

Professor: Dayo Gore

Office Hours: Tues and Thurs 11:00-12:00 pm & by appointment

Office: Bartlett 261

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WOST 301
Theorizing Women's Issues: U.S. Feminisms
in Theory and Practice
Tuesday and Thursday 11:15-12:30 pm, Bartlett 310

"We have still to recognize that being a woman is, in fact, not extractable from the context in which one is a woman- that is race, class, time and place. We have still to recognize that all Women do not have the same gender."

—Elsa Barkley Brown, "What Has Happened Here"

"It is not our differences that separate women, but our reluctance to recognize those differences and to deal effectively with the distortions that have resulted from the ignoring and misnaming of those differences."

—Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*

This course provides a historical overview and critical analysis of feminist theories and politics as they have emerged within the United States. In particular the course will explore the ways overlapping and intersecting structures of race, gender, class, nation and sexuality, as well as the politics of difference, have shaped feminist theories and activisms. The course emphasizes understanding feminist theories within the political, historical and cultural contexts in which they developed. In addition, the course will take into account the ways such theories address practical questions and debates regarding gender relations, women's lived experiences and strategies for social change. Thus, we will also examine how feminist theories have engaged, emerged from and shaped different forms of political activism and debates from abolitionism and anti-imperialist struggles to the civil rights movement, queer politics and grassroots organizing.

Required Readings

Carole McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim editors, *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (2003)

Margaret Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale* (2000)

Assata Shakur, *Assata* (1987)

Additional Article and readings available on SPARK (they will also be on E-reserve password: theory).

All required books are available at **Food for Thought Books** at 106 N. Pleasant St. in downtown Amherst. The *Reader* will also be available on reserve at the Du Bois Library.

Assignments and Grades

This course is writing and reading intensive. Some week's assignments are more difficult than others and may include a number of dense theoretical concepts. Therefore, to get the most out of each class it is imperative that you complete all readings and written assignments for the days they are due. **Late assignments, when accepted, will be marked down.** Your grade will be based on your engagement with the material, specifically your ability to use written and oral skills to articulate your understanding and analysis of the readings, films, and lectures. You will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate your knowledge through written assignments, class exercises and discussions, including:

- Five 2 pg. typed response papers that provide a detailed response to your choice of a complete day's assigned readings. Each paper should directly address the readings in a thoughtful manner and reflect a critical analysis of the material (i.e. what theoretical insights do the articles provide, what are the common themes, and what key issues do they raise). You should not attempt to summarize an entire set of readings but rather pull out key points and examples that present the article main argument and your own interpretation. Although creativity and making connections to broader issues is definitely welcomed, the majority of your essay should *critique* the day 's readings, discussing both its strengths and weaknesses. Each response will count as 5% of your grade (25% total). Response papers are due **at the beginning of class on the day for which the readings were assigned.** **You must complete your first paper on Joan Wallach Scott article "Equality v. Difference."** The remaining 4 response papers are due by the beginning of class on Tuesday November 25, 2008 (week 13). **Late response papers will not be accepted.**

- A 6-8 page (typed and double spaced) analytic essay that makes use of class readings to respond to a question handed out in-class. The essay will serve as a midterm and will count for 25% of your grade. The paper is due at the start of class on Thursday October 16th.

- A 6-8 page cultural critique (typed and double spaced) that draws on class readings to provides a feminist analysis of a cultural product or event (i.e. a movie, TV show, magazine issue, mass public event, public debate etc). This will count for 30% of your grade and is due in the Women's Studies office by 4 pm, Tuesday December 16th (more details forthcoming in handout).

