASANT STREET, AMHERST
THEY ARE ALSO ON RESERVE IN THE LIBRARY**

ERESERVE ARTICLES:

Articles are on EReserve. While this may not be the most convenient form to get these articles to you, it is the most economical. Readers have been getting more and more expensive, and the cost of this number of articles in a reader would have been prohibitive for many students. You are **REQUIRED** to print out the articles so that you can bring them to class. If you do not have access to a printer OIT will print them for you, but this service is no longer free. It is, however, much less than what you would have to pay for the articles in a reader.

One xeroxed copy of the articles will be available during regular business hours in the Women's Studies office – 208 Bartlett

COURSE CALENDAR

9/9 Introduction to the course Video showing: TOMGIRLS!!

9/14 What is Gender?

READING:

Freedman, "Before Feminism," pp. 17-42

Judith Lorber, "'Night to His Day' The Social Construction of Gender," in *Women's Studies in the Academy: Origins and Impact*, Robyn L. Rosen, ed. pp. 214-233 **ER** (Ereserve)

Gerd Brantenberg, "Bram, the director and her family," "The subjection of menwim . . ." "The studs' tragedy" in *Egalia's Daughters*. **ER** 1985. The Seal Press. pp. 9-16, 168-179, 185-191

GENDER, RACE, AND DIFFERENCE: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

9/16 Science Constructs Woman

READING:

Grewal & Kaplan, **Part I**, Introductory Essay to Part 1, **Section 1**, readings **A, B, C, D, E**; **Section 2**, readings **A, B, C, D**

William O. Beeman, "Call the Sex Inspectors – Ambiguity vs. 'Marriage Laws'," *The Providence Journal*, February 13, 2004, p. B-7 **ER**

9/21 Making of Race, Sex, and Empire

READING:

Grewal & Kaplan, **Part. 1, sec 3**

SOCIAL POSITIONALITY PAPER DUE

THE INDIVIDUAL, IDENTITIES, AND THE STATE

9/23 Public and Private

READING:

Grewal & Kaplan, **Part 2**, Introductory Essay to Part 2; **Section 1** readings **A, C, D**; **Section 2**, Reading **A, B**

SOCIAL POSITIONALITIES

9/28

Intersections

READING:

Amott and Mattai, "Race, Gender, and Women's Works: A Conceptual Framework," in *Race, Gender and Work: A Multicultural Economic History of women in the United States*. 1991. South End Press, pp. 11-28.

ER

Grewal & Kaplan, **Part 2**, Reading **A, C, D, E**

Evelynn Alsultany, "Los Intersectios: Recasting Moving Selves," in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, Gloria E. Anzaldúa & Annalouise Keating, eds. 2002. Routledge, pp. 106-110. **ER**

9/30

Race and Ethnicity

READING:

Gerwal and Kaplan, **Part 4, Section 3**, readings **A, B, C**

"Cohambee River Collective Statement," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. Barbara Smith, ed. 1983. Kitchen Table. pp. 272-282. **ER**

Veronica Chambers, "Betrayal Feminism" in *Listen Up: Voices From the Next Feminist Generation*, Barbara Findlen, ed. 2001. Seal Press, pp. 258-264.

ER

10/5

THE ELECTION—DOES IT MATTER TO WOMEN?

Students are urged to attend the panel on the election on 10/4. Details to follow.

10/7

Whiteness

READING:

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account . . ." in *Race, Class, and Gender*, Margaret Anderson & Patricia Hill Collins, eds. 1992. Wadsworth. pp. 70-82.

Mary, "things I'm gonna stop doing with my white privilege," in *A Girl's Guide to Taking Over the World: Writings from the Girl Zine Revolution*, Karen Green and Tristan Taormino, eds. 1997. St. Martin's Press, pp. 189-90.

ER

Thomas Ross, "Innocence and Affirmative Action," in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, Richard Delgado, ed. 1995. Temple. pp. 551-563. **ER**

Trina Grillo & Stephanie M. Wildman, "Obscuring the Importance of Race: The Implications of Making Comparisons Between Racism and Sexism [or Other -isms] *ibid.* pp. 564-563. **ER**

10/12

Social Class

READING:

Dorothy Allison, "A Question of Class" in *Women's Lives Multicultural Perspectives*, Gwyn Kirk & Margo Okazawa-Rey, eds. 2004. McGraw Hill. pp. 78-85 **ER**

Richard D. Kahlenberg, "How Much Social Mobility Exits in the United States?" in *The Meaning of Difference: American Constructions of Race, Sex and Gender, Social Class and Sexual Orientation*, Karen E. Rosenblum & Toni-Michelle C. Travis, eds. 2000. McGraw Hill. pp. 117-129. **ER**

334- Randy Albeda, "Fallacies of Welfare-to-Work Policies," in Rosen *op. cit.* pp. 343. **ER**

Maria Cristina Rangel, "Knowledge is Power," in *op. cit.* Findlen. **ER**

10/14

Sexual Orientation

READING:

Vera Whisman, "Identity Crises: Who is a Lesbian Anyway?" in *Sisters, Sexperts, and Queers: Beyond the Lesbian Nation*, Arlene Stein, ed. 1993. Plume. pp. 47-60. **ER**

Richard Goldstein, "Why Progressives Must Joint this Fight: The Radical Case for Gay Marriage." *The Village Voice*, September 3-9, 2002. **ER**

Leslie Feinberg, "We All Works in Progress,": in *op. cit.*, Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, pp. 164-168. **ER**

Elissa Nelson, "Girl Picnic," *op. cit.*, Green & Taormino, pp. 17-20. **ER**

10/19

Colonialism and Globalization

READING:

Gerwal & Kaplan, **Part 3, Section 4, Readings A, B, C, D**

10/21

Structural Adjustment

READING:

