

WOST 201: Critical Perspectives in Women's Studies

University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Tobin 307 / TTh 11:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Fall 2007

Professor: Mary Elizabeth Strunk

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* Course Description and Objectives

If you are drawn to topics that fit within the interdisciplinary field of “women’s studies,” you are likely someone who thinks about questions of identity, social justice, power hierarchies, and the (frequently invisible) symbiosis that exists both within and between our local and global communities. This course ponders those questions and more, and it does so by placing gender and the lived experience of women at the center of its analyses. The excitement in a field like women’s studies is that the scholarship is very much alive and evolving in response to a rapidly changing world. Classic and comforting ideas about the “commonality of women” suddenly seem inadequate when considered within a transnational framework that exposes the systems of inequality that shape women’s lives. The very category of “woman” also invites new scrutiny, especially in a moment in which the science of women’s bodies is – literally and figuratively – being rewritten. Bear in mind that there is no such thing as THE feminist position on these topics. Your job is to use the analytical tools we study to develop a more critically informed perspective on the issues.

Once you have contemplated the world through the lens of gender, you may find that any sort of economic or historical analysis seems quite incomplete without that lens. By semester’s end, you will:

1. understand the most salient ideas and debates that are the foundation of women’s studies;
2. recognize and know how to use a variety of methods for studying gender as a social institution;
3. gain a fuller understanding of your own life experiences, relationships, and communities; and
4. develop written, verbal, and general advocacy skills that will help you confidently and purposefully engage with those communities.

* Required Texts (Available at Food for Thought Books in Amherst)

- Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds. *An Introduction to Women’s Studies: Gender in a Transnational World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006). [“Text”]
- Miriam Ching Yoon Louie. *Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take On the Global Factory* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001).
- Wangari Maathai. *Unbowed: A Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 2006).
- Additional short readings, distributed via e-reserves or in class.

* Assignments and Deadlines

Participation, homework, in-class writing		15%
Discussion-leading + SPARKS post	TBD	10%
Exploration papers (2)	T 9/25; T 10/23	20% (10% ea.)
Mid-term exam	Th 11/1	20%
Project proposal	Proposal due Th 11/15	5%
Group presentation	TBD	10%
Final project report and analysis	Due noon, T 12/18	20%

Total: 100%

Reading/Discussion Schedule:

- Sept. 4** **Introductions, Course Overview**
- “If Men Could Menstruate” Ms. Magazine, October 1978;
 - “Testosterone Poisoning” October 1975 (in-class)
- Sept. 6**
- Text: Part 1
 - ___ “**Social and Historical Constructions of Gender**” (pp.1-5)
 - Text: Section 1, A, B + p. 19
 - ___ A: Nelly Oudshoorn, “Sex and the Body”
 - ___ B: Emily Martin, “The Egg and the Sperm”
 - ___ + Joan Scott, “Gender and the Politics of History” (p. 19)
- Sept. 11** **Sex Differences and Changing Ideas of Gender**
- Text: Section 1, D, E
 - ___ D: Charlotte Furth, “Androgynous Males and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in 16th and 17th Century China”
 - ___ E: Carole S. Vance, “Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality.”
 - E-reserve
 - ___ Anne Fausto-Sterling “Do Sex Hormones Really Exist? (Gender Becomes Chemical)”
 - In-class screening: *Just Call Me Kade* (2003)
- Sept. 13** **The Rise of Western Science**
- Text: Section 2, A, B, D, E
 - ___ A: Linda Gordon “Magic”
 - ___ B: Sheila Rowbotham, “Feminist Approaches to Technology”
 - ___ D: Stephen Jay Gould, “Women’s Brains”
 - ___ E: Udo Schuklnk et al, “The Ethics of Genetic Research on Sexual Orientation”
 - Handout:
 - ___ “The Iceland Exception: A Land Where Girls Rule in Math,” Time, March 7, 2005.
 - Optional e-reserve
 - ___ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14(3), 1988.
- Sept. 18** **The Making of Race, Sex, and Empire**
- Text: Section 3, A, C, E
 - ___ A: Ian F. Haney López, “The Social Construction of Race”
 - ___ C: Anna Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood”
 - ___ E: Evelyn M. Hammonds, “New Technologies of Race”
- Sept. 20** **History of Medicine: Altered Bodies**
- Text: Section 4, D, E
 - ___ D: Ben Barker-Benfield, “Sexual Surgery in Late 19th Century America”
 - ___ E: Rogaia Abusharaf, “Unmasking Tradition”
 - E-reserve:
 - ___ Robert Wilson, *Feminine Forever* (excerpts), 1966
- Sept. 25** **First exploration paper due.**
- History of Medicine: Women Healers, Women’s Knowledges**
- Text: Section 4, B, C
 - ___ B: Barbara Ehrenreich and Dierdre English, “Exorcising the Midwives”

