

**WS 201: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN WOMEN'S STUDIES
SPRING 2005
Banu Subramaniam**

Tu, Th 9:30 - 10.45
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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Women's Studies is a vibrant interdisciplinary field today, spanning the humanities, social, natural and physical sciences. Scholars in women's studies have developed frameworks, theories and methods used to study and understand our natural and social worlds. This course will introduce the field of women's studies, using a transnational framework. Fundamentally it will interrogate the category "woman." Are there essential/innate characteristics that define all women? What of our many differences? How do we incorporate other social categories such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nationality? How do we understand and live with our multiple identities and locations? How do these locations shape our economic, political, and cultural lives? This course will explore theories about women and gender through interdisciplinary analyses, as well as disciplinary lenses such as biology, history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and literary studies. The course will explore the diversity of women transnationally as well as the U.S. It will explore some of the important theorists, thinkers, writers and activists who have grappled with the inextricable interconnections of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity and nationality. We will grapple with how to conceptualize the category "woman" to reflect all the similarities as well as the many substantive differences.

II. TEXTS

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan eds, 2002. McGraw Hill. (referred to as *Text*)
Nickel and Dimed: Or (Not) Getting By in America, Barbara Ehrenreich. Metropolitan Books, 2001.
Course Pack/Reader of Additional Reading (referred to as *Reader*)
Recommended: The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World, Joni Seager, Penguin USA (Paper); Revised and Updated edition, April 1, 2003. (referred to as *Atlas*)

The books are for sale at: Food for Thought Books-106 N.Pleasant Street, Amherst
Course Reader is available at: Copycat Print Shop, 37 E. Pleasant Street, Amherst.
Books and Reader are On Reserve in the Library and the Women's Studies Office, (Bartlett 208).

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This class is a reading intensive class. It is essential that you complete and reflect upon the reading assignments before coming to class, and be prepared to contribute to the discussion. Every class will focus on the readings assigned for that class as stated in the syllabus. Your attendance and participation are required for the entire session of each class meeting. The format of the class will be primarily a group discussion focussed on the themes of the class readings.

ATTENDANCE: Your attendance & participation is required for the entire session of each class. More than 3 unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade by at least one letter grade.

- **Class Participation and In-Class Writing (10%):** The issues we will be discussing this semester have both academic and personal implications. In order to grapple with this material it is vital that you read the assignments carefully and on time, come to class with questions, opinions, and analyses (agreements and disagreements) -- in other words to be prepared to participate in an intellectual debate. Class participation (quality not quantity!) counts for 10% of your grade.
- **Social Positionality Paper:** This 2-3 page paper will not be graded but IS required. Despite the lack of the grade, I consider this assignment to be vitally important and expect your serious consideration and effort. You will be graded down if you do not complete the assignment. (Due 2/10)
- **Homework Assignments (25%):** Early in the semester I will hand out a list of short homework assignments (hopefully fun and creative) designed to enrich understanding of the readings through applications to your current social world. You must submit at least 5 assignments – at least 3 of them before the analytic paper is due.
- **World Atlas Presentation (10%):** During the semester, each student (with the approval of the instructor) will pick one or more themes from the world atlas. Using the readings from the course, you will analyze the overall and specific trends emerging from the world atlas. Students may work on this project individually, in pairs or as a group. Students will present their findings to the class. Topics will be discussed in class. (Presentations 4/19)
- **Analytic Paper (20%) and Critical Evaluation (10%):** One 5 page based on the material covered (due 4/7). The paper will require you to do analytic work focussing on the material you have read for this course, rather than doing library research on topics not addressed in class. You will exchange papers with a fellow student, and critically analyze and evaluate his/her paper (due 4.12). The paper will count for 20% of your grade and the evaluation 10% of your grade.
- **Group Project (25%):** Students will work in groups in doing a research/action project. Topics will be discussed in class. Oral presentation on the project will count for 10% of your grade and the final written report for 15% of your grade. (Presentations 5/3, 5/5 or 5/10. The due date for the final paper will be decided in class.)
- **Class Discussant:** You will work in pairs to serve as discussant for *one* session during the semester. You will discuss and analyze the readings assigned for that day (5-10 minutes). You will submit a 2 page reflection based on that day's readings due in class that day. This will count as one of the five required home work assignments.

