

Women's Studies 201: Critical Perspectives in Women's Studies

Course Information

Professor	Miliann Kang Assistant Professor, Women's Studies Program, UMass Amherst
Office Location & Number	Bartlett 73 (basement), 577-0710 or 545-1922 (Women's Studies office)
Office Hours	Tues, Thurs 12:30-1:30 and by appointment
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Class Info	Fall 2009, Bartlett 119, Tues, Thurs 11:15-12:30

Course Description

The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized.

Audre Lorde, *Sister*, p. 36

The story is older than my body, my mother's, my grandmother's. For years we have been passing it on so that it may live, shift, and circulate.

Trinh. T. Minh-ha, *Woman Native Other*, p. 137

This course will introduce you to the vibrant field of Women's, Gender, Sexuality Studies and its unique interdisciplinary perspective grounded in a commitment to individual and social transformation. Questions that we will interrogate throughout the semester include: How are individuals, institutions and social processes "gendered"? How do biological, cultural, historical and political frameworks shape knowledge of sex, gender and sexuality? What are the various perspectives in feminist analysis and activism? How is the category of "woman" constructed differently across social groups, cultures and historical periods? Are there common experiences and essential characteristics that define all women? How do the differences between women according to race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nationality complicate our commonalities? How do we integrate these cross-cutting categories in analyzing women's multiple identities and social positions? How can an understanding of women's lives empower us to act as agents of personal and social change? In exploring these questions, the course material will incorporate social science research, literature, political essays, film, poetry and art. The course has a strong comparative focus between women in the U.S. and women around the world, emphasizing transnational linkages and the processes of globalization.

Readings

Required Texts: All books are available at Food for Thought Books, 106 East Pleasant St. 413-253-5432 in Amherst Center and are also on reserve in the library. Additional readings will be distributed.

- 1) *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*, by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006).
- 2) Louise Erdrich. *The Plague of Doves* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009).
- 3) Additional short readings, distributed on-line, on SPARK or in class.

Goals & Organization

- 1) to gain an understanding of the major intellectual concepts and debates that are the foundation of an interdisciplinary feminist perspective.
- 2) to develop a feminist analysis that enables you to view yourself and your various social worlds (family, school, workplace, hometown, country, environment, etc.) through a critical "gender lens" that prioritizes the experiences and contributions of women.
- 3) to master the basic tools of feminist inquiry – including the ability to identify gendered processes, to pose theoretical questions, to understand current debates, and to learn methods of research, criticism and advocacy.
- 4) to engage actively with feminist concerns in the college and local community.
- 5) to gain a deeper understanding of yourself, your relationships and the society in which you live
- 6) to envision social institutions, policies, relations, ideologies and practices that foster respect, health, safety, equality, esteem and empowerment of all people.
- 7) to develop written and verbal skills for developing ideas, exchanging ideas with others, and presenting these ideas to a broader audience
- 8) to create a learning environment that instills confidence in your abilities to articulate and interpret your own experiences, and to empower you to take action on the things you care about.

Approach to Readings and Course Material

This course aims to give you an experience of Women's, Gender, Sexuality Studies as an integrated intellectual perspective with numerous cross-currents and debates across interdisciplinary boundaries. Introductory courses can be both exciting and frustrating in that they cover so many topics in such a short period of time. Thus, I have designed the course to give you both breadth and depth as you venture into new intellectual terrain. The main reader for the course, *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World* (henceforth referred to as *Text*) addresses the many broad subfields within Women's Studies. I have also assigned a full-length book, *The Plague of Doves*, a new work of fiction by Louise Erdrich (winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award and finalist for the Pulitzer Prize) about relations between Native Americans and white settlers that are intricately connected by issues of gender, race, trauma, and ultimately love.

Your comprehension of the material will be greatly enhanced if you take the time to make notes on the author's arguments and your responses to them. Careful notes greatly enhance comprehension and also elevate the level of our class discussions. Reliable reading notes also makes studying and paper writing far, far easier than it would be if you had to reconstruct the readings "cold." In our class meetings, we will frequently refer to specific sections of what we have read, so you must always bring to class the text or articles to be discussed that day. There will be some on-line and SPARK articles: As course readers have become more and more expensive, these are now the most economical way to assemble readings for class. You are required to print out all articles and bring them to class. If you do not have access to a printer, OIT will print them out for you for a fee. If you find yourself having a problem with this system, I trust that let me know BEFORE the day that readings are due.

Requirements

Many of us have intense feelings about our gendered identities and the practices and structures that shape them. Thus, I ask that we work together to create a space that honors the sensitivity of the issues we will discuss. I ask each of you to take responsibility for building a classroom environment based on trust, confidentiality and community while at the same time challenging each other in intellectually rigorous discussions. It is fine to share personal experiences where appropriate, but please do so as a way of illustrating or engaging with debates in the readings rather than substituting anecdotes for critical thinking.

