

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



Allia Matta, amatta@froam.umass.edu

Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45 am Bartlett Hall 119

Mailbox: Bartlett 208 Office Hours: Wednesday 9:30- 11:30 or by individual appointment.

Bartlett (TBA)

Welcome! Women's Studies is a vibrant interdisciplinary field spanning the humanities, natural, physical, and social sciences. Scholars in Women's Studies have developed frameworks, theories, and methods to study and understand our natural and social worlds.

This course seeks to ask and answer the following questions: Who are the women in Women's Studies? How can we conceptualize the category "women" so that it reflects our similarities as well as our differences? What are the relationships among, gender, race, class, and 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 have feminist activists addressed these issues in the past, and what are some of the contemporary approaches to change?

Using literary, visual, and theoretical texts, our learning community will explore some of the key concepts and frameworks in contemporary feminist scholarship by analyzing and reflecting on current issues and controversies. Using an intersectional/integrative analysis which employs considering social categories such as: gender, race, class, age, nation, and sexual power concerns, our task is to examine the multifaceted dimensions of women's lived experiences (Euro-American women, African-descended and Women of Color, and Third World Women); the production of knowledge and critical thought; crucial debates of feminist scholarship and activities; women's agency and their pragmatic activism which addresses those issues deemed injurious to the well-being of all women and their respective communities.

Throughout this course, we will also integrate and employ:

- **Integrative Analysis:** It is crucial that we understand "women" and "gender" as multiple and diverse, embedded in the complex network of interlocking variables of race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality.
- **Feminism(s):** There is no unitary "feminism" but rather "feminisms." Feminisms must be understood as multiple, shifting, and contesting movements—from the historical and contemporary perspectives.
- **Knowledge Construction:** Exploring feminist interventions in the politics of knowledge—as indicated in theoretical and literary texts.

- **Feminist Theory:** Emphasizing a notion of feminist theorizing that includes *description* and *analysis* as well as thinking that imposes *vision* and *change*.
 - **Activisms:** Exploring women's resistance to oppression and inequities.
-

Required Texts:

All texts are available at *Food for Thought Books* in downtown Amherst, 106 North Pleasant Street.

- *Race, Class, and Gender An Anthology*, Margaret L. Anderson & Patricia Hill Collins. 5th Edition
- *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangarembga
- *For Colored Girls Who Consider Suicide When the Rainbow is Enough*, Ntozake Shange
- *Does Your House Have Lions*, Sonia Sanchez
- Additional readings will be available via SPARK (your OIT User Id/Password allows you access to the course page)

Course Requirements:

This course is a reading intensive. It is essential that you complete and reflect upon the reading assignments before coming to class and are ready to participate in class discussion. I am completely interested in how you process and analyze the topics and our class format will primarily consist of full and small group discussions and student-lead discussant presentations. Many of the issues raised will have larger academic and personal implications, I therefore recommend that you read the assignments carefully and closely, and come to class prepared to ask and answer questions, provide your opinions/analyses (whether you agree or disagree), so that we will engage in a beneficial intellectual debate. I am completely vested in maintaining a positive and engaging learning community where "we all" function as interactive participants.

Attendance Policy:

More than three (3) unexcused absences will negatively impact your grade. **Excused absences include events of sickness with medical documentation, a valid family emergency, or religious observance.** When possible please notify me in advance of your intended via email. Only those with excused absences have the opportunity to make-up the points deducted from your grade; this can be done by completing a make-up assignment in lieu of your participation, explained further below.