Grading:

Home Work Assignments	25%
Mid-Term Analytic Paper	20%
-Evaluation	10%
Atlas Project	10%
Group Project:	
-Class Presentation:	10%
-Written Report:	15%
Class Participation:	10%

IV: SCHEDULE

Week I: Introduction

Thursday, January 27:

Gloria Steinem, "If Men Could Menstruate." *Ms Magazine*, October 1978. (in-class reading)

Week II: Women's Bodies and Difference

Tuesday, February 1:

Part I, Sec 1: A, B, C/D, E (Text)

Anne Fausto Sterling, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough." *The Sciences*, March/April 1993. (Reader)

Thursday, February 3:

Marilyn Frye, "Oppression." In *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*. The Crossing Press Feminist Series, 1983. (Reader)

Kimberle' Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women." In *Critical Race Theory: Key Writings that Framed the Movement*, NY: The New Press, 357-384, 1995.

Allan G. Johnson, "Patriarchy, The System: An It, Not a He, A Them, or an Us." In *Women's Lives: Multicultural Perspectives*, Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey eds., McGraw Hill, 2004. (Reader)

Week III: Social Positionality and Location

Tuesday, February 8:

Dorothy Allison, "A Question of Class," in *Skin: Talking About Sex, Class & Literature*, 1994. Ithaca, New York: Firebrand Books. (Reader)

June Jordan, "Report from the Bahamas," *On Call: Political Essays*. 1995. Boston: South End Press. (Reader)

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies," in *Race, Class and Gender*, Anderson & Hill Collins, eds., 1992. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (Reader)

Trina Grillo & Stephanie Wildman, "Obscuring the Importance of Race: The Implications of Making Comparisons Between Racism and Seism [or Other-isms]," in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. Richard Delgado, ed., 199. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. (Reader)

(Poem: Pat Parker, "For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend," in *Making Face, Making Soul, Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*, Gloria Anzaldúa ed., 1990. Aunt Lute Books.)

Thursday, February 10:

Arlene Stein, "Introduction" and "The Year of the Lustful Lesbian," In *Sisters, Sexperts, Queers: Beyond the Lesbian Nation*, Plume Books, 2993, 13-34. (Reader)

Joan Nestle, "Narratives of Liberation: Pluralities of Hope" and "My Years with the Lesbian Herstory Archives," In *A Fragile Union: New and Selected Writings*. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998. (Reader)

Geeta Patel, "Home, Homo, Hybrid: Translating Gender," *College Literature*, 1997, 24(1): 139- 148.

Social Location Paper Due, February 10: Write a 2-3 page paper outlining your social positionality? How would you locate yourself on the axes of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality? What has this meant for you and how has it shaped your experiences? – in the opportunities or challenges you have faced. This paper will not be graded, but is required.

Week IV: Making of Race, Sex and Empire

Tuesday, February 15:

Part I, Sec 2: ABCDE (Text)

Thursday, February 17

Part I, Sec 3: ABCDE (Text)

Alan Goodman, "Bred In the Bone," *The Sciences*, March/April 1997.

Week V: Medicine and Reproductive Rights

Tuesday, February 22:

Part I, Sec 4: BCD(Text)

Part I, Sec 5: ABCDE (Text)

Thursday, February 24:

Part I, Sec 6: ABDEF

Part II, Sec 1: ACD (Text)

Week VI: Gender, Identity and the State

Tuesday, March 1:

Part II, Sec 2: ABCD (Text)

Teresa L. Arnott & Julie A. Matthaei, "Race, Class, Gender and Women's Works: A Conceptual Framework" in *Race, Gender and Work: A Multi-cultural Economic History of Women in the United States.*, Teresa Amott & Julie Mattaei eds., 1996, Boston: South End Press. (Reader)

Thursday, March 3:

Part II, Sec 3: ABCDE (Text)

Alison Jagger & Paula Rothenberg, "Theories of Women's Subordination," In *Feminist Frameworks: Alternate Theoretical Accounts of Relations between Men and Women.* (Third Edition), McGraw Hill, 1993.(Reader)

Week VII: Gender, Community, Nation and Globalization

Tuesday, March 8:

Part II, Sec 4 and 5 (Text)

Thursday, March 10:

Part IV, Sec 5,6 (Text)

☺ TUESDAY, MARCH 15 – MARCH 17 – SPRING BREAK ☺

Week VIII: Globalization and its impact on the U. S

Tuesday, March 22 – Nickel and Dimed

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, Metropolitan Books, 2001.