The final 20% of your grade will rest on class participation. Your participation grade will be based on regular attendance and active engagement in class discussions, breakout sessions, and quizzes. Also once during the semester you will be required to briefly discuss (5 minutes) one of that day's readings and provide a discussion question. You will sign up for days to start discussion during the second week of class. **More than 2 unexcused absences will result in an automatic lowering of your grade.**

Summary

Response papers (5)	25%
Class participation	20%
Analytic essay	25%
Cultural Critique	30%

Academic Honesty

It is expected that all assignments handed in for this class are your own original work. Please make sure in all essays assignments you make proper use of quotations and cite sources. Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated and you are responsible for being knowledgeable of University's official policy on academic honesty. You can read it in full at http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/code_conduct/acad_honest.htm

Introduction and Overview

Tues, Sept. 2: Overview of Course: Why does theory matter? What are women's issues?
Readings: bell hooks, handout and in *Feminist Theory Reader*, p. 50-57
Response Paper Handout

Thus, Sept. 4: Some relevant theories/tools for feminist scholars
Readings: Joan W. Scott, p. 378-389 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

Tools for Building an Integrated Analysis

Tues, Sept. 9: What are the politics of Feminist Theory?
Readings: M. Baca Zinn and B. Thornton Dill, p. 353-361 in *Feminist Theory Reader*
Cynthia Enloe, "Feminist Theorizing from *Bananas to Maneuvers*," on SPARK

Thurs, Sept. 11: Social Constructionism and Identity
Reading: Amott and Matthaiei, "Women, Race and Work " on SPARK
Evelyn Higgenbotham, "The Metalanguage of Race" on SPARK

In Slavery and Freedom, Forging Early Feminists Debates

Tues, Sept. 16: Feminist History – Freedom and Power in the 1800s
Readings: "Declaration of Sentiments" on SPARK
Paula Giddings, "To Choose Again Freely" on SPARK
Ania Loomba, "Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies" on SPARK

Immigration, Colonization and U.S. Imperialism

Thurs, Sept. 18: Understanding the Connections between Gender, Race and Nation

Readings: Lisa Lowe, "Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization" on SPARK

Tues, Sept. 23: Discussion - Gender and Difference within U.S. Imperialism

Readings: Adrienne Rich, p. 447-459 in *Feminist Theory Reader*
Jaspir Puar, "On Torture: Abu Grahیب," on SPARK

Framing the Social Movements of the 1960s

Thurs, Sept. 25: The Contested Roots of 1960s Feminism

Readings: Daniel Horowitz, "Introduction" to *Betty Freidan* on *E-Reserve*
Beulah Richardson's, "A Black Woman Speaks" on *E-Reserve*
Shakur, *Assata*, Intro-Chp. 2

Tues, Sept. 30: Discussion - A Life in Theory and Practice

Readings: Shakur, *Assata*, Chp. 3-12

1970s and 1980s Feminisms

Thurs., Oct. 2: Sexual Liberation?

Reading: Anne Koedt, p. 242-248, Charlotte Bunch, p. 80-87 and Monique Wittig, p. 249-254 in *Feminist Theory Reader*
Contextualizing the Sexuality debates on SPARK

Tues, Oct. 7: Discussion: Defining Women's Oppressions and Differences

Readings: Bonnie Kreps, p. 41-49; The Combahee River Collective, Donna Rushin and Mitsuye Yamada, p. 164 -174 all in *Feminist Theory Reader*.
Shakur, *Assata*, to end.

Handout for Analytic Essay

Thurs, Oct 9: Analyzing the Relationship Between Capitalism and Women's Oppression

Readings: Heidi Hartmann, p. 206 -221 in *Feminist Theory Reader*
Linda Lim, p. 222 -230 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

Rethinking Feminist Politics through Theory

Tues, Oct 14: No Class –Monday Schedule

Thurs, Oct 16: Intersecting Constructions of Capitalism and Gender

Readings: Judith Halberstam, "Temporalities and Postmodern Geographies" on *E-Reserve*

**Analytic Essay Due at the Beginning of Class on Thursday
No Response Papers Will Be Accepted This Week**

Constructing Gender and Sex ?