This course follows a seminar format, which means that it is based mostly on class discussion and interactive learning exercises rather than lectures. This requires that you come prepared to think critically, articulate ideas coherently, listen attentively and respect the diversity of experiences and perspectives of your classmates. Because active class participation is so important for the success of this class, I have designed the assignments to facilitate deeper engagement with the readings and richer discussions. The class is structured around frequent, shorter assignments which allow me to provide you with regular feedback. In other words, this is not a course that you will be able to “cram” for. In order to do well in this course, you must take time to digest and integrate the course material through consistent work over the course of the semester. Rather than completing one section and moving on, we will weave and layer the many different strands of feminist thought, drawing connections and contrast between different authors and analytical approaches. Thus, it is important to read and master concepts in each section.

- **Class participation, Homework Assignments, Quizzes and In-class Writing (30%)** The class format is designed to encourage and reward you for keeping up with the readings and coming to class prepared with comments and questions. Class participation will include regular attendance, informed and thoughtful contributions to discussion, in-class writing, participation in group exercises and periodic quizzes. You are expected to attend every class session and to let me know the reason for absences, preferably ahead of time. Students who have more than THREE unexcused absences will have their grades penalized. The attendance sheet will be passed out only at the beginning of class. I will periodically assign short (hopefully fun and creative) assignments designed to enrich understanding of the readings through applications to your current social world. (eg. I may ask you to interview a roommate or friend, observe social interactions in your dorm, or collect data from the TV or Internet and then report your findings to the class). I will also ask you to hand in short written responses in class. I utilize frequent, short exercises, or what English professor Peter Elbow refers to as “low stakes writing” as a way of helping you to synthesize the course material and generate your own analysis. There will also be periodic unannounced quizzes. Rather than a threat or penalty, these assignments are designed to allow you to demonstrate your knowledge and to receive regular feedback.
- **Class Discussant Essay and SPARK post (25% - 2-3 pages)** You will sign up to be a class discussant for one class session. This will involve writing a short essay, analyzing and critiquing (not merely summarizing) the assigned readings, presenting your arguments briefly to the class (5 minutes), generating discussion questions and leading discussion. In most cases, you will work together with at least one other student and present on the same readings, I encourage you to meet with each other and find engaging ways to collaborate (eg. One of you can address the strengths, the other focus on the weaknesses; you can lead an exercise together, etc). You will each, however, submit, your own written essay, which you must **post on SPARK by 11 a.m. on the day before the discussion** is to take place (in most cases, this will mean you will post on Wed and lead class discussion on Thurs). The rest of the class will read the paper ahead of class time and class members are welcome to post their own comments. This can be a little nerve-wracking for some students, but it has proven to be a very effective learning tool. It gives you the opportunity to engage in public discourse with both the professor and your peers. Don't worry –we will offer constructive comments urging you to clarify and develop your own ideas.
- **Short Paper on Healthcare Debate 3-4 pages (20%)** This class encourages you to draw connections between the course material and contemporary issues. As the country confronts important debates and policies about health care during this Fall 09 semester, we will use these issues to reflect upon and apply feminist perspectives and analysis. This assignment is designed to help you synthesize and apply the readings toward understanding and shaping your own social worlds and to foster collaborative learning. You will have a choice between attending a public event or analyzing media sources on issues of gender and sexuality in health care debates and applying key concepts from the class to critique these debates.
- **Final Paper 5-6 pages (30%)** Drawing upon Erdrich's *Plague of Doves*, you will complete an analytical paper that draws connections between the novel and an interview that you will conduct with a

person of your choosing whom you regard as a feminist role model (whether or not that person claims that identity). We are not having a final exam so this final paper must demonstrate your mastery of the course readings, concepts and debates. More detailed instructions will be given later in the semester, but you should start thinking about the person you may want to interview.

- **Special Opportunities** Frequently, the issues we cover in this class will overlap with topics that you are studying in your other classes or may be covered in the news, contemporary political debates, or popular culture. I encourage you to be on the lookout for such connections, and to share them with the class when appropriate. We are lucky to be in the Five College area, in which there are so many relevant and stimulating events. On our SPARK site, there will be a place to post events that are especially relevant to this class; please feel free to notify me of any such events or student opportunities that I might have missed. You will not be given direct credit for attending these events but they will undoubtedly improve your grade by informing your class participation, your discussant essay and presentation and your written papers.

