

Course: WOST 201 Critical Perspectives in Women's Studies  
Instructor: Joy N. Miller

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Office hrs: Tuesday and Thursday 2:30-4:00 and by appointment

**Course Description:** Women's Studies is a vibrant interdisciplinary field grounded in a commitment to intellectual rigor and transformation---in the world of ideas and the material and spiritual worlds in which we live. This course asks the fundamental questions about the lives of women. What does it mean to be a woman? How is the category "woman" constructed differently across social groups, cultures and historical periods? How do we analyze women's multiple identities and social positions? How can knowledge production result women acting as agents of personal and social change? How do the intersections of commonalities and differences in women's social identities challenge and liberate women's lives?

The course explores multiple methods of analysis and reflection on current issues and controversies in feminist thought within a context inclusive of gender, class, race, age, and sexual power concerns. This course examines global perspectives on women's studies centering women's lived experiences. This analysis uses women's social identities as the primary lenses from which critical knowledge and action emerge. We will review debates in feminist scholarship including contradictions of subjectivity and objectivity and theory versus practice.

**Course Goals:** 1) Critical exploration of the constructions and evolution of feminist theory and praxis 2) Analyze the ways in which women's individual and group social identities (race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, age) intersect 3) Explore how critical perspectives transform individual and systemic oppression into liberation 4) Enhance critical thinking skills by further understanding the complex interactions between institutions and public attitudes and policies toward women, and the intersections of social identities within systems of oppression and liberation.

**Accommodations and Support:** Students with concerns and/or disabilities are strongly encouraged to speak with me as soon as possible regarding accommodations and essential support to ensure success in this course.

**Critical Analysis Papers (CAP) 20%:** One of the major goals of the course is to examine, reflect, and further understand the ways in which women's social identities are constructed, interpreted, and lived. You will be asked to submit via email 3 CAPs over the course of the semester. You must integrate the course material from our readings, class discussion and exercises. These papers are a way to cultivate your critical thinking

skills and contemplate the course material. Choose two or three key points to help focus your response and critique. I encourage you to take risks; incorporate your ideas about the subject; challenge yourself and me. Comment on the contributions of the author(s), name the author(s) perspective, argument strategy, discuss the limitations and insights of the analysis. I want to know that you have read, understood, and analyzed the readings. Grades will be based on the quality and clarity of your arguments as well as the organization of your ideas. Guidelines will be handed out.

**Critical Autobiography (15%):** You will submit an autobiography (3-5 pages) that details how race, gender, class, and sexuality impact and shape your life and perception of the social and cultural world. In particular, you should discuss your conceptions of the intersections of these social identities on the decisions that you make, would like to make, may or may not make regarding your personal and professional goals. The purpose of this paper is to get you thinking about who you are, what you believe and why these things are seemingly “normal” or natural. These papers will be graded on how well they evidence critical thinking about these issues and how well you articulate this thinking.

**Attendance and Participation 15%:** Both attendance and participation are essential for success in this course. Each of you will be starting the semester with a grade of “A” in this course. Consistent attendance and participation is the first step to maintain this grade. Two unexcused absences will affect your final grade by at least one letter grade. Please inform me of Religious Observances and keep in mind you are still responsible for the any assignments due.

**Reflection Paper 10%:** This assignment asks you to articulate your experience and reaction to the literature of Mab Seagrest, Memoir of a Race Traitor. You will be asked to comment on the intersectionalities discussed in this memoir. Guidelines will be provided.

**Group Project 15%:** This will be a collaborative effort in which you (in small groups) will create and execute a final project that relates to activism and social change. We will discuss this specific guidelines in class and we will work on this as a class throughout the semester. Each group will present its project at the end of the semester. Because it is a collaborative effort, you should expect to meet with your group outside of class on a regular basis but I will provide some in-class consult time to work on your projects. I will also be available to meet with groups as needed. Topics for these projects will be discussed early in the semester and will include a range of activities such as collective art work; a project for change of a contemporary political or social policy; a series of poetry. Guidelines will be provided.

**Final Exam 20%:** There will be one final examination in this course. You will be given two questions to answer in which you will be expected to demonstrate your understanding and application of the course materials. The goal is for you to produce knowledge based on theory and praxis constructed over the course of the semester.

**Event Experience 5%:** You must attend one event in the 5 college system that expresses one or more of your social identities you want to explore, examine, think about it. You will be asked to write a brief reflection on the experience. Please send me an email prior to attending this event so we may discuss it.

**Academic Honesty and Other Undergraduate Policies:**

My assumption is that students are honest and hard working. You are responsible for knowing and following the University of Massachusetts Academic Guidelines. Please read and familiarize yourselves with the University Policy Statement on Academic Honesty, Course Requirements, Attendance, Religious Observances, and other relevant policies, in the **Undergraduate Rights and Responsibilities Booklet**. Necessary action in compliance with official guidelines will be taken against students who commit academic dishonesty. Plagiarism of any kind will be detrimental to your tenure at the University. Avoid using written papers from the internet. Caucus with me about resources for learning needs.