Tues, Oct. 21: Feminist Definitions of Gender and Sex

Readings: Gayle Rubin, selection from "The Traffic in Women" on SPARK

Thurs, Oct. 23: Why Does Gender Matter?

Readings: Judith Butler, p. 415-427 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

Judith Halberstam interview "Masculinity without Men" on SPARK

Feminist Theory and "Post" Theories

Tues, Oct 28: Poststructuralist Theories and Their Usefulness

Readings: Donna Haraway, p. 391-403 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

C. Delphy, "Rethinking Sex and Gender" p. 57-67 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

Wednesday Oct 27th Last Day To DROP with "W"

Thurs, Oct. 30: Discussion: Difference and Post Structuralism

Readings: Norma Alarcon, p. 404-414 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

Genders, Sexualities and more

Tues, Nov. 4: Sexuality and the State

Readings: Lisa Duggan, *Twilight of Equality*, chp. 2 on SPARK

Audre Lorde p. 254-259

Thurs, Nov. 6: The Shifting Politics and Meanings of Gender, Sexuality and Sex

Readings: GLQ Forum "Thinking Sex/Thinking Gender" Intro, Stryker, Valentine, Stein, Rosario and Roughgarden, on SPARK

Feminist Perspectives on Violence and the State

Tues, Nov. 11: **No Class - Start Reading Atwood, *A Handmaid's Tale***

Weds, Nov. 12: **Class - Tues Schedule: A Women's Sphere?**

Readings: Anannya Bhattacharjee, "The Public/Private Mirage" on SPARK

Atwood, *A Handmaid's Tale*, to pg. 75

Thurs, Nov. 13: Women, Gender and Power

Readings: Atwood, *A Handmaid's Tale*, to pg. 224

Some Strategies for Inclusion and Resistance

Tues, Nov. 18: Discussion: Women, Difference and Power

Readings: Finish Atwood, *A Handmaid's Tale*, to pg. 311

Nelson, "Race Class and Sexuality: Reproductive Rights for an Inclusive Feminism", p. 145-177 on SPARK

Thurs, Nov. 20: Battles Waged From Culture to Politics
Readings: Michele Byers, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" on SPARK
Ayana Byrd, "Claiming Jezebel" on SPARK

Some Strategies for Inclusion and Resistance

Tues, Nov. 25: Lessons Learned
Readings: Sonia Correa and Rosalind Petchesky, p. 88-102 and Jee Yeun Lee, "Beyond Bean Counting," p. 472-76 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

Final Response Paper Due At Start of Class

Thurs, Nov. 27: No Class Thanksgiving Break

Some Strategies for Inclusion and Resistance

Tues, Dec 2: Discussion: Identity and Politics: Can Feminists Build at the Intersections?
Readings: Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," on SPARK
Audre Lorde Project, 2008 Update on SPARK and <http://www.alp.org/>
Ella's Daughters, ARC109 reading on SPARK and <http://www.ellasdaughters.org/home-mainmenu-1>
Third Wave Foundation, Video at <http://www.thirdwavefoundation.org/>

Thurs, Dec 4: Difficulty of Building at the Intersections: The Elections
Readings: Gloria Steinem, "Women are Never Front Runners," on SPARK
Ariel Werner, "A Response to Gloria Steinem," on SPARK
Patricia Williams, "House of Cards" on SPARK
Barbara Ehrenreich, "Feminism's Assumptions Upended" on SPARK

The Mainstreaming of Feminist Politics and The Post Feminist Backlash

Tues, Dec. 9: Culture Wars: From Feminist to Post-Feminist
Readings: Carolyn Sicro, p. 428-436 in *Feminist Theory Reader*
Susan Faludi, "Think the Gender War is Over? Think Again" on SPARK

Thurs, Dec. 11: Theory and Practice in the Current Climate
Readings: Handout on Tuesday Dec. 9th

**Final Paper/Cultural Critique Due in Women's Studies Office
208 Bartlett, by 4 pm Tuesday, December 16, 2008**