___C: David Arnold, "Women and Medicine"

- E-reserve or online:

"The Score: How Childbirth Went Industrial," Atul Gawande, *New Yorker*, Oct, 9, 2006.

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/10/09/061009fa_fact

Sept. 27 **Population Control and Reproductive Rights**

- Text: Section 5, A, B, C

___A: Susan Davis, "Contested Terrain: The Historical Struggle for Fertility Control"

___B: Angela Davis, "Reproductive Rights"

___C: Betsy Hartmann, "Family Matters"

- Handout

___ "10 Reasons to Rethink Overpopulation," The Population and Development Program at Hampshire College, *different Takes* No. 40, Fall 2006

Oct. 2 **Health Education and Advocacy**

- Text: Section 6, B, C

___B: Sandra Morgen, "Conceiving History:"

___C: Nadia Farah, "The Egyptian Women's Health Book Collective"

- E-reserve

___ Barbara Ehrenreich, "Welcome to Cancerland," *Harper's*, Nov. 2001.

- In-class screening: *Blue Vinyl* (2002)

Oct. 4 **Global Health Systems and Inequalities**

- Text: Section 6, A, D, E

___A: Maureen Larkin, "Global Aspects of Health and Health Policy in 3rd World Countries"

___D: Andrea Densham, "CDC, NIH, ACS, FDA—Alphabet City: The Institutional and Organizational Terrain of Breast Cancer and AIDS Activism"

___E: Kathryn Corovano, "More Than Mothers and Whores: Redefining the AIDS Prevention Needs of Women"

- Guest speaker: Dr. Adam Sitze, Amherst College Dept. of Law, Jurisprudence, Social Thought

Oct. 9 No class due to Columbus Day holiday. (Monday class schedule.)

Oct. 11 • Text: Part 2, pp. 149-154

___ "Gendered Identities in Nations and States"

- Text: Section 7, A; Section 8, A, B, D

___7A: Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy"

___8A: Jan Jindy Pettman, "Women, Gender, and the State"

___8B: Jeffrey Weeks, "Power and the State"

___8D: Gail Bederman, "Remaking Manhood through Race and 'Civilization'"

Oct. 16 **Race, Gender, Class in Informal Service Jobs**

- Text: Part 4, Section 22 A, B

___A: Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Women and Labor Migration"

___B: Leslie Salzinger, "A Maid by Any Other Name: The Transformation of 'Dirty Work' by Central American Immigrants"

- In-class screening: *Maid in America* (2005)

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/maidinamerica/film.html>

Oct. 18 **Women, Work, Immigration**

- *Sweatshop Warriors*, Introduction, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3