**Required Textbooks:**

- 1) Patricia Hill Collins, Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology. Wadsworth, 2007.
- 2) Kelly Coate, Suki Ali, & Wanguyi Wa Goro, Global Feminist Politics: Identities in a Changing World. Routledge, 2000.
- 3) bell, hooks, Feminist Theory From Margin to Center. South End Press, 1984.
- 4) Mab Segrest, Memoir of a Race Traitor. South End Press, 1994.
- 5) Additional Handouts and E-Reserves

\*Books are available at Food For Thought Books---North Pleasant Street, Amherst and also on reserve in the library.

**Our Community:** I believe education is a collaborative journey that we undertake together as a class. I expect each of you to come to class prepared to discuss and contemplate the course material. Our most valuable text is our own life experiences we each bring to the discussion. I ask that recognize we are all in different places in journey and for all of us to move forward we must do it with love. Love comes in many forms and expressions. In our classroom, it will be expressed in our joint agreement to share our experiences, curiosities, beliefs, values, in the hopes that we learn from each and about each other as human beings.

<b>Week 1</b>
Thursday September 7 <sup>th</sup> <i>Introduction</i>
<b>Week 2 Part 1: Critical Perspectives—Oppression and Liberation</b>
Tuesday September 12 <sup>th</sup> <i>bell hooks, <u>Feminist Theory from Margin to Center</u> (pgs. 1-83)</i>
Thursday September 14 <sup>th</sup> <i>bell hooks, <u>Feminist Theory from Margin to Center</u> (pgs. 84-167)</i>
<b>Week 3 Part 1: WHY RACE, CLASS AND GENDER STILL MATTER</b>
Tuesday September 19 <sup>th</sup> <b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b> "Missing People and Others: Joining Together to Expand," Arturo Madrid. 1. "La Guera," Cherríe Moraga. 2. "Oppression," Marilyn Frye. 3. "A Different Mirror," Ronald T. Takaki. 4. "From a Native Daughter," Haunani-Kay Trask. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," Audre Lorde
Thursday September 21 <sup>st</sup> <b>NO CLASS</b>
<b>Week 4 PART II: SYSTEMS OF POWER AND INEQUALITY</b>
Tuesday September 26 <sup>th</sup> <b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b> 1. "Racism without Racists," Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. 2. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," Peggy McIntosh. 3. "Of Race and Risk," Patricia Williams 10. "Seeing More than Black and White," Elizabeth Martinez. 11. "What White Supremacists Taught a Jewish Scholar about Identity," Abby L. Ferber
Thursday September 28 <sup>th</sup> <b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b> 12. "Growing Gulf Between Rich and Rest of Us", Holly Sklar. 13. "Tired of Playing Monopoly?" Donna Langston. 14. "The Hidden Cost of Being African American," Thomas M. Shapiro. 15. "Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class," Mary Pattillo-McCoy. <b>CAP #1 due via email by 4:00pm</b>

<p><b>Week 5 PART II: SYSTEMS OF POWER AND INEQUALITY</b></p> <p>Tuesday October 3<sup>rd</sup></p> <p><b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b></p> <p>16. <i>"Broken Levees, Unbroken Barriers"</i>, Jason De Parle. <i>Gender and Sexism</i>.  17. <i>"Sex and Gender Through the Prism of Difference"</i>, Maxine Baca Zinn, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Michael Messner.  18. <i>"Ideological Racism and Cultural Resistance: Constructing Our Own Images"</i>, Yen Le Espiritu</p>
<p>Thursday October 5<sup>th</sup></p> <p><b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b></p> <p>19. "Masculinities and Athletic Careers," Michael Messner.  20. "A White Woman of Color," Julia Alvarez.  21. "Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender," Thomas J. Gerschick. <i>Ethnicity and Nationality</i></p> <p><b><i>Critical Autobiography Draft #1 due via email by 4:00pm</i></b></p>
<p><b>Week 6 PART II: SYSTEMS OF POWER AND INEQUALITY</b></p> <p>Tuesday October 10<sup>th</sup></p> <p><b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b></p> <p>22. "Is This A White Country, or What?," Lillian Rubin.  23. "Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?," Mary Waters.  24. "Salsa and Ketchup: Transnational Migrants Straddle Two Worlds," Peggy Levitt.  25. "'Mexicanness' in New York: Migrants Seek New Place in Old Racial Order," Robert Smith.  26. "Migration and Vietnamese American Women: Remaking Ethnicity," Nazlia Kibria. <i>Sexuality and Heterosexism</i>.</p>
<p>Thursday October 12<sup>th</sup></p> <p><b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b></p> <p>27. "You Talkin' to Me?," Jean Kilbourne.  28. "Where Has Gay Liberation Gone: An Interview with Barbara Smith," Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed</p>
<p><b>Week 7 PART II: SYSTEMS OF POWER AND INEQUALITY &amp; Part III: THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS.</b></p> <p>Tuesday October 17<sup>th</sup></p> <p><b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b></p> <p>29. "Globalizing Sex Workers' Rights," Kamala Kempadoo.  30. "Black Sexuality: The Taboo Subject," Cornel West.  31. "The Invention of Heterosexuality," Jonathan Ned Katz.</p>
<p>Thursday October 19<sup>th</sup></p> <p><b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b></p> <p>32. "Race, Class, Gender and Women's Work," Teresa Amott and Julie Mattheai.  33. "The Indignities of Unemployment," Kenneth W. Brown.  34. "Soft Skills' and Race" Philip Moss and Chris Tilly.  35. "The Invisible Poor" Katherine Newman.</p>
<p><b>Week 8 Part III: THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS.</b></p> <p>Tuesday October 24<sup>th</sup></p> <p><b>Guest Lecturer Dr. Zeta Elliott, Mount Holyoke College</b></p> <p><b>Andersen &amp; Collins Text</b></p> <p>36. "Domestica," Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo  37. "Our Mothers' Grief: Racial-ethnic Women and the Maintenance of Families," Bonnie Thornton Dill.  38. Navigating Interracial Borders: Black-White Couples and Their Social Worlds," Erica Chito Childs  39. "Straight is to Gay As Family Is To No Family," Kath Weston</p>