Make-up assignments--If your absence is excused and documented, you must submit a written response analysis that will help you to synthesize what you missed involving the themes of the readings for the week of your absence. Satisfactory completion of this response analysis will result in your earning back the points deducted for your absence. **If you have an excused absence, you are responsible for contacting me for the assignment and for completing the response analysis within a week of your absence.**

Moving Through the Course

- Please adhere to written assignment due dates as outlined in the syllabus. All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and use the appropriate citation guidelines. Please use MLA as several of our primary texts are literary in genre.
- Plagiarism will be treated as a serious offense. Please read and familiarize yourself with the Undergraduate Rights and Responsibilities code:
http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/rights/acad_honest.htm
- Office hours are a time when we can discuss things individually, and you can touch base about any points you would like clarified from class or if you would ever like to discuss your progress in the class. Additionally, you may contact me via e-mail if you ever have questions or concerns about your academic performance.
- If any student has a condition, such as a physical or sensory disability which will make it difficult to complete the work as outlined, please inform me at once, so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Grading Criteria:

- 1) **In-Class Assignments/Participation (10%)**: Periodically, I will assign in-class writing based on the readings and class discussion.
- 2) **Social Positionality Paper (10%)**: This 2-3 page paper will not be letter-graded (though I will provide comments). This paper is an important starting point for our work together as it asks that you think about your own positionality, with respect to race, class, gender, and sexuality.
- 3) **Critical Analysis Papers (2) (40%)**: Students are required to complete two five page essays engaging the course material. Part of this process will be to respond to a critical question or issue rooted in the topic by incorporating the readings.
- 4) **Discussant Presentation/Paper (20%)**: Once during the semester, you will sign up to lead the class in discussion. To complete this task, examine the readings for the designated date, pick out the main themes and important ideas for the week, and develop a short presentation and essay on the topics. For the presentation, develop a clear presentation that demonstrates mastery of the readings. Focus on one or two key concepts or debates and pose specific questions to promote discussion. Please bring discussion questions to class. Presentation should be 5-7 minutes long.
- 5) **Final Paper (20%)**

Grades are determined according the following scale:

A: 94-100	B-: 80-82	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-93	C+: 77-79	D: 60-66
B+: 87-89	C: 73-76	F: 59-0
B: 83-86	C-: 70-72	

Matta 201 Assignments Fall 2009

Texts Key: *Race, Class, and Gender An Anthology*, (Text); *Nervous Conditions* (Dangar); *Does Your House Have Lions* (Sanchez); *For Colored Girls..*(Shange); *Supplemental Readings* (HA/ SPARK/Web)

Assignments

Date	Topic	Readings (to complete by this date)	Assignments Due (on this day)
9/8	Course Introductions	Women are important because... (Discussion)	
9/10	Framing out Feminisms	1) Text—Introduction pp. 1-12 2) In-Class Reading: “If Men Could Menstruate” Gloria Steinem” (HA-Web)	
9/15		Rachel Fudge, “All You Wanted to Know About Feminism But Were Afraid to Ask” Bitch Magazine http://bitchmagazine.org/article/everything-about-feminism .	
9/17		Catherine Harnois , “Re-Presenting Feminisms: Past, Present, and Future”(Spark Articles)	
9/22	Social Positionality & Why Race, Class and Gender Still Matter	1) Anderson and Collins, “Shifting the Center: Introduction” (Text) 2) Arturo Madrid, “Missing People and Others...(Text) 3)Marilyn Frye, “Oppression”(Text) 4) Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference”(Text)	
9/24		1) June Jordan, “Report from the Bahamas” (Text) 2) Peggy McIntosh, <i>White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack</i> ” (Text) 3) Cherrie Moraga, “La Güera” (Text) 4) Elizabeth Martinez, “Seeing More than Black and White”(Text) 5) Excerpts— <i>Black Girls Who Eat Sushi</i> —Pergus; Matta	Social Positionality Paper Due (2-3 Page Minimum) Write a critical paper that discusses your social positionality by detailing how race, gender, class, and sexuality impact and shape your life and your perception of the social and cultural world. How does this shape the decisions you make? What has this meant for you and how has it shaped your experiences?

