

Feminist Theory
WOMENSST 791B (#36386)
Fall 2009

Instructor: Svati P. Shah
svatipshah@wost.umass.edu

Tuesday 4:00-6:30 pm
Office Hours: Tuesdays before class and by appointment

Course Description:

This is a graduate seminar in feminist theory, and constitutes a core course for students enrolled in the Graduate Certificate Program. The seminar will be organized around questions that emerge for feminism from contemporary discourses of transnationalism, economic development, and human rights. We will also be thinking through feminist critiques of free trade, neoliberal economic policies, and the growing prison industrial complex. The course readings will draw from multiple fields, including history, anthropology, and legal studies, with an emphasis on interventions and developments in feminist theory that have emerged since 1985. It will also draw from numerous located feminist work, including much work that is being produced by feminists in India. Given that students will be approaching the work from multiple disciplines, and with a range of theoretical expertise, we will be emphasizing the methodological and historical contexts for each of the works we will be discussing in class. The course readings ultimately trace a narrative arc, from the question of borders and the ways in which feminist subjectivities have been constituted across them, to the intersections of race, sexuality, and contemporary discourses on security, and culminating in questions that arise from instantiations of social movements and subversive practices.

Required Readings:

All articles and single chapters will be available on E-Reserves in Spark. Books are available at Food For Thought Books in Amherst.

Uma Narayan, Dislocating Cultures : identities, traditions, and Third-World feminism, New York : Routledge, 1997.

Aimee Cesaire, Discourse on Colonialism, New York : Monthly Review Press, 2000.

Robin D.G. Kelley, Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination, Boston : Beacon Press, 2002.

Wendy Brown, Regulating Aversion : tolerance in the age of identity and empire, Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2006.

Michel Foucault, Discipline and punish : the birth of the prison, New York : Vintage Books, 1995, 1977.

Angela Davis, Are Prisons Obsolete? New York : Seven Stories Press, 2003.

Julia Sudbury (ed.), Global lockdown : race, gender, and the prison-industrial complex, New York, N.Y. : Routledge, 2005.

Jasbir Puar, Terrorist assemblages : homonationalism in queer times, Durham : Duke University Press, 2007.

Course Requirements and Semester Grade:

All students are expected to attend each class meeting, and to participate fully in class discussions. If you are not able to attend class, you must alert the instructor in advance. Official documentation for absences, e.g., notes from your doctor or clinic if you are ill, are highly encouraged. The course grade will be calculated as follows:

Course Preparation and Participation – 30%

The course is reading-intensive, with up to one book per week, or its equivalent, assigned for each class. Students are required to complete all readings. The amount of reading is challenging, but manageable, and requires students to prioritize what you will emphasize in your reading practice from week to week. You are encouraged to come to class with notes from your readings, as well as the reading itself, along with at least two critical questions drawn from the texts. Although there are weeks when a single text is assigned, the emphasis throughout the course will be on reading between the texts, and understanding the contexts for their production and reception. Discerning how the texts intersect with one another is as important as understanding the main themes and critiques that constitute each individual piece.

Class Presentation - 30%

Each class will begin with a short student presentation of the reading for that day. Students will be assigned these presentations at the beginning of the course. The presentations should be 10-15 minutes in length, covering the main points of the reading, the places where the book, chapter(s) or article(s) connect with other pieces, and to what questions the pieces give rise. The questions should generate discussion, and form the starting point for our collective analysis.

Final Paper– 40%

Final paper proposals are due October 20, and should be no more than one page long. Paper topics must be pre-approved. Final papers are due on the last day of class, and should include a detailed exploration of at least one or two theoretical concepts or writers discussed over the course of the semester, organized around a topic that is relevant to your research interests.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

September 8

Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex," in Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality, Carole S. Vance (ed.), New York: Routledge Press, 1984.

Carole Vance, "Pleasure and Danger: Toward a Politics of Sexuality," in Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality, Carole S. Vance (ed.), New York: Routledge Press, 1984.

September 15

from Edward Said, Orientalism, , Random House: New York, 1978.
Chapters 1 and 2

"Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Chandra Mohanty, in Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism, Mohanty, Russo, and Torres (eds.), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

from Uma Narayan, Dislocating Cultures : identities, traditions, and Third-World feminism, New York : Routledge, 1997.
Ch. 1, 3 and 4

September 22

Aimee Cesaire, Discourse on Colonialism, New York : Monthly Review Press, 2000.
Robin D.G. Kelley, Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination, Boston : Beacon Press, 2002.

September 29

Wendy Brown, Regulating Aversion : tolerance in the age of identity and empire, Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2006.

