

Women's Studies 201
Critical Perspectives in Women's Studies
Spring 2006
Claudia de Lima Costa

Tu/Th 11:15 –12:30, Bartlett 127
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Course Description

This course is an exploration into the theories about women and gender through interdisciplinary and transnational feminist analyses. It will explore the diverse ways in which the category "woman" is crosscut by other axis of identity – such as race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality (to name a few) – constitutive of one's location and experience. We will grapple with the multiple and complex ways in which both experience and location defy and subvert understandings of women across all types of boundaries.

Readings

Required Texts:

1. Grewal, Inderpal and Caren Kaplan (eds.). *Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World*. New York: MacGraw Hill, 2002.
2. Acevedo, Luz de Alma (or Latina Feminist Group). *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.
1. Lispector, Clarice. *The Hour of the Star*. New York: New Directions Paperbook, 1992.
2. *Course Reader (e-reserves)*. All the e-reserve readings are placed in a file with the course instructor's name and the course title - WOMENSST 201 Critical Perspectives. The password is *gender*. The website is <http://ereserves.library.umass.edu> .

Course Requirements

Students in this course will be expected to: (1) be fully prepared for and actively participate in seminar discussions;(2) organize and facilitate class discussion of assigned readings during the quarter; (3) prepare discussion questions and brief synopses of the required readings for the seminar session s/he facilitates, (5) write one analytical essay (4-5pp) on topics related to themes of the course, and (6) work in groups in doing a research/action project (includes oral presentation of the project and a written report).

Teams of two or more students will facilitate seminar discussion each class session. This will entail: (1) meeting with other facilitators before the class to plan the seminar session; (2) making brief presentations on a subset of the assigned readings for that day; (3) preparing a one to two-page reflection based on the assigned readings, including questions to initiate and guide the seminar discussion.

Presentations should: (a) explain/summarize the main arguments of the texts in question; (b) discuss how the authors goes about her/his analysis and argument; (c) assess the adequacy of the argument; (d) relate texts/author's arguments to one another; (e) state what you learned or what the texts provoked you to think about.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- Class Participation, Discussion, and In-Class Assignments (10%)
- Class Discussant and Essay (25%, 1-2 pages)
- Take-Home Midterm Essay (35%, 4-5 pages)
- Group Project (30%)

Course Schedule

1. Week One (1/31 – 2/2)

- Introduction
- What is Feminist Theory? What is Feminism? Lexicon of the Debates (Kolmar and Bartkowski, p. 1-50). E-reserves.

2. Week Two (2/7 – 2/9): Gender, Woman, Difference

- Introduction. Gendered Histories, Gendered Contexts (Glover and Kaplan, p. ix-xxxiv). E-reserves.
- Interpreting Gender (Linda Nicholson). E-reserves
- Dueling Dualisms (Anne Fausto-Sterling). E-reserves.

3. Week Three (2/14 – 2/16): Sex Differences Across Cultures

- Introduction to Women's Studies (Grewal and Kaplan): Part I, Introduction; Section 1: B, D, E and Section 2: B, C, D.

4. Week Four (21/2 – No class; 23/2): Feminist Politics of Location

- Notes Toward a Politics of Location (Adrienne Rich). E-reserves.
- Report from the Bahamas (June Jordan). E-reserves.
- Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It? (Martin and Mohanty). E-reserves.

- Postmodern Geographies: Feminist Politics of Location” (Caren Kaplan, chapter 4, p. 143-187). E-reserves.

5. Week Five (28/2 – 3/2): Making of Race, Sex, and Empire (I)

- Cont. readings Week Four
- Video: Stuart Hall, *Race: The Floating Signifier*
- Introduction to Women’s Studies (Grewal and Kaplan): Part I, Section 3: A,B,C, D, E.

** Social Location Paper due (3/2): Write a 2-3 page paper outlining your social positionality. Explain your location on the axes of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, etc. How have these locations shaped your experiences? **

6. Week Six (3/7 – 3/9): Making of Race, Sex, and Empire (II)

- Cont. Week Five readings
- Take Home Midterm Essay questions hand out

7. Week Seven (3/14 – 3/16): The Politics of Representation (I)

- The work of representation (Stuart Hall). E-reserves.
- Introduction to Women’s Studies (Grewal and Kaplan): Part III, Section I: A, B, C, D

SPRING BREAK (3/21 – 3/23)

8. Week Eight (3/28 – 3/30): The Politics of Representation (II)

- Cont. Week Seven readings
- Introduction to Women’s Studies (Grewal and Kaplan): Part III, Section V: A, B, C, D.
- Images: Producing Culture for the Market (chapter 3) (Arlene Dávila). E-reserves
- Screening the Image (chapter 4) (Arlene Dávila). E-reserves

** Take Home Midterm Essay due (30/3)**

9. Week Nine (4/4 – 4/6): Representing Experience: Testimonies

- *Telling to Live* (selections will be assigned)

10. Week Ten (4/11 – 4/13): Representing Experience: Fiction

- *Telling to Live* (cont.)
- *The Hour of the Star*
- Film: *The Hour of the Star*

11. Week Eleven (4/18 – 4/20): New Social Movements and Identity Politics

- Introduction to Women's Studies (Grewal and Kaplan): Part II, Section III: A, B, C, D, E.
- Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms (Sonia E. Alvarez et al.). E-reserves

12. Week Twelve (4/25 – 4/27): Gender, Globalization, and Transnational Feminisms

- Introduction to Women's Studies (Grewal and Kaplan): Part IV, Section I: A, B, C, D. Section III: A, B, C.
- Introduction to Women's Studies (Grewal and Kaplan): Conclusion: A, B
- Area Studies, Gender Studies, and the Cartographies of Knowledge (Ella Shohat). E-reserves

13. Week Thirteen (5/2 – 5/4)

- Group Presentations

14. Week Fourteen (5/9 – 5/11)

- Group Presentations and Course Conclusion