- **Academic Honesty** Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated and you are responsible for educating yourself about the University's policy <<http://www.umass.edu/umhome/policies/honesty.html> *If an instructor finds that a student has violated the University's Academic Honesty Policy, the instructor has the right to lower the student's grade, or even to fail the student for the course. Students have the right to appeal such a grade penalty by an instructor. The University Academic Honesty Board, which must be notified by instructors of any grade penalty, reviews all student appeals. The Board may sustain or recommend modification of the penalty given by the faculty member, or may recommend sanctions exceeding those originally given, such as suspension or expulsion from the University.*

- **Deadlines and Late Policy** 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 documented emergencies, late assignments will not be accepted and/or will receive a significant penalty.

- **Proofreading** A sloppy paper detracts significantly from your argument. We all make honest mistakes. But it is disrespectful to submit hastily prepared work to your professor and peers and your grade will reflect this.

→ **Summary of Assignments and Deadlines**

Participation, homework, in-class writing, quizzes	Throughout the semester	30%
Discussion-leading + SPARK post	Depends on dates for individual sign-up	25%
Short paper on healthcare	October 8, due at beginning of class	20%
Final paper	Due in class, last day, Dec 10	25%

Total: 100%

Course Schedule

- I reserve the right to make changes in the schedules as I see appropriate.
- I will also post related news and magazine articles on SPARK – please check frequently.
- Films will be viewed in class: We will only see a brief segment of most of the films listed below – films will be on reserve in the library for one week after we see them in class for those who miss them or wish to see the entire film. You are responsible for the content of the films, as they will be referred to in quizzes and you should incorporate them where appropriate into your essays and final paper.

Sept 8 Introduction, Course Overview

Sept 10 Gender as a Social Construction

In-class screening: *The Miracle of Life* UM Media Video V 2293

- 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," p. 6
- ___B: Emily Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm," p. 10
- ___ + Joan Scott, "Gender and the Politics of History," p. 19

Sept 15

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," p. 21
- ___E: Carole S. Vance, "Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality," p. 29

Sept 17

The Rise of Western Science

In-class screening: *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman - "The Hottentot Venus" UMASS V1845*

- Text: Section 2, A, C, D, E
- ___A: Linda Gordon "Magic," p. 33
- ___B: Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Biological Connection," p. 41
- ___D: Stephen Jay Gould, "Women's Brains," p. 43
- ___E: Udo SchukInk et al, "The Ethics of Genetic Research on Sexual Orientation," p. 47

(Monday, Sept 21 – Last Day to Drop/Add)

Sept 22

The Making of Race, Sex, and Empire

- Text: Section 3, A, C, E
- ___A: Ian F. Haney López, "The Social Construction of Race," p. 52
- ___C: Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," p. 60
- ___E: Evelyn M. Hammonds, "New Technologies of Race," p. 69

Sept 24

Population Control and Reproductive Rights

In class screening: *Skin Deep*-Smith College Call # RG137.6.N68 S55 1997

- Text: Section 5, A, B, C
- ___A: Susan Davis, "Contested Terrain: The Historical Struggle for Fertility Control," p. 99
- ___B: Angela Davis, "Reproductive Rights," p. 103
- ___C: Betsy Hartmann, "Family Matters," p. 107
- <http://popdev.hampshire.edu/projects/dt/40>
- "10 Reasons to Rethink Overpopulation," The Population and Development Program at Hampshire College, *differenTakes* No. 40, Fall 2006

Sept 29

History of Medicine: Case Study of Birthing Practices

- Text: Section 4, D, E
- ___D: Ben Barker-Benfield, "Sexual Surgery in Late 19th Century America," p. 85
- ___E: Rogaia Abusharaf, "Unmasking Tradition," p. 91
- Text: Section 4, B
- ___B: Barbara Ehrenreich and Dierdre English, "Exorcising the Midwives," p. 77
- SPARK 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

Oct 1

Health Education and Advocacy

- Text: Section 6, B, C
- ___B: Sandra Morgen, "Conceiving History," p. 129
- ___C: Nadia Farah, "The Egyptian Women's Health Book Collective," p. 133
- on-line <http://www.barbaraehrenreich.com/cancerland.htm>
- ___ Barbara Ehrenreich, "Welcome to Cancerland," *Harper's*, Nov. 2001.