Tuesday, March 24 –

Part IV: Sections: 1 (AB), 2 (ACD), 3 (ABCD).

Week IX: Representation

Tuesday, March 29:

Part III, Sec 4: ABCD (Text)

Leith Mullings, “Images, Ideology, and Women of Color” In *Women of Color in U. S. Society*, Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, eds. 1994. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 265-290 (Reader)

Thursday, March 31:

Part III, Sec 5: ABCD (Text)

Part III, Sec 7: ABC (Text)

Week X: The Beauty Culture

Tuesday, April 5:

Part III, Sec 6: (Text)

Jacqueline Urla and Alan Swedlund, “The Anthropology of Barbie: Unsettling Ideals of Feminine Body in Popular Culture.” In *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*. Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla eds., Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995, 277-313. (Reader)

Thursday, April 7:

Short excerpts from *A Girl’s Guide to Taking Over the World: Writings from the Girl Zine Revolution*, Karen Green & Tristan Taormino, eds., 1997. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin and *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation*. Barbara Findlen, ed., 1995. Washington, DC: Seal Press and *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today’s Feminism*, Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman eds., Seal Press, 2002. (Reader)

Analytic Paper due April 7: Reflect on the content we have learnt in class to this point. Choose two or three points that stand out for you to help focus your responses and/or critique and write a critical analysis on those points - take risks, and incorporate your ideas about the subjects, but remember to include the content from the class readings. Discuss insights gained or limitations in the analysis. I want to know that you have read, understood, and analyzed the class reading material. (5 pages)

Week XI: Zines and Utopias

Tuesday, April 12:

Short excerpts from *A Girl’s Guide to Taking Over the World: Writings from the Girl Zine Revolution*, Karen Green & Tristan Taormino, eds., 1997. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin and *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation*. Barbara Findlen, ed., 1995. Washington, DC: Seal Press and *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today’s Feminism*, Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman

eds., Seal Press, 2002 (Reader)

Comments on paper, Due April 12: During the last class, you will exchanged your paper with another student. Critically analyze and evaluate the paper. Has s/he understood the material? If yes, why? If not, why not? How could the student have further developed the paper? What grade would you give the paper? (2 page evaluation)

Thursday, April 14:

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, "Sultana's Dream," in *Inventing Women: Science, Technology, and Gender*. Gill Kirkup and Laurie Smith Keller eds., The Open University Press, 1992. 294-302. (Reader)
Gerd Bratenberg, "Bram, the director and her family," "The Maidmen's Ball," "Ruth Bram and her housebond – for better or worse." *The Daughters of Egeia*. 1985. Boston: South End Press.

Week XII: World Atlas Presentations

Tuesday, April 19:

World Atlas Presentation

Thursday, April 21: No Class (Monday Schedule)

Week XIII: Gender, Travel and Tourism

Tuesday, April 26:

Part IV, Sec 1: AD (Text)

Part IV, Sec 2: ACD (Text)

Michael Zweig, "Welcome to the Working Class!" *NYT*, July 13, 2002. (Reader)

Thursday, April 28:

Part IV, Sec 3: ABC (Text)

Part IV, Sec 4: ABCD (Text)

Barbara Ehrenreich, "Two Tiered Morality," *NYT*, June 30, 2002. (Reader)

Week XIV: Group Project Presentations

Week XV: Presentations and summary

Tuesday, May 10: Group Presentations

Thursday, May 12: Conclusion and Summary

Conclusion: AB (Text)

Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," In *Feminism and Race*, ed. Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Oxford University Press, 2001, 89-92.

Rebecca Gardyn, "Daughters of Feminism," *American Demographics*, April 2001 (Reader)

June Jordan, "Where is the Love?" *Making Face, Making Soul, Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*, Gloria Anzaldúa ed., 1990. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

(Reader)

bell hooks, "Sisterhood is Still Powerful" In *Feminism is for Everybody*, South End Press, 2000, 13-18.

(Reader)