October 6

Michel Foucault:
Discipline and punish : the birth of the prison, New York : Vintage Books, 1995, 1977.
Essay on heterotopia
Selections from Society must be defended : lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76, New York : Picador, 2003.

October 13

Angela Davis and Gina Dent, "Prison as a Border: A Conversation on Gender, Globalization, and Punishment," *Signs*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Globalization and Gender (Summer, 2001), pp. 1235-1241

Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York : Seven Stories Press, 2003.

October 20 – proposals due

from Julia Sudbury (ed.), *Global lockdown : race, gender, and the prison-industrial complex*, New York, N.Y. : Routledge, 2005.

Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15, and 16

reference: Douglas Kellner, *Guys and guns amok : domestic terrorism and school shootings from the Oklahoma City bombing to the Virginia Tech massacre* Boulder, CO : Paradigm Publishers, 2008.

October 27

Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist assemblages : homonationalism in queer times*, Durham : Duke University Press, 2007.

November 3

"Introduction" and "The critique of rights in critical legal studies," in *Left Legalism/Left Critique*, Wendy Brown and Janet Halley (eds.), Durham : Duke University Press, 2002.

Neferti Tadiar, "The war to be human/becoming human in a time of war," in *Color of violence : the Incite! anthology*, Incite! Women of Color Against Violence (eds.), Cambridge, Mass. : South End Press, 2006.

Jennifer Hyndman and Malathi de Alwis, "Beyond Gender : Towards a Feminist Analysis of Humanitarianism and Development in Sri Lanka," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 3/4, (Fall - Winter, 2003), pp. 212-226.

November 10

From Robyn Wiegman (ed.), *Women's studies on its own : a next wave reader in institutional change*, Durham : Duke University Press, 2002:

Miranda Joseph, "Analogy and Complicity, Women's Studies/ L/G Studies and Capitalism"

Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal, "Transnational Practices and Interdisciplinary Feminist Scholarship, Refiguring Women's and Gender Studies"

John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity"

November 17

Kamala Visweswaran, "Defining feminist ethnography," in Turning Points in qualitative research: tying knots in a handkerchief, AltaMira Press: CA, 2003.

from James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds.), Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography, Berkeley : University of California Press, 1986:

"Introduction: Partial Truths"

"On Ethnographic Allegory"

from Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, Borders and Boundaries : women in India's partition, New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1998.

"Speaking for Themselves: Partition History, Women's History"

"Borders and Bodies: Recovering Women in the Interest of the Nation"

November 24

American Anthropologist: In Focus: Anthropology an Human Rights in a New Key, 108(1) 2006 (entire issue)

David Kennedy, "International Human rights part of the problem?" Harvard Human Rights Journal, 99, 2001.

from Nivedita Menon, Recovering Subversion : feminist politics beyond the law, , Urbana : Permanent Black/University of Illinois Press, 2004:

"Introduction"

"Rights: Putting History Back In"

"Recovering subversion"

December 1

Eithne Luibhéid, "A Blueprint for Exclusion: The Page Law, Prostitution, and Discrimination," in Entry Denied : controlling sexuality at the border, Eithne Luibhéid, Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Judith Whitehead, "Measuring Women's Value: Continuity and Change in the Regulation of Prostitution in Madras Presidency, 1860-1947" in Of Property and Propriety: the role

of gender and class in imperialism and nationalism : the role of gender and class in imperialism and nationalism, Himani Bannerji, Shahrzad Mojab, and Judith Whitehead (eds.) Toronto: Toronto, 2001

Ashwini Tambe, "The Elusive Ingénue: A Transnational Feminist Analysis of European Prostitution in Colonial Bombay," *Gender and Society*, 19:2 (2005) 160-179.

Svati P. Shah "The Politics of Red Light Visibility in Mumbai: Producing The Spectacle of Kamathipura" *Cultural Dynamics* 18: 269 (2006): 269-292.

Kamala Kempadoo "Introduction: Globalizing Sex Workers' Rights" in Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition, Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (eds.), Routledge: New York and London, 1998

Wendy Chapkis, "Trafficking, Migration, and the Law: Protecting Innocents, Punishing Immigrants" *Gender & Society* 17.6 (2003) 923-37

December 8

from A Question of Silence: : the sexual economies of modern India, Mary E. John and Janaki Nair (eds.), New Delhi : Kali for Women, 1998:

"Introduction"

"Citizenship and its discontents"

"Inventing saffron history: celibate hero emasculated nation"

from The Phobic and the Erotic: the politics of sexualities in contemporary India, Brinda Bose (ed.)

Shohini Ghosh, "False Appearances and Mistaken Identities: Phobic and the Erotic in Bombay Cinema's Queer Vision"