___ Introduction. "Listening to the Women"

___ Chapter 2, "¡La Mujer Luchando, El Mundo Transformando!"

___ Chapter 3, “Each Day I Go Home with a New Wound in My Heart”

- Oct. 23** **Second exploration paper due.**
- *Sweatshop Warriors*, Chapter 5 “Movement Roots”; and Conclusion
 - ___ Chapter 5 “Movement Roots”
 - ___ Conclusion “Returning to the Source”
 - In-class screening: TBA
- Oct. 25** **New Social Movements and Identity Politics**
- Text: Part 2; Section 9, A, C, E
 - ___ A: Kathryn Woodward, “Concepts of Identity and Difference”
 - ___ C: Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”
 - ___ E: Lisa Duggan, “Making It Perfectly Queer”
- Oct. 30** **Feminist Organizing Across Borders**
- Text: Part 2: Section 11, A, C, D
 - ___ A: Leila J. Rupp, “The International First Wave”
 - ___ C: Lepa Mladjenovic and Vera Litricin, “Belgrade Feminists 1992: Separation, Guilt, and Identity Crisis”
 - ___ D: Winnie Woodhull, “Global Feminists, Transnational Political Economies, Third World Cultural Production”
- Nov. 1** **Midterm Exam**
- Nov. 6** **Women Creating and Being Created**
(election day)
- Text: Section 12, Intro, A, C
 - ___ “Representations, Cultures, Media, Markets,” (pp. 265-268)
 - ___ A: John Berger, “Ways of Seeing” (excerpt)
 - ___ C: Suzanne Lustig, “How and Why Did the Guerrilla Girls Alter the Art World Establishment?”
 - Text: Section 14, E
 - ___ E: William Wresch, “World Media”
- Nov. 8** **Commodifying the Body: Gender, Consumption, and Representation**
- Text: Section 17, A, B, C, F
 - ___ A: Rosalind Coward, “The Body Beautiful”
 - ___ B: Nancy Worcester, “Nourishing Ourselves”
 - ___ C: Roland Marchand “Grotesque Modern”
 - ___ F: Rone Tempest: “Barbie and the World Economy”
- Nov. 13** **Sexualities, Cyberculture, Tourism**
- Text: Section 18, B
 - ___ B: Juana María Rodríguez, “Welcome to the Global Stage: Confessions of a Latina Cyber-Slut”
 - E-reserves
 - ___ Felicity Schaeffer-Grabiel, “Planet-Love.com: Cyberbrides in the Americas and the Transnational Routes of U.S. Masculinity,” *Signs*, vol. 31, no. 2, wtr 2006.
- Nov. 15** **Gendering Globalization: Economic and Wartime Refugees**
Small-group proposals due at start of class.
- Text: Section 19, Intro, A
 - ___ “Gendering Globalization and Displacement” (pp. 383-387)
 - ___ A: “On the Beach: Sexism and Tourism”

- Text: Section 20, C, D
 ___C: Phil Marfleet, “The Refugee”
 ___D: Ayesha Khan, “Afghan Refugee Women’s Experience of Conflict and Disintegration”
- Nov. 20 **The Gendered Nature of Eco-Devastation and Activism**
 - Text: Section 24, C; Conclusion, A
 ___C: Helen Zweifel, “The Gendered Nature of Biodiversity Conservation”;
 ___Conclusion, A: Cynthia Enloe, “Beyond the Global Victim”
 - Optional E-reserve
 ___Sandra Steingraber, “Sap Moon,” *Having Faith: An Ecologist’s Journey to Motherhood*, 2001.
- Nov. 22 No class. Thanksgiving Break.
- Nov. 27 **Global Consumption and Sustainability: The Green Belt Movement**
 - Wangari Maathai’s *Unbowed*
 ___Chapters 1-4
- Nov. 29
 - Wangari Maathai’s *Unbowed*,
 ___Chapters 5-8; + Epilogue; visit <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>
 - Visit “Sustainable South Bronx” <http://www.ssbx.org/>
 - Majora Carter’s “Greening the Ghetto” speech (Feb. 2005):
<http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/53>
- Dec. 4 Small-group presentations.
- Dec. 6 Small-group presentations.
- Dec. 11 Small-group presentations.
- Dec. 13 Course overview and exam preparations.

Take-Home Final Exam due at noon on Tuesday, December 18.

* Course Structure

Introductory courses can be both exciting and frustrating as they cover so many topics in a single semester. Bear in mind that we will never be totally finished with any one topic. Certain themes will carry over into subsequent areas of inquiry. This course is designed to give you a big-picture understanding of “women’s studies” as an integrated intellectual perspective that yet contains numerous cross-currents and ongoing debates across interdisciplinary boundaries. Taken together, the readings will help you to weave together the many different strands of feminist thought, drawing connections and contrasts among different authors and analytical approaches.

Consciously or not, most people harbor strong feelings about gendered identities and the systems and practices that shape them. Ours will be a classroom that honors the sensitivity and privacy of the issues we discuss. I expect that each of you will help build a classroom environment based on trust, confidentiality, and community, while also challenging each other in intellectually rigorous discussions.

Most of our class meetings will be run seminar-style, which means that they will be based mostly on class discussion and interactive learning exercises rather than lectures. Therefore, you must come to class having read and having

read *well*. It is your job to prepare yourself to think critically, to articulate ideas clearly, and to listen attentively and respectfully to your classmates, who may have perspectives quite different from your own.

Take note! This is not a class for which you will be able to “cram.” In order to do well in the class, you must keep up with the readings. This means working consistently and giving yourself ample time to digest and integrate the course material over the semester.