Matta 201 Assignments Fall 2009

9/29	Race and Racism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ronald Takaki, "A Different Mirror" (Text) 2) "Conceptualizing Race, Class, & Gender" (Text) (5th) or Systems of Power and Inequality" (Text) 6th 3) Peggy McIntosh, "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (text) 4) Abbey Ferber, "What White Supremacists Taught A Jewish Scholar About Identity" (Text) 	
10/1	No-Class—(Conf)	<p>Web Assignment Due: Please upload this assignment into the appropriate SPARK folder by Friday 10/2/09 10:00pm. Topics: Liberal, Social, Radical, Marxist, Chicana, Black, Global, Eco-Feminism (s);</p>	<p>Assignment: Using the Web research a movement and write a piece where you define the ideology/objectives of the movement, the constituency of women represented and how this points to a particular lens of feminism/activism.</p>
10/6	Class Inequality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Donna Langston, "Tired of Playing Monopoly" (Text) 2) Patricia Williams, "Of Race and Risk" (Text) 3) Arnott & Matthaei, "Race, Class, Gender, and Women's Works" (Text) 	<p>Discussant Leaders:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 2)
10/8		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mary Patillo-McCoy, "Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class" (Text) 2) Jennings and Kushnick, "Poverty as Race, Power, and Wealth" (Text 5th) 3) Jason De Parle, "Broken Levees, UnBroken Barriers" (Text 6th) 	<p>Discussant Leaders:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 2)
10/13	No Class—Monday Schedule		
10/15	Gender and Sexism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Messner, "(Sex and Gender Through the Prism of Difference" (Text) 2) Yen Le Espiritu, Ideological Racism and Cultural Resistance..." (Text) 3) Julia Alvarez, "A White Woman of Color" (Text) 4) Michael Messner, "Masculinities and Athletic Careers" 	<p>Discussant Leaders:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 2) 3)
10/20	Sexuality and Heterosexism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Julie A. Greenberg, Definitional Dilemmas, Male or Female/ Black or white?... (Spark) 2) Gluckman & Reed "Where Has Gay Liberation Gone? An Interview with Barbara Smith (Text) 	<p>Critical Analysis Paper #1 Due</p>

Matta 201 Assignments Fall 2009

		3) Cornell West, "Black Sexuality: The Taboo Subject" (Text) 4) Kamala Kempadoo "Globalizing Sex Workers Rights" (Text)	
10/22	Culture, Art and Literary Activism	1) Jean Kilbourne, "You Talking To Me?" (Text 6 th) 2) bell hooks, "An Aesthetic of Blackness" (Spark) 3) "Feminism and Art in the Twentieth Century"	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2) 3)
10/27		1) <i>For Colored Girls...</i> (Shange)	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2) 3)
10/29		1) Collins Article--"Activists Who Yearn for Art that Transforms..." (Spark) 2) "Conversations with Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro" (Spark)	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2)
11/3		1) <i>Does Your House Have Lions</i> (Sanchez) 2) "Discipline and Craft" An Interview with Sonia Sanchez (Spark)	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2)
11/5		Guest Lecturer: Readings TBA	
11/10		1) "Activism and Institutions" (Spark) 2) Lopez and Roth, "Social Protest: Racism and Sexism" (Spark)	Critical Analysis Paper #2 Due
11/12		Guest Lecturer: Readings TBA	
11/17		1) Trinh T. Minh-Ha, "Difference, 'A special third world women issue'" (Spark) 2) Pratibha Parma, "Hateful Contraries Media Images of Asian Women" (Spark) 3) The Guerilla Girls (Spark)	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2) 3)

Matta 201 Assignments Fall 2009

11/19		1) Uma Narayan, "Westernization, Respect for Cultures, and Third World Feminists (Spark) 2) Black Women Poets Speak (Spark)	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2) 3)
11/24		<i>Nervous Conditions</i> (Dangar) pp. 1-57	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2) 3)
12/1		1) <i>Nervous Conditions</i> pp. 58-121 2) African Feminism, Introduction (Spark)	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2) 3)
12/3		<i>Nervous Conditions</i> pp. 122-178	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2) 3)
12/8		<i>Nervous Conditions</i> pp. 179-End	Discussant Leaders: 1) 2) 3)
12/10	Last Class	Where do we go from here? Final remarks...	

Final Portfolios Due: December 17, 2009.