

Professor: Dayo F. Gore

Office Hours: Tues 2:30-3:30pm, Thurs 10-11am, and by appointment

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WOST 301-Fall 2009
Theorizing Women's Issues: U.S. Feminisms
in Theory and Practice
Tuesday and Thursday 11:15-12:30 pm, Bartlett 3

“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 activism. 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, identity, 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: An Autobiography* (1987)

Additional Article and readings available on SPARK

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

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. To get the most out of each class it is imperative that you complete all readings and written assignments on the day 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:

- Four 2 pg. typed response papers that provide a detailed response to 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 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 your understanding of the articles main argument. Although making connections to broader issues is definitely welcomed, the majority of your essay should *critique* the day's readings. Each response will count as 5% of your grade (20% 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 "Equality v. Difference" article. The remaining 3 response papers are due at the beginning of class for the day of your choice. **No response papers will be accepted after Tuesday November 19th.**

- One presentation during the semester where you will work with another student to **briefly and concisely** (no more than 15 minutes) outline the key themes and arguments of that day's readings. You and your co-presenter will also be required post to SPARK by 10pm the night before at least 3 questions to frame the class discussion for that day. You will sign up for your day to lead discussion during the second week of class. This will count for 15% of your grade

- A written exam. Another 15% of your grade will be based on a Take Home Exam that will draw on your analysis and understanding of class readings and theoretical concepts.

- 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 a total of 30% of your grade (10% for Abstract & documentation of your product and 20% for the finale paper). The final paper is due in the WOST office by 4 pm, Tuesday December 15th (**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. **More than 2 unexcused absences will result in an automatic lowering of your grade.**

Summary

Response papers (4 paper)	20%
In Class presentation & disc. questions	15%
Class participation	20%
Take Home Exam (Due Oct. 15)	15%
Cultural Critique Abstract (Due Nov. 24)	10%
Cultural Critique (Due Dec. 15)	20%

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. 8: Overview of Course: Why does theory matter? What are women's issues? *Response Paper Handout also Available on SPARK*

Thus, Sept. 10: Some relevant theories/tools for feminist scholars
Readings: Joan W. Scott, p. 378-389 in *Feminist Theory Reader*
First Response Paper Due at the Start of Class

Tools for Building an Integrated Analysis

Tues, Sept. 15: What are the politics of Feminist Theory?

Readings: bell hooks, p. 50-57 in *Feminist Theory Reader*,
Cynthia Enloe, "Feminist Theorizing from *Bananas to Maneuvers*," on
SPARK

Thurs, Sept. 17: Social Constructionism and Identity

Reading: Amott and Matthaedi, "Women, Race and Work " on SPARK
Baca Zinn and B. Thornton Dill, p. 353-361 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

Immigration, Colonization and U.S. Imperialism

Tues, Sept. 22: Slavery and Freedom, the Connections between Gender, Race and Nation

Readings: "Declaration of Sentiments" on SPARK
Paula Giddings, "To Choose Again Freely" on SPARK
A. Loomba, "Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies" on SPARK

Thurs, Sept. 24: 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. 29: 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, Oct. 1: Discussion - A Life in Theory and Practice
Readings: Shakur, *Assata*, Chp. 3-12

1970s and 1980s Feminisms

Tues, Oct. 6: Sexual Liberation?
Reading: Anne Koedt, p. 242-248 and Monique Wittig, p. 249-254 in *Feminist Theory Reader*
"Contextualizing the Sexuality Debates" on SPARK

Handout of Take Home Exam

Thurs, Oct. 8: Discussion: Defining Women's Oppressions and Differences
Readings: Bonnie Kreps, p. 41-49; The Combahee River Collective, and Mitsuye Yamada, p. 164 -174 all in *Feminist Theory Reader*.
Shakur, *Assata*, to end.

Feminist Politics and Economics

Tues, Oct 13: No Class – Monday Schedule

Thurs, Oct 15: Intersecting Constructions of Capitalism, Gender and Women's Oppression
Readings: Heidi Hartmann, p. 206 -221 in *Feminist Theory Reader*
J. Halberstam, "Temporalities & Postmodern Geographies" on SPARK
Take Home Exam Due at the Start of Class

Constructing Gender and Sex ?

Tues, Oct. 20: Definitions of Gender and Sex
Readings: C. Delphy, "Rethinking Sex and Gender" p. 57-67 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

Thurs, Oct. 22: Why Does Gender Matter?
Readings: Judith Butler, p. 415-427 in *Feminist Theory Reader*
J. Halberstam interview "Masculinity without Men" on SPARK
Last Day To DROP with "W"

Feminist Theory and "Post" Theories

Tues, Oct 27: Poststructuralist Theories and Their Usefulness

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

Thurs, Oct. 29: Discussion: Difference and Post Structuralism

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

Genders, Sexualities and more

Tues, Nov. 3: Sexuality and the State

Readings: Margot Canaday, "The Straight State" on SPARK

Thurs, Nov. 5: 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. 10: A Women's Sphere?

Readings: Anannya Bhattacharjee, "The Public/Private Mirage" on SPARK
Atwood, *A Handmaid's Tale*, to Night p. 99

Thurs, Nov. 12: Women, Gender and Power

Readings: Atwood, *A Handmaid's Tale*, to Jezebel p. 195

Some Strategies for Inclusion and Resistance

Tues, Nov. 17: Battles Waged From Culture to Politics

Readings: Atwood, *A Handmaid's Tale*, to end (including Historical Notes)

Thurs, Nov. 19: Discussion: Women, Difference and Power

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

Final Day to Hand in Response Papers

Some Strategies for Inclusion and Resistance

Tues, Nov. 24: Lessons Learned

Readings: Sonia Correa and Rosalind Petchesky, p. 88-102 and

Abstract for Cultural Critique Due at Start of Class

Thurs, Nov. 26: No Class Thanksgiving Break

Some Strategies for Inclusion and Resistance

Tues, Dec 1: Discussion: Identity and Politics: Can Feminists Build at the Intersections?

Readings: Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens," on SPARK
Review Following Websites:
Audre Lorde Project, <http://www.alp.org/>
Ella's Daughters, <http://www.ellasdaughters.org/home-mainmenu-1>
Third Wave Foundation, at <http://www.thirdwavefoundation.org/>

Thurs, Dec 3: Difficulty of Building at the Intersections:

Readings: Audre Lorde p. 254-59 and Jee Yeun Lee p. 472-76 "Beyond Bean Counting," both in *Feminist Theory Reader*
The Confirmation of Sonia Sotomayor on SPARK

The Mainstreaming of Feminist Politics and the Post Feminist Backlash

Tues, Dec. 10: Feminist Theory and Politics in Current Events

Readings: On Michael Jackson Posted on SPARK by Thursday Dec. 3rd
Lisa Duggan Readings on SPARK

Thurs, Dec. 12: Culture Wars: From Feminist to Post-Feminist

Readings: Carolyn Sicro, p. 428-436 in *Feminist Theory Reader*

**Final Paper/Cultural Critique Due in the WOST Office,
208 Bartlett, by 4 pm Tuesday, December 15, 2009**