Thursday October 26<sup>th</sup>

**Andersen & Collins Text**

42. "Racist Stereotyping in the English Language" Robert Moore.
43. "Crimes Against Humanity" Ward Churchill.
44. "Media Magic: Making Class Invisible" Gregory Mantsios.
45. "The Myth of the Latin Woman: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria" Judith Ortiz Cofer.
46. "Gladiators, Gazelles, and Groupies: Basketball Love and Loathing" Julianne Malveaux. Health and Social Welfare.

***CAP #2 due via email by 4:00pm***

**Week 9 Part III: THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS.**

Tuesday October 31<sup>st</sup>

**Andersen & Collins Text**

47. "Can Education Eliminate Race, Class, and Gender Inequality?" Roslyn Arlin Mickelson and Stephen Samuel Smith.
48. "Welfare Reform, Family Hardship and Women of Color," Linda Burnham.
49. "Aid to Dependent Corporations: Exposing Federal Handouts to the Wealthy," Chuck Collins.
50. "Race, Poverty and Disability: Three Strikes and You're Out! Or Are You?" Pamela Black, Fabricio Balcazar and Christopher Keys.

Thursday November 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Andersen & Collins Text**

51. "Just Choices": Women of Color, Reproductive Health, and Human Rights," Loretta J. Ross, Sarah L. Brownless, Dazon Dixon Diallo, Luz Rodriguez, and Sistersong Women of Color Reproductive Health Project. State Institutions and Violence.
52. "The First Americans: Americans Indians," C. Matthew Snipp
53. "Policing the National Body: Sex, Race, and Criminalization," Jael Silliman.
54. "Military Mirrors a Working-Class America," David M. Halbinger and Steven A. Holmes.
55. "Rape, Racism, and the Law," Jennifer Wriggins.
56. "How Safe is America," Desiree Taylor.

**Week 10 PART IV: SOCIAL CHANGE AND SITES OF CHANGE**

Tuesday November 7<sup>th</sup>

57. "The Starbucks Paradox" Kim Fellner.
58. "Interrupting Historical Patterns: Bridging Race and Gender Gaps between Senior White Men and other Organizational Groups," Nancie Zane.
59. "Women of Color on the Front Line" Celene Krauss.
60. "'Whosoever' Is Welcome Here: An Interview with Reverend Edwin C. Sanders II" Gary David Comstock.

Thursday November 9<sup>th</sup>

61. "Silent Covenants," Derrick Bell. Processes of Change.
62. "How the New Working Class Can Transform Urban America" Robin Kelley.
63. "From the Ground Up" Charon Asotoyer.
64. "Manifesta " Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards.
65. "What Does an Ally Do?" Paul Kivel.
66. "Can I Get a Witness? Testimony from a Hip Hop Feminist," Shani Jamila.

***Reflection Paper on Memoir of a Race Traitor due via email by 4:00pm***

**Week 11 Global Feminist Politics and Actions**

Tuesday November 14<sup>th</sup>

***Ali, Coate & Goro, Global Feminist Politics (pp.1-48)***

Thursday November 16<sup>th</sup>

<b>Ali, Coate &amp; Goro, Global Feminist Polics</b> (pp. 49-106)
<b>Week 12</b>
Tuesday November 21 <sup>st</sup> <b>NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</b>
<b><i>CRITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY FINAL DRAFT DUE VIA EMAIL BY 2:15</i></b>
Thursday November 23 <sup>rd</sup> <b>NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</b>
<b>Week 13 Global Feminist Politics and Actions</b>
Tuesday November 28 <sup>th</sup> <i>Ali, Coate &amp; Goro, Global Feminist Polics</i> (pp. 107-180)
Thursday November 30 <sup>th</sup> <b><i>CAP #3 due via email by 4:00pm</i></b>
<b>Week 14 Part 4: Taking Action—Student Presentations, Analysis and Praxis</b>
Tuesday December 5 <sup>th</sup> <b><i>Class Presentations</i></b>
Thursday December 7 <sup>th</sup> <b><i>Class Presentations</i></b>
<b>Week 15</b>
Tuesday December 12 <sup>th</sup> <b><i>Last Class</i></b>