Oct 6

Global Health Systems and Inequalities

- In-class screening: *YESTERDAY* (2005)
- Text: Section 6, A, D, E
- ___A: Maureen Larkin, "Global Aspects of Health and Health Policy in 3rd World Countries," p. 119
- ___D: Andrea Densham, "CDC, NIH, ACS, FDA—Alphabet City: The Institutional and Organizational Terrain of Breast Cancer and AIDS Activism," p. 135

___E: Kathryn Corovano, "More Than Mothers and Whores: Redefining the AIDS Prevention Needs of Women," p. 138

Oct 8 Feminist Critiques of the Health Care Debate

FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS
Class debate and discussion of papers

Oct 13 NO CLASS – MONDAY SCHEDULE

Oct 15 Gendered Identities in Nations and States

- Text: Part 2, pp. 149-154
- Text: Section 7, A; Section 8, A
- ___7A: Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy," p. 155
- ___8A: Jan Jindy Pettman, "Women, Gender, and the State," p. 174

Oct 20 Gender, Race, Sexualities and the State

- Text: Section 8, B, C, D
- ___8B: Jeffrey Weeks, "Power and the State," p. 181
 - ___8C: Margot Bardan, "Competing Agenda," p. 185
 - ___8D: Gail Bederman, "Remaking Manhood through Race and 'Civilization'," p. 190

Oct 22 New Social Movements and Identity Politics / Feminist Organizing Across Borders

- Text: Part 2; Section 9, A, C, D, E
- ___A: Kathryn Woodward, "Concepts of Identity and Difference," p. 195
- ___C: Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," p. 200
- ___D: Alma M. Garcia, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse," p. 207
- ___E: Lisa Duggan, "Making It Perfectly Queer," p. 211
- ___+Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities," p. 218

Oct 27 Race, Gender, Class in Informal Service Jobs

- In-class screening: *MAID IN AMERICA* (2005)
<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/maidinamerica/film.html>
- Text: Part 4, Section 22 A, B
- ___A: Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Women and Labor Migration," p. 444
- ___B: Leslie Salzinger, "A Maid by Any Other Name: The Transformation of 'Dirty Work' by Central American Immigrants," p. 449
- ___C: Rigoberta Menchu, "A Maid in the Capital," p. 453

Oct 29 Women, Work, Immigration: Case Study of the Nail Salon Industry

(SPARK) Excerpts from Miliann Kang, *Nailed: Gender, Race and Immigration in Body Service Work*

Nov 3 Gendering Globalization: Economic and Wartime Refugees

- Text: Section 19, Intro, A
- ___ "Gendering Globalization and Displacement" (pp. 383-387)
- ___A: "On the Beach: Sexism and Tourism"
- Text: Section 20, A, C
- ___A: Lydia Potts, "Excerpt from the World Labor Market: A History of Migration," p. 411
- ___C: Phil Marfleet, "The Refugee," p. 419

Nov 5 Gender and Consumption,

- ___E: William Wresch, "World Media," p. 307
- Text: Section 17, C, F
- ___C: Roland Marchand "Grotesque Modern," p. 356
- ___F: Rone Tempest: "Barbie and the World Economy," p. 363

Nov 10 Sexualities, Cyberculture, Tourism

- Text: Section 18, B
- ___B: Juana María Rodríguez, "Welcome to the Global Stage: Confessions...Cyber-Slut," p. 371

- Text: Part 4, Section 22 D
___D: Satoko Watanabe, "From Thailand to Japan: Migrant Sex Workers as Autonomous Subjects," p. 458
- E-reserves
___ Felicity Schaeffer-Grabiell, "Planet-Love.com: Cyberbrides in the Americas and the Transnational Routes of U.S. Masculinity," *Signs*, vol. 31, no. 2, wtr 2006.

Nov 12 **Guest Lecture and Readings TBA**

Nov 17 **Intersectionality in Art and Fiction**
The Plague of Doves pp. 5-160

Nov 19 **Writing Identities, Trauma and Healing**
The Plague of Doves pp. 160-320

Nov 24 **Connections between Fiction and Life**
Ereserves
Leslie Marmon Silko, "Here's an Odd Artifact for the Fairy-Tale Shelf"
Nancy Feyl & Allan Chavkin, "An Interview with Louise Erdrich"

Nov 26 **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Dec 1 **Women Creating and Being Created: Gender and Representation**
Final project prospectus due in class
In-class screening: *Guerrillas in Our Midst* UMASS V 841
• Text: Section 12, Intro, A, C, E
___ "Representations, Cultures, Media, Markets," (pp. 265-268)
___A: John Berger, "Ways of Seeing," p. 269
___C: Suzanne Lustig, "How and Why Did the Guerrilla Girls Alter the Art World Establishment?"

Dec 3 **The Gendered Nature of Eco-Devastation and Activism**
• Text: Section 24, C; Conclusion, A
___C: Helen Zweifel, "The Gendered Nature of Biodiversity Conservation," p. 485
___Conclusion, A: Cynthia Enloe, "Beyond the Global Victim," p. 496
• 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 8 Student presentations and discussion of final papers.

Dec 10 Course Wrap-Up and Final Papers Due at Beginning of Class.

Final Paper due in class on Thursday, Dec 10.