Gerwal & Kaplan, **Part 4, Section 5 & 6**

HOW TO EXPLAIN IT

10/26 **Feminist Theories I**

READING:

Alison Jagger & Paula Rothenberg, "Theories of Women's Subordination," *Feminist Frameworks*. 1993. McGraw Hill. pp. 113-126. **ER**

10/28 Feminist Theories II

READING:

Elizabeth Martinez, "Seeing More than Black and White," *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century*. 1998. South End. pp. 5-20. **ER**

Maxine Baca Zinn & Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Theorizing Difference from a Multiracial Feminism, in *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*, Estelle Disch, ed. 2000. Mayfield. pp. 59-68. **ER**

Sasha, "Sisterhood Would Have Been Powerful," *op. cit.*, Green and Taormino, pp. 171-174. **ER**

MIDTERM ESSAY DUE

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT—ACTIVISM

11/2 What Is Feminism

READING:

Freedman, "The Historical Emergence of Feminisms," pp. 45-119.

Susan Muaddi Darraj, "It's Not an Oxymoron: the Search for an Arab Feminism" in *Colonize This: Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism*, Daisy Hernandez & Bushra Rehman eds. 2002. Seal. pp. 295-311 **ER**

Darice Jones, "Falling off the tightrope onto a Bed of Feathers" *ibid.* pp. 312-325 **ER**

Pandora L. Leong, "Living Outside the Box," *ibid.* pp. 343-356. **ER**

11/4 Shifting the White Male Gaze

VIDEO SHOWING: Guerrillas in Our Midst

READING:

Gerwal & Kaplan, **Part Three, Introductory Essay, Section 1**, readings **A, B, C, D**

E. Ann Kaplan, "Is the Gaze Male?" *op. cit.* Rosen. pp. 257-268. **ER**

11/9 The Politics of Work and Family

READING:

Freedman, Part III

Gerwal & Kaplan, **Part 4, Section 4**, Graphics, pp. 487-89; 494

Trudy Condo, "Making Do With Food Stamp Dinners," in Arlene Voski Avakian ed. *Through the Kitchen Window: Women Explore the Intimate Meanings of Food and Cooking*. 1997. Beacon. pp. 206-209.

11/11 NO CLASS VETERANS DAY

11/16 Organizing Against Violence Against Women

READING:

Freedman, Part IV, "Gender and Violence," pp. 276-302

Sandyha Shukla, "Feminisms of the Diaspora Both Local and Global: The Politics of South Asian Women Against Domestic Violence," in Cathy J. Cohen, Kathleen B. Jones, Joan C. Tronto, eds., *Women Transforming Politics: An Alternative Reader*. 1997. NYU. pp. 269-283. **HANDOUT**

June Jordan, "A Poem About My Rights," *Naming Our Destiny*. 1989. Thunder's Mouth. pp. 102-104. **ER**

11/18

The Women's Health Movement & Reproductive Rights

Freedman, Part IV, "Medicine, Markets, and the Female Body" pp. 203-222;
Reproduction: The Politics of Choice,

Gerwal & Kaplan, **Part 1, Section 6**, readings **A, B, C, D**

11/22

MONDAY IN THE WORLD–THURSDAY AT UM

Organizing Around Objectification/Commodification of Women's Bodies

Gerwal & Kaplan, **Part 3, Section 6**

Freeman, "The Politics of Representation" pp. 222-228.

Sirena Riley, "The Black Beauty Myth," in *op. cit.* Hernandez & Rehman, pp. 357-369. **ER**

Max Airborne, "The Fat Truth," *op. cit.* Green and Taormino, pp. 43-45. **ER**

Sarah F., "there is something horribly, terribly wrong . . ." *ibid.* pp. 31-32. **ER.**

Lauren Martin, "Princess Charming," *ibid.* pp. 160-163. **ER**

Dina Stander, "When Mom is the Focus of Schoolyard Taunts," *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, 7/6/04. **ER**

11/23

Sexuality Politics

READING:

Freedman, Part IV, "Sexualities, Identities, and Self-Determination," pp. 253-275

Grewal & Kaplan, **Part 3, Section 5**, Reading **D**

Vera Whisman, Identity Crises: Who is a Lesbian Anyway," in *Sisters, Sexperts and Queers: Beyond the Lesbian Nation*. 1993. Plume. **ER**

Jeanne Delombard, "Femmenism," in *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*, Rebecca Walker, ed. 1995. Anchor Books. pp. 21-33. **ER**

11/25

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

**THANKSGIVING IS A NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING
FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
YOU CAN JOIN THEIR COMMEMORATION OF THIS DAY
AT PLYMOUTH, MA**

11/30 International and Transnational Women's Movements

READING:

Grewal & Kaplan, **Part 2, Section Five**, Reading **A, C, D, E, F**

Loretta Ross, "African American Women's Activism in the Global Arena," in *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African American Women's Contemporary Activism*, Kimberly Springer, ed. 1999. NYU. pp. 325-339. **ER**

ANALYTIC PAPER DUE

12/2 What Now? Organizing for the Future

READING:

Freedman, Part V, "Feminist Visions and Strategies," pp. 305-347

M. A. Jaimes Guerrero, "Exemplars of Indigenism: Native North American Women for De?Colonization and Liberation, in *op. cit.* Cohen, Jones, Tronto. pp. 203-222. **HANDOUT**

Carol Hardy-Fanta, "Latina Women and Political Consciousness: *Las Chispa Que Prende*," *ibid.* pp. 223-237. **ER**

Sonia Shah, "Presenting the Blue Goddess: Toward a National Pan-Asian Feminist Agenda," *ibid.* pp. 541-549. **ER**

12/7- ACTION GROUP REPORTS AND CLASS CONCLUSION

12/9