

**WOST 201: Critical Perspectives in Women's Studies
Spring 2008**

Tuesdays and Thursdays
9:30-10:45

Instructor: Lori Bindig

Email: Lbindig@comm.umass.edu

Office: Machmer E 34

Mailbox: Machmer Mailroom (4th Floor)

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:45-5:15 PM and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an introduction to fundamental questions and concepts of feminist thought and to the basic intellectual tools of analysis integrating economic and cultural imperialism, gender, class, race, and sexual orientation. This course also addresses the multifaceted dimensions of women's lived experiences within a global context. Because this is an introductory course we will review key feminist theories. However, we will also go beyond the theoretical and explore how feminism and feminist issues are at play in our own lives. In particular, you will have the opportunity to become agent of change in regards to a feminist issue that you feel strongly about. By the end of this course you should be able to discuss how feminist issues in various cultural contexts as well put them into practice.

Required Texts:

1. Burn, S.M. (2004). *Woman Across Cultures: Global Perspectives*. Boston: McGraw-Hill. *Available at Food for Thought in Amherst.*
2. Additional readings available on SPARK

LETTER GRADING

A: 93-100%, A-: 90-92%, B+: 87- 89%, B: 83-86%, B-: 80-82%, C+: 77-79%, C: 73-76%, C-: 70-72%, D+ 67-69%, D 64-66%, F: below 64.

GRADING STRUCTURE

Discussion Leader	15%
Critical Biography Paper	20%
Reading Responses	20%
Final Action Project	35%
Participation	<u>10%</u>
	100%

OVERVIEW OF GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

Discussion Leader

You will be asked to summarize an article from one of the required readings listed on the syllabus and make an informal presentation of the author's main arguments to the class in a clear and concise manner. You should also create a handout for everyone in the class that contains the information you will present. In the presentation and handout you should summarize the key points and arguments in your essay, bring in at least two relevant examples (videos, magazines, ads, recordings, etc.) that are not already mentioned in the essay to support your position regarding the argument, demonstrate how the assigned chapter is related to at least one other assigned reading, and create three discussion questions for the class based on the reading.

Reading Responses

Throughout the course of the semester, we will be reading from the assigned text as well as additional articles that can be found on SPARK. As it is imperative that everyone in the class keeps up with the reading assignments, you will be required to write a 1-page response to 10 groups of readings. You must turn in 5 reading responses before spring break and five after spring break. In these responses you should address questions you had about the readings, aspects of the readings that you found interesting, or other examples that relate to the authors' arguments.

Critical Biography

One key component of culture that shapes our views about the world is media. This assignment asks that you find a media text (television show, film, etc.) that depicts a feminist issue from this class. In a 3-5 page paper you should discuss your own relationship to feminism in general as well as the media depiction that you have selected. Whenever possible you should incorporate the class readings to support your point of view.

Final Action Project

Feminism is comprised of two key components: theory and action. Throughout the semester you have been interrogating various feminist theories and issues. Now is your chance to put your understanding of these issues into practice with 3-4 of your fellow classmates. As a group you will propose and implement an activist project of your own choosing. Once you have implemented your activist project you will write a report discussing the strengths and weaknesses of your project and incorporating class readings. Your group will then make a 15-20 minute presentation about your final action project.

Participation

Participation is key to the success of this class. Although I will lecture, I don't believe this should be strictly a lecture class. Since this is a writing course, many of our class

discussions will evolve out of in-class writing assignments, which I refer to as “free writes.” Throughout the semester, you may be asked to reflect class readings, a popular cultural “text” (a film, television show or advertisement) or evaluate an argument in a free write. At the end of the semester you are to turn in all your free write pieces in a folder. The free writes will be graded on quality of the writing along with how many pieces were submitted. In order to participate in class discussions and compose intelligent free writes, you must do the course reading ahead of time. Please don't try to fake it-- I always can tell! Participation in class discussion and free writes is worth 10% of your final grade and I never hesitate to give poor grades for poor participation.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Regular attendance is MANDATORY. Everyone is expected to attend all classes and arrive on time, ready to participate. In-class writing activities and discussions cannot be made up, and class participation will be factored into final grades. Two absences will be allowed without penalty. Starting with the third absence, half a letter grade will be deducted from your final grade. No distinction will be made between excused and unexcused absences (with the exceptions of illness documented by a physician and religious holidays). Please try to inform me beforehand if you will be unable to attend a class so that I may plan accordingly. Also please be aware that **three late arrivals will count as one absence**. If you have special circumstances (i.e. class on another campus prior to our meeting time), please let me know and we can try to make arrangements.