* Readings

Reading well means reading with a pencil in hand and taking the time to make marginal notes on the author’s arguments and your responses to them. These notes are invaluable. They greatly enhance comprehension and also elevate the level of our class discussions. (When you are reading for multiple classes, you know how essential notes are for jogging your memory about a particular article under discussion.) A set of reliable reading notes also makes studying and paper-writing far, far easier than it would be if you had to re-enter the readings “cold.” In our class meetings, we will frequently parse specific sections of what we have read, so **you must always bring to class the text or articles to be discussed that day.**

* A Note on E-reserve articles: As course readers have become more and more expensive, e-reserves are now the most economical way to assemble readings for class. **You are required to print out all e-reserve articles so that you can bring them to class.** If you do not have access to a printer, OIT will print them out for you for a fee. One paper copy of each e-reserve article will be available during regular business hours in the Women’s Studies office (208 Bartlett).

* Participation / Short homework assignments / In-class work

You will receive frequent, short writing assignments that will enable you to experiment with new ideas, while also allowing me to give you regular feedback on your progress. Your class participation grade will be based on your performance on these assignments, plus the quality of your participation in class. Obviously, being absent or late to class will adversely affect your grade. Students with more than three or more unexcused absences will automatically have their grades lowered.

* Discussion-leading and Pre-class SPARKS post

Each student will sign up to be the class discussant for one class session. This will involve analyzing and critiquing the assigned readings, presenting a condensed version of their (and your) arguments to the rest of the class, and generating questions to guide the in-class discussion. Students will work in pairs on the same set of readings. You are encouraged you to meet ahead of time with your student partner to find engaging ways to collaborate. (For example, one student may address the strengths of an article, while the other addresses the weaknesses; or one student might lead an exercise, while the other student offers an analysis after the exercise is complete.) Each student will submit her or his own written critique, which must be posted on SPARKS by noon of the day before the discussion is to take place.

* Exploration Papers (2)

The exploration paper is an opportunity for you to reflect upon, explore, and apply new ideas from the course readings. Note that this is NOT merely a summary or opinion paper. Rather, the exploration paper should contain some sort of argument regarding BOTH (a) an author’s method of framing an issue; and (b) how an issue or inequality might best be addressed and why. This 2-page (maximum) paper should specifically cite and engage with a specific portion of one or more of the readings. At the end of the paper, include at least two questions for further discussion and/or further research. You do not need to know the answers to these questions. They should be questions provoked by the writing of the exploration paper. This assignment may eventually provide fodder for your final project.

* Midterm Exam

The midterm will be bluebook exam written in class in response to two essay questions. This exam will be based on all course material from the first half of the semester.

* Final Project

As the culmination of a semester's work, this group action project will enable you to synthesize all you have learned and to apply it in the "local" community, broadly defined. It also will hone your collaborative learning and public presentation skills. Small groups of students will work together to design a community project based on one of the course topics. The final project is worth 35% of your grade, which will be broken down as follows:

- 1) **The Proposal (5%)** Group members will collectively write a plan for completing your group project, including the topic, goals, implementation, contribution by each individual member, schedule for completion, a short bibliography of sources that will inform the project.
- 2) **The Presentation (10%)** The small group will organize and lead part of a class session on the topic pertaining to your project. You are encouraged to connect with local organizations and/or attend events and activities pertaining to your topic. The use of visual aids, multimedia, and role-plays are also encouraged, insofar as these genuinely enhance your presentation and your audience's comprehension of what you aim to convey. For the presentation, groups will receive one collective grade.
- 3) **Research Report (20%)** Each student will write an individual research report, a 5-6 page document describing their group project, its strengths and liabilities, and how the project supports, refutes, or complicates the arguments in the course readings. Your report should include relevant background sources, and many, but not all, of these may be drawn from our course readings. The research report must demonstrate your mastery of the course readings, plus your ability to go beyond the readings and delve critically into your specialized topic.

* Deadlines

Most of the written assignments are time-sensitive, especially the discussion-leading web post. Turn in all written assignments on the due date. Except with prior approval of the professor or in the case of extreme emergencies, late assignments will not be accepted.

* Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty (knowingly helping another student to cheat). You can review University's official policy on academic honesty here: <http://www.umass.edu/umhome/policies/honesty.html> .