If an assignment is due on a day when you are absent, you are still responsible for turning it in by placing it in my mailbox before class. NO late assignments are accepted without special permission prior to the due date. Any late assignments that are accepted will lose half a letter day for each day it is late (including the weekend!). Assignments will NOT be accepted via email.

Note about Class Discussion

This class is a safe and friendly environment for people of all genders, races, sexual orientations, and political/subcultural affiliations. Although I will not enforce an oppressive code of political correctness, I will not tolerate remarks with the intention to make others feel uncomfortable. Because this course deals with very personal issues the views and feelings of every individual in the class MUST be tolerated and respected.

Format for Assignments

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date given. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with a 12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margins, and APA style citations. Also, be sure to number your pages!!!

All assignments must be your own original work and must be specifically written for this course. It is crucial that you properly cite any information or ideas that you take from other sources. Plagiarism will result in the FAILURE of this course.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignment</u> (readings should be completed for the date listed)
T 1/29	Course Introduction
TH 1/31	Overview of Feminist Theories SPARK Readings: Tong: Introduction the diversity of feminist thinking Fudge: Everything you wanted to know about feminism Feminist Approaches
T 2/5	Women's Low Status & Power WAC: pp.11-16 (first paragraph) pp. 34-48
TH 2/7	Women & Work WAC: pp. 97-129
T 2/12	Women & Work SPARK readings: Wharton: Feminism at Work Farabee: Linda Hirschman's Manifesto for Women
TH 2/14	Women & Violence: WAC: pp. 16-30 Due: Critical Biography
T 2/19	NO CLASS—MONDAY SCHEDULE
TH 2/21	Women & Violence SPARK readings: Straus: Escape from Animal House Duke: Bullies on the Adult Playground
T 2/26	Sexuality WAC: 79-94
TH 2/28	Sexuality SPARK readings: Tanenbaum: Slut Rosenbloom: Good Girls Go Bad for a Day
T 3/3	Women & Reproductive Rights WAC: pp. 51-75

TH	3/6	Women & Reproductive Rights SPARK readings: GMD: If it's not on, it's not on Liss: The New Breed
T	3/11	Women and Parenthood SPARK readings: Buttenwieser: Hooray for Hollywomb Scott: Mom's the Word
TH	3/13	Women and Parenthood SPARK readings: Bowe: Gay Donor or Gay Dad Price: Queer and Pleasant Danger Due: Final Action Project Proposal
T/TH	3/18-3/20	NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK
T	3/25	Group Conferences/ Group Work
TH	3/27	Group Conferences/ Group Work
T	4/1	Women & Beauty SPARK readings: Wolf: The Beauty Myth Urla & Swedlund: Anthropometry of Barbie
TH	4/3	Women & Body Image SPARK readings: Mernissi: Size 6 Kilbourne: The more you subtract, the more you add
T	4/8	Women & Cosmetics SPARK readings: Zeisler: Plastic Passions Samarasinha: Busting the Beige Barrier
TH	4/10	Women & Globalization SPARK readings: Lee: Gender and the South China Miracle
T	4/15	Women & Politics WAC: pp. 187-218
TH	4/17	Women & Politics Kornblut: Ascent of a Woman Zeisler: Memo to: The New York Times

T	4/22	Women & Activism WAC: pp.221-247
TH	4/24	Women & Activism WAC: pp. 251-268
T	4/29	Catch Up Day
TH	5/1	Final Action Presentations
T	5/6	Final Action Presentations
TH	5/8	Final Presentations
T	5/13	Last Day of Class- Evaluations Final Action Report